

TRANSLATING THE REPRESENTATION OF MALABO IN THE UNITED STATES AND SPAIN: THE CASE OF PAUL THEROUX'S *THE LOWER RIVER*

LA REPRESENTACIÓN DE MALABO TRADUCIDA A LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS Y ESPAÑA: EL CASO DE *EN LOWER RIVER* DE PAUL THEROUX

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Abstract

In this paper we analyze how Malabo and Africa appear represented in the novel *The Lower River*, by American author Paul Theroux, and how his cultural and linguistic vision of the city and the continent reach Spain through the translated version. In order to do so, a description of the publishing market is provided to understand its importance both for the original text and for the translation in Spain. Through a textual analysis of both texts using the software WordSmith Tools (Scott 2004), including word-frequency and concordance searches, we will explore if there is a positive or negative portrayal of Malabo. Finally, through a linguistic comparative analysis of the original and the translation, we will determine to what extent the reader in Spain can draw the same inferences as the English reader of the original.

Keywords: Theroux, representation, WordSmith, Africa, translation, Spain.

Resumen

Este artículo analiza cómo Malabo y África aparecen representados en la novela *The Lower River*, por el autor norteamericano Paul Theroux, y cómo su visión lingüística y cultural de la ciudad (y el continente) llega a España a través de su

versión traducida. Se comienza ofreciendo una descripción del mercado editorial para comprender su importancia, tanto del original como de la traducción. Se emplea el software Wordsmith Tools (Scott 2004) para realizar un estudio textual de ambos textos, realizando búsquedas de frecuencia de palabras y de concordancias, para explorar la representación de Malabo y comprobar si esta es positiva o negativa. Finalmente, mediante un análisis comparativo lingüístico se estudia hasta qué punto el público en España puede realizar las mismas inferencias que el público del original en inglés.

Palabras clave: Theroux, representación, WordSmith, África, traducción, España.

1. Introduction

Africa has long held a place both in the literary imagination of the United States and in the literary panorama in Spain. Since colonization, there has been a novelization of Africa and its people in many different literary genres, and as Krishnan states:

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A colonial invention, “Africa”, as a unified entity, embodies the constant struggle of representation to find a moment of closure which is forever denied. Africa, that is to say, remains elusive; yet, it perpetually offers its spectral presence. In its simultaneous transparency and opacity, Africa stands as a paradox that speaks as much about us, its readers, as it does about the place and its people. (2014: 15)

It is the aim of this paper to analyze how Malabo is represented in literature in modern times, focusing on the novel *The Lower River* (2012) by American author Paul Theroux, and how his cultural and linguistic vision of the city (and the continent) is read in Spain through the translated version, published in 2014 and translated by Ezequiel Martínez Llorente.

Paul Theroux has been selected as he is a well-known author, mostly due to his novel (and movie and TV adaptations) *The Mosquito Coast* (1981), that won the James Tait Black Memorial Price in the same year. *The Lower River* (2012) is the most recent novel by Theroux to deal with the subject of Africa, as his last three novels —*Mother Land* (2017), *Under the Wave at Waimoa* (2021) and *The Bad Angel Brothers* (2022)— focus on different subjects. Ezequiel Martínez Llorente, the Spanish translator, has been an active literary translator since 2007, working as well as a reviewer and writer.

It is our aim to offer a holistic approach to the novel, focusing on different aspects that affect our reception and understanding of *The Lower River*. First, we provide a description of the publishing market in order to understand the literary context of the country in which the translation is published. Then, through a textual

analysis of both texts using the software Wordsmith Tools (Scott 2004), including word-frequency and concordance searches, we will determine if there is a positive or negative portrayal of Malabo in this text and whether there is an equal portrayal in the translated version into Spanish. Through a linguistic comparative analysis of the original and the translation, we will explore if the reader in Spain may draw the same inferences as the English-speaking reader of the original, following Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2002) taxonomy of translation techniques as used by Martínez Llorente in his translation of this literary text. Thus, a combination of methodologies will be used to offer a global vision of the novel.

For this analysis, we will consider that Theroux is already translating Africa and its people for the reader from the United States. Venuti points out that:

Within the hegemonic countries, translation fashions images of their subordinate others that can vary between the poles of narcissism and self-criticism, confirming or interrogating dominant domestic values, reinforcing or revising the ethnic stereotypes, literary canons, trade patterns, and foreign policies to which another culture may be subject. (1998a: 159)

2. The Representation of Africa in the Literary Panorama in Spain

In Spain, most of the literary production about Africa is available to the public through translated versions. Few authors in Spain write directly about Africa (mostly in books that could be included in the travel literature genre and bestseller authors such as Javier Reverte or Alberto Vázquez-Figueroa). In this paper, we focus on how the reader in Spain perceives Malabo (and Africa) through Theroux's *The Lower River*.

In 2014, the year the translation *En Lower River* was published, the percentage of total books in general translated in Spain was 22% of the total published (Federación de Gremios de Editores de España 2019). In this same year, Statista reports that the number of books translated into Spanish was 23,063 titles, continuing a downward trend in translated books that started in 2008 ("Evolución anual" 2020). The Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2020) shows that in 2012, English was the most translated language in Spain, with 4,858 books.

Understanding how the market selects what titles are published and translated is fundamental so as to understand that the perception of Africa by the Spanish reader can vary depending on which titles are selected. As Brouillette states, "the expansion of the market for English literatures has been mostly an Anglo-American phenomenon" (2011: 58), which means that the "kind of postcolonial writing

most often picked up for global distribution has certain characteristics. It is typically novels, currently the bestselling literary genre. Writing in European languages, and especially in English, is privileged” (Brouillette 2011: 58-59). Being published in English by a big publishing house (*The Lower River* was published by the Penguin Group) also has the advantage of making it easier to get translated into Spanish; the translation in this case was published by Alfaguara, a Spanish publishing house owned by Penguin Random House.

A search of translated editions of books by African writers published in Spain revealed that most of the titles translated into Spanish were originally published in English. Furthermore, not many African writers are available to the general reader, except African authors who have received international recognition through international literary prizes (such as Coetzee or Achebe).¹ This has led some scholars in Spain to believe that African literature has little interest for the Spanish reader, as María Sofía López states in her interview with Rodríguez Murphy (2014). López indicates that the literature that attracts the interest of publishing houses in Spain comes after authors from the Anglo-American market receive prizes, for example, and who become part of the “World African Literature”. López believes that the cultural neo-colonialist press needs to accept authors so they can reach the wider public, after fitting in with what the West considers marketable (in Rodríguez Murphy 2014: 246).

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We must not forget that when we talk about African literature and post-colonial literature in the current globalized world, translation is fundamental. As wa Thiong’o states, “[i]n that context [globalization], we do need a language that can bring colours and languages together, and that language, in my view, now has a name: Translation” (2012: 118).

This article focuses on a book about Africa written by an American author and translated into Spanish, so there are several translation-layers interacting: The author metaphorically translating Africa for the English-speaking reader and the book translated into Spanish for the reader in Spain. Part of the marketing strategies of this book included using the autobiographical genre as a way of increasing interest in the novel, but also selling it as travel literature, which has been widely explored both in translation studies and in cultural studies, “for this is the genre in which individual strategies employed by writers deliberately to construct images of other cultures for consumption by readers can be most clearly seen” (Bassnett 1998: 138). In this case, the image constructed for the reader in the United States and translated for the reader in Spain is that of Malabo, generalized for readers as “Africa”.

3. Methodology

The present research is empirical and qualitative in nature. It is, therefore, an exploratory and holistic study. It aims to better understand how a multilayered text is received in translation. For this reason, this work does not start from a hypothesis, but rather it is an exploratory, descriptive and inductive piece of research. As for the corpus used, the complete text is studied, both the original and the translation. This paper uses the software Wordsmith Tools Version 4 (Scott 2004) to create word-frequency lists and concordance searches. In order to be able to use the program, both novels were digitally scanned and converted into .txt documents as this is the format supported by Wordsmith Tools. After importing each book separately, we obtained word lists generated in frequency order, to identify the most common words and how they could relate to the main topics in the novel. Also, as stated in the program Help facility, using wordlists is a way to “compare the frequencies of cognate words or translation equivalents between different languages” (Scott 2004).

We focused on nouns and adjectives, and the results show that the two most frequent nouns are *Hock* (1230 instances) and *Manyenga* (425 instances), the two opposing characters in the novel, and that the most repeated place name in the novel is *Malabo* (186 instances), where the action of the novel takes place. This wordlist analysis can be used to determine the main topics of the novel: the clash the main character suffers after returning to Africa (represented in his conflicts with Manyenga); the representation of Africa (as we have frequent words such as *Malabo, Sena, Africa, village*); the importance of money (the term *money* appears 176 times); and the opposition between *dark* (61 instances)/*black* (35 instances) and *white* (75 instances). After selecting the words to be analyzed, we made a concordance analysis to see each word in its context (both in the original and in the translation). As Wordsmith Tools does not provide full quotations for each concordance (for example page numbers), we searched manually for each concordance line included as examples in the following sections (four and five) of this article, to be able to provide full quotations.

The Sena language is also important throughout the novel, appearing 75 times. Theroux includes Sena words (marked typographically in italics), a strategy kept by Ezequiel Martínez Llorente, the translator of the novel into Spanish, and examples of these are provided in section five of this article. Sena words were first identified manually in the physical books (as they are marked typographically) and then tracked using Wordsmith Tools, as the software does not include formatting (such as italics).

In addition, Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2002) taxonomy of translation strategies was used when analyzing the discrepancies between Wordsmith Tool's English and Spanish results, as they provide a comprehensive classification of translation techniques that can be applied in literary translation. This taxonomy can help explore the decisions taken by the translator, to help us discover how the singularities of the original text are represented in the translated version.

4. *The Lower River* and *En Lower River*: Textual Analysis

As languages interact, so do cultures, and through these interactions we aim to appreciate whether the portrayal of Africa offered to the reader has any connotations (positive or negative), both in the original text and in the translation into Spanish. As Venuti states, “[r]elations of power and domination have always existed between languages” (1998a: 136), and these complex power relationships existing between languages—deeply rooted in the colonial process—have survived until today.

We aim to discover if the image of Africa constructed by the author reflects any change from the images created during colonization, or if the same stereotypes remain, considering the biased lens of an American author. As Bassnett reminds us:

A writer does not just write in a vacuum: he or she is the product of a particular culture, of a particular moment in time, and the writing reflects such factors such as race, gender, age, class, and birthplace as well as stylistic, idiosyncratic features of the individual. Moreover, the material conditions in which the text is produced, sold, marketed and read also have a crucial role to play. [...] Translation, of course, is a primary method of imposing meaning while concealing the power relations that lie behind the production of that meaning. (1998: 136)

The Lower River follows the main character, Ellis Hock, an American returning to Africa at the age of 62. Hock is following his own dream, the memories he has of Malabo, where he spent four years as a teacher with the Peace Corps and which were “[t]he happiest years of his life” (Theroux 2012: 35). Hock returns to Africa only to find that it has changed so much he no longer recognizes it. After arriving in Malabo, Manyenga, the man who runs the village and its people, keeps him there. Money is all the villagers seem to care for, and Hock feels trapped, trying fruitlessly to escape several times. The story that this novel tells, previously published as a fiction story in *The New Yorker* under the title “The Lower River”, reinforces Theroux's special interest in the themes he develops further in the book.

After analyzing the word list obtained with Wordsmith Tools, we saw that the representation of Africa was one of the main topics, as we have frequent words such as *Malabo*, *Sena*, *Africa*, *village*. The word frequency analysis of the original

text shows that *Africa* appears 47 times (0.04% of the total word count) as opposed to the *United States* (5 times) and *Europe* (4 times). After conducting a concordance search to see the connotations of these words, paying attention to the adjectives surrounding them, the results show that the *United States* appears with no positive or negative connotations, as can be seen in Examples 10-12:

- (1) Nor did the newer stores offer Hock's quality —Scottish tweeds, English shirts, argyle socks, Irish knitwear, Italian leather goods, even Italian fedoras, and shoes from the last great shoemakers in the **United States**. (2012: 9)
- (2) Hock saw an American flag hanging from a steeply angled pole, and a plaque identifying the newish building as the *United States Consulate*. (2012: 44)
- (3) “Great”, he said, and gave him a gold-embossed name card: *Kent Gilroy, Consulate of the United States of America*. (2012: 48)
- (4) The girl leaned closer and shouted into his ear, “What country?” “**United States**”. “Big country”, she said, still shouting. (2012: 51)
- (5) Hock wished that someone he had known back in the **States** —Deena, or Roy— could witness him here, the tableau of his calmly sitting among the elders in the remote village on the Lower River. (2012: 71)

Europe appears with negative connotations (the Agency, a fictional company managing all the international money, is from Europe, and Europe is presented as having *war, machines, materialism, frozen food*): “Maybe outsiders felt that in this green preindustrial continent it might still be possible to avoid the horrors that had come to Europe —war, machines, materialism, frozen food— to develop a happier place” (Theroux 2012: 36).

Africa is used mostly in descriptive sentences idealizing the continent; however, in 4 instances it is described in negative terms, including *hopeless* and *punishing*, as we can see in Examples 6-10 from the novel:

- (6) None of what he saw from the car was lovely: the **Africa** of people, not of animals. And that was its oddity, because it looked chewed, bitten, burned, deforested, and dug up. (2012: 64)
- (7) Only self-interested outsiders trifled with Africa, so **Africa** punished them for it. (2012: 110)
- (8) HE DID NOT want to think that **Africa** was hopeless. (2012: 126)
- (9) Anyway, **Africa** didn't exist except as a metaphor for trouble in the minds of complacent busybodies elsewhere. (2012: 126)

American appears 25 times, used by Theroux as the demonym for citizens of the United States, with no relevant negative or positive connotations, as can be seen in the following concordance lines:

- (10) **Americans** like coming to the bush. (232)
- (11) But surely they would not have ignored such a desperate plea from an **American** citizen. (256)
- (12) Hock whispered, “Did you give my message to the **Americans?**” (259)

Theroux offers two different representations of Africa: the real Africa, which is the changed reality that welcomes the main character when he returns, versus the romantic utopia that the character remembers and seems reluctant to forget. Thus, we see the idealized image of Africa in the form of Hock’s own lost paradise where he spent the best years of his life: “I always tell people, ‘Africa was my Eden’” (Theroux 2012: 41). As such, the main character feels as if his departure from Africa was like losing a bit of himself. The novel represents the displacement of the self that the main character experiences, as “On the Lower River, at Malabo, Hock has been the *mzungu* from America; in the Medford store, he was the man who’d lived in Africa” (Theroux 2012: 19).

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In order to find out if the translation carries the same connotations, we performed a parallel word frequency analysis and concordance searches on the translated text. The results show that *África* appears 45 times (0.04% of the total words), two times fewer than in the original. In both instances, the original read *South Africa*, which was translated as *Sudáfrica*, the Spanish name of this country. *Europa* appears 4 times (as in the original), but the main difference comes when analyzing *los Estados Unidos*. Even though in the original we only find 5 instances of *the United States*, we saw that Theroux used *American* (25 times) as a demonym. In the translation, *los Estados Unidos* appears 9 times, and *estadounidense* and *estadounidenses* appear 23 times. Martínez Llorente chooses to use the demonym *estadounidense* in his translation, as in Spain the denomym *estadounidense* and *norteamericano* are preferred over the general term *americano* to designate citizens from the United States. For example, we find *the American Consul* as *el consulado de los Estados Unidos*, or *I’m an American* as *soy estadounidense*. In this case, as in the original, the results show that the term *United States* appears with no positive or negative connotations (Table 1).

	<i>The Lower River</i> (2012)	<i>En Lower River</i> (2014)
(13)	Nor did the newer stores offer Hock's quality —Scottish tweeds, English shirts, argyle socks, Irish knitwear, Italian leather goods, even Italian fedoras, and shoes from the last great shoemakers in the United States . (9)	Las tiendas nuevas tampoco ofrecían la misma calidad que Hock's: <i>tweeds</i> de Escocia, camisas inglesas, calcetines de rombos, géneros de punto irlandeses, prendas de cuero italianas, fedoras de ese mismo país y zapatos fabricados por los últimos grandes artesanos de Estados Unidos . (17-18)
(14)	Hock saw an American flag hanging from a steeply angled pole, and a plaque identifying the newish building as the United States Consulate . (44)	Hock advirtió una bandera estadounidense que colgaba de un mástil muy torcido; una placa identificaba ese edificio, bastante nuevo, como el consulado de los Estados Unidos . (58)
(15)	"Great," he said, and gave him a gold-embossed name card: <i>Kent Gilroy, Consulate of the United States of America</i> . (48)	—Muy bien— dijo, y le entregó una tarjeta con su nombre escrito en relieve de oro: Kent Gilroy, Consulado de los Estados Unidos de América. (62)
(16)	The girl leaned closer and shouted into his ear, "What country?" " United States ." "Big country," she said, still shouting. (51)	La chica se inclinó buscando más cercanía. —¿País? —le gritó al oído. — Estados Unidos . —Gran país —dijo, todavía a voces. (65)
(17)	Hock wished that someone he had known back in the States —Deena, or Roy— could witness him here, the tableau of his calmly sitting among the elders in the remote village on the Lower River. (71)	Hock deseó que alguno de sus conocidos en Estados Unidos —Deena o Roy— pudiera contemplarlo allí: esa estampa con él sentado calmadamente entre los ancianos de una aldea remota en Lower River. (86)

Table 1. Examples of the concordance lines of *United States* and *Estados Unidos*

Europa also appears with the same negative connotations in the translation: "Tal vez los forasteros creían que en ese continente verde y preindustrial podrían evitarse los horrores que habían azotado Europa —guerra, máquinas, materialismo, comida congelada— para construir una sociedad más feliz" (Theroux 2014: 49).

África appears mostly in descriptive sentences idealizing the continent. However, in 4 instances it is described in negative terms, including *castigaba* and *caso perdido*, the same ones as in the original:

- (18) Los paisajes contemplados desde el coche no eran lo que se dice de postal: se trataba del **África** de las personas, no de los animales. Y, paradójicamente, parecía mordisqueada, masticada, quemada, deforestada y removida. (78)
- (19) Sólo los foráneos con intereses particulares perdían el tiempo en **África**, y **África** los castigaba por ello. (131)

- (20) Hock se resistía a considerar **África** como un caso perdido. (149)
- (21) En general, en las mentes de los benévolos entrometidos en el extranjero **ese continente** sólo existía como una metáfora de la adversidad. (149)

Continuing with our analysis of the representation of Africa as a theme, based on the word frequency results from Wordsmith Tools, the novel includes specific locations in the continent, including *Malabo* (it appears 186 times, 0.17%), *Mozambique* (23 times, 0.02%) and *Malawi* (22 times, 0.02%). Malabo becomes the center of the narration, the focus of Theroux’s description. He places his main character in Malabo during two very different moments in history. The moment of independence, during his visit in those first years of happiness, and after 40 years when he comes back. Theroux shows that independence did not only not solve people’s problems, as the problems created by colonization were too deeply rooted to be overcome, but created new ones. The preconceived ideas that Hock has of Malabo are reminiscent of the colonial discourse and the passing of time has exposed its consequences, as Theroux states: “He saw the foolishness of his decision. He had come expecting to be welcomed; he’d wanted to contribute something to the village or the district. But no one was interested” (2012: 141).

A concordance analysis of *Malabo* in the original novel shows that Theroux uses negative terms associated with it. *Malabo* appears surrounded by terms such as *sick, confusion, disorder, prison, robbed, nothing, terrible, distant* or *unknown*, which perpetuates traditional stereotypes of corruption and violence in the place. Examples of these concordances can be seen in Table 2.

In the translation, the word frequency analysis shows that *Malabo* appears 186 times (0.17% of the total word count), three times fewer than in the original. The three cases constitute examples of Molina and Hurtado Albir’s (2002) reductions, a translation strategy that involves suppressing information in the translated text, and that in these cases does not entail any loss of meaning from the original:

	<i>The Lower River</i> (2012)	<i>En Lower River</i> (2014)
(22)	He had not seen them like this since first arriving back in Malabo and being welcomed with apprehension. (276)	Pero no los había visto reunidos así desde su llegada, cuando salieron a recibirlo llenos de aprensión. (318)
(23)	The sacks from Malabo were stamped with the shield logo and the words <i>L’Agence Anonyme</i> . (307)	Los sacos tenían el sello con el escudo y las palabras L’Agence Anonyme. (354)
(24)	He had forgotten again the length of time he’d been in Malabo –three months now? (309)	Había vuelto a perder la noción del paso del tiempo; ¿llevaba allí tres meses? (356)

Table 2. Examples of the concordance lines of reductions of Malabo in the Spanish translation

As can be seen in Table 3, in the rest of the instances, *Malabo* carries the same negative connotations as in the original.

	<i>The Lower River</i> (2012)	<i>En Lower River</i> (2014)
(25)	Malabo was more distant than Mars. It was perhaps not all that remote in miles, but it was unknown, so it was at the limit of the world. Because of its isolation it was absurd, fantastic, unreal, a place of the naked and the misshapen. (92)	Malabo estaba a una distancia mayor que Marte. Tal vez no tan lejano en kilómetros, pero era desconocido, y por eso se situaba en los confines del mundo. Su aislamiento lo hacía absurdo, fantástico, irreal, un retiro para los desnudos y los disformes. (111)
(26)	He had been happy when he had never suspected anyone in Malabo of having a darker motive. (107)	Había sido feliz mientras no había sospechado que en Malabo alguien pudiera albergar intenciones oscuras. (127)
(27)	I might have died, he thought, and reflected on Malabo as a terrible place to die —alone, in this heat, among strangers. (144)	Podría haber muerto, pensaba, y Malabo era un sitio realmente terrible para morir: solo y bajo el calor, entre extraños. (168)
(28)	And none of the boys had risen, in itself an act of defiance, for on the Lower River, even in the disgrace that was Malabo , the children stood up in the presence of adults. (168)	Ninguno de los chicos se había levantado todavía, lo cual constituía ya de por sí un acto de desafío, puesto que en Lower River, incluso en ese desorden que era Malabo , los niños se ponían de pie en presencia de adultos. (195)
(29)	Malabo was a prison now, and the only strength that Hock had was bluff. (226)	Malabo era una cárcel, y la única fuerza de Hock era un farol. (263)

Table 3. Examples of concordance lines of Malabo with negative connotations

Mozambique appears the same number of times in the translation (23) with the same connotations as in the original, and *Malawi* appears 23 times, one instance more than in the original. Comparing the concordance results we find that in one instance the translator decides to use the same strategy of reduction, as “He would stay there, become a Malawi citizen” (Theroux 2012: 98) is translated for “solicitado la nacionalidad” (Theroux 2014: 117). Even though he omits the origin of the nationality, it is perfectly understandable from the context. In the two remaining instances the translator decides to specify the country for clarification, like “llevaba seis meses en Malawi” (2014: 60) instead of “he had been in the country six months” (2012: 46), and “como hacía otra gente en Malawi” (2014: 121) for “as other Malawians did” (2012: 101). By using the addition technique and making explicit the country, the translator helps the reader to better understand the text.

As seen before, the word frequency analysis of the original text showed that the two characters’ names that appear most frequently are *Hock* and *Manyenga*.

Considering the antagonism between the characters, the word *white* appears 75 times (0.07%) whereas *black* appears 35 times (0.04%). A concordance analysis of these words (*Hock*, *Manyenga*, *white* and *black*) shows that Theroux describes *Hock*, the main character, in such a way as to create sympathy in the reader, while he characterizes *Manyenga* using words such as *anger*, *raged*, *screamed* or *fierce*. Of the 35 times that *black* appears in the novel, only 5 refer to skin color, whereas on 28 occasions *white* refers to skin color (out of 75).

In the translation, we find significant differences in the number of instances of both words: *Hock* and *Manyenga*. *Hock* appears 1,324 times (1.15% of the total words), 124 times more than in the original. The translator decides to specify the main character's name substituting *he* with *Hock*, a strategy that fits with Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2002) particularization translation technique, where a more precise term is used. This strategy explains this difference in word frequency and helps the reader focus on the main character. However, *Manyenga* appears 407 times (0.35% of the total words), 18 fewer than in the original. Martínez Llorente uses different strategies in this case. On the one hand, following Molina and Albir's taxonomy (2002), he uses reductions, as in Spanish the subject of a sentence can be elided, such as in "tuvo a todo el auditorio en un puño" (2014: 367) ("assured Manyenga of their close attention" (Theroux 2012: 317)). On other occasions, the translator opts for the description strategy, changing Manyenga's name for a noun that describes his status, for example, "la consternación *del jefe*" (Theroux 2014: 369, emphasis added) ("Manyenga's consternation", (Theroux 2012: 319) back translated as "the chief's consternation"). As in the original, *Hock* is portrayed to develop sympathy in the reader, being described as *struggling*, *condemned man*, *full of fear* and *exhausted*, while *Manyenga* is characterized using negative words such as *ira*, *enrabietado*, *gritando* or *fiera*.

In the case of the translation of the adjectives *black* and *white*, the Spanish language reflects adjective agreement, meaning that the adjective has to agree with the noun it defines in gender and in number. After analyzing the word frequency of the adjectives, we found that *blanca* appeared 26 times, *blancas* 6 times, *blanco* 37 times and *blancos* 6 times, adding up to a total of 75 instances, the same number as in the original. However, while *black* appeared 35 times in the original, adding up *negra* (16 times), *negras* (5 times), *negro* (9 times) and *negros* (10 times) gives a total of 40 instances of this adjective in the translation. After comparing the concordance results, this difference in the total frequency can be explained by the translator's decision to translate the English adjective *dark* as *negro* in the following four examples: *víboras negras* (*dark vipers*), *traje negro* (*dark dress suit*), *medallón negro* (*dark medallion*), *largo blusón negro* (*dark smock-like dress*). In the last case, *los huecos negros en su dentadura* (*his teeth missing*), the translator uses translation

by converse or semantic adjacency of a causal kind, which following Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2002) taxonomy can be considered an example of a modulation translation strategy, in this case a really effective strategy to keep the naturalness of the translation.

As in the original, out of the 35 times that the words *negra/negro/negras/negros* appear in the novel, only 5 refer to skin color, whereas on 28 occasions the translation of *white* refers to skin color (out of 75). A concordance analysis shows that in many cases there is a direct association between *Hock/white people and money*, as can be seen in the clusters result from Wordsmith Tools, which shows that *money, Hock and said* form a cluster (pattern of repeated phraseology in the text).

The term *money* appears 176 times in the original text, 0.16% of the total words, which makes it another main theme of the novel, according to the wordlist results from Wordsmith Tools. A concordance search shows that the term *money* is always connected with Hock, for example, "Hock gave them money, each man a thickness of kwacha notes" (Theroux 2012: 68) or "Hock called for his duffel bag. He took it aside and unzipped it so that no one could see what it contained —the fat envelopes of money" (72).

Theroux turns around colonialism in the sense that the white man is the one "squeezed" until there is no more money to be got from him. Theroux reflects this in Hock naively believing that "When he had nothing left, he'd go" (2012: 108). After Hock's failed attempt to escape by helicopter and after being attacked by a group of children, he is "rescued" by Manyenga (ironically, the man Hock feels is holding him prisoner for his money) and brought back to Malabo. In a sense, Manyenga mirrors colonial ideas of slavery, as he is keeping Hock in Malabo and tells him "You belong to us" (309). He clearly states all he wants is his money: "What is the price of one human life?" Manyenga asked" (221). After Hock is left with no money, there is still something they can get from him: Manyenga sells Hock for food.

In the translated version, *dinero* appears 177 times, one more than in the original. This extra instance of the term appears in "Manyenga siempre alargaba la palabra 'dinero' con una especie de gañido" ("Manyenga, as always, whined the word, making it *maahhnee*"). While in the original Theroux decides to imitate how Manyenga pronounces the English word, in Spanish the translator has decided to include the word *dinero* and explain the manner in which it was pronounced, an example of Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2002) amplification translation strategy, which involves using extra information or explanations through paraphrasing, as we will see in the next part of the article.

Linked to the corruptive nature of money that runs through the novel is the emergence of Theroux's belief that giving money to Africa is not a solution, but part of the problem (Theroux 2005), as money seems to be the driver of all interactions with the locals. Money appears as an illness rooted in society, one that seems to move people's interests and to have changed traditional cultural values. This is reflected in the text by a mysterious company, L'Agence Anonyme or The Agency. The word *Agency* appears 47 times in the original text (0.04%) (the same number of times as *Agencia* in the translated text). This company manages all the money received from international aid and the visits from rock stars to Malawi. Theroux criticizes how The Agency manages the money: "'The money is rubbish,' Manyenga said. 'They don't give it the right way. They were cheating me'" (Theroux 2012: 95).

Both the original and the translation reflect Theroux's opinions about the current situation of Africa regarding international aid, amongst other political and economic reflections on Africa's reality. In his contribution to *The New York Times*, "The Rock Star's Burden" (2005), we can identify all the aspects mentioned above that appear in *The Lower River*, including "the impression that Africa is fatally troubled and can be saved only by outside help —not to mention celebrities and charity concerts—is a destructive and misleading conceit" (Theroux 2005).

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5. *The Lower River* and *En Lower River*: The Use of Different Languages

As previously stated, *The Lower River* is a book written in English by an American author trying to convey the African reality in Malabo. The textual analysis has shown how Theroux's selection of words reflects his idea of Africa. Another way Theroux uses to convey a sense of "Africanism" through language is by appropriating traditional strategies used by postcolonial authors to subvert the canons and applying them to try to represent the complexity of the linguistic variations of African English in order to create a more realistic image.

Ashcroft et al. state the importance of the English language during colonization as "[o]ne of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language" (1989: 7). The imperial education system marginalized variants. In order to fight this language hegemony, some strategies appear in the writings of post-colonial authors, such as the inclusion of dialects, the use of vernacular expressions and the refusal to translate key words in an attempt to undermine colonial control. These strategies are used also by Theroux, for example, "Hock spoke the sentence he had rehearsed: '*Ndi kupita ku Nsanje*'" (2012: 44).

Theroux uses these strategies but he turns them into a way of offering a “real” representation of Africa that favors the exotic in the novel. Theroux includes Sena words (marked typographically in italics), a strategy kept by Ezequiel Martínez Llorente in the translation. From the beginning, when Hock is in America, he uses words in Sena, for example: “[...] of the sort of *mganga* he had known long ago in Africa” (Theroux 2012: 3), referring to black magic. The subversive postcolonial intention of making the reader feel excluded by, for example, not offering a translation of the term, is not present here. Every term in Sena has its explanation in *The Lower River* (and in the translation) so that the reader understands them, as in Example 30a and its translation (Example 30b):

- (30) a. One of the derivations of *mzungu* was “spirit”, but the word meant “white man”. (Theroux 2012: 20)
- b. Una de las derivaciones de *mzungu* era «espíritu», aunque la palabra significaba «hombre blanco». (Theroux 2014: 31)

Theroux does not even try to explain the complexities of the Sena language to the reader. The Sena language is a cross-border language with two different language profiles: from Malawi and Mozambique. As Funnell states:

The Sena people on the Malawi side of the border are living in an Anglophone country and are influenced by English and the very dominant Chichewa language, while the Senas on the Mozambique side are in Lusophone territory and are influenced by Portuguese. As a result of this situation two separate standardised varieties of the Sena language have developed. (2004: 1-2)

Theroux only refers in his novel to the Sena language in general, without making any distinction between both varieties and without mentioning the characteristics of the Sena languages in Malawi and Mozambique. As Funnell (2004) explains, Sena is one of the fifteen Bantu languages spoken in Malawi and one of the thirty-nine living languages spoken in Mozambique. There are some differences between the two varieties of Sena (Funnell 2004), such as the *m* versus *n* spelling variations between the Malawi and Mozambique varieties. This difference in orthography enables us to identify Theroux’s use of the Malawi variety of Sena in the novel, as he writes *mzungu* instead of *nzundu* (the Mozambique variety), even though both written words are pronounced the same. Another clue to the use of the Malawi variety of Sena in the text is the mark —*ku*— signaling the present continuous tense, as we can find in the following example: “*Ndikufuna thandiza*. We need help” (Theroux 2012: 67), which literally translated would be [We are needing help].

When Hock returns to Africa the second time, he still remembers the Sena language, even rehearsing the sentences he has to say in order to fit in: “The

immigration officer asked him his reason for being in the country. Hock spoke the sentence he had rehearsed: ‘*Ndi kupita ku Nsanje*’ (Theroux 2012: 44). What he finds is that people answer him back in English, and some people in the city do not even understand the Sena language. The city officers use English, which reinforces wa Thiong’o’s idea that: “The second mode of captivation was that of elevating the language of the conqueror. It became the language of the elect. [...] Thus equipped with the linguistic means of escape from the dark Tower of Babel” (1993: 32). However, in this novel, no escape has occurred and the subject of the imposition of English language seems unimportant in Malabo.

Theroux also applies the strategy of altering the standard use of English and transforms it into a mere representation of the inability of locals to speak English “properly”. As we have seen, the representation of Sena words in the Spanish translation follows the same strategy as in the original (marking the words in italics), but the representation of English phonetics is more difficult to transfer into the Spanish language, as the readers in Spain are reading a translation and are not expected to know English.

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For example, from Theroux’s descriptions of how natives speak the English language, the reader can deduce that, as a general rule, the locals extend the pronunciation of the vowel *e* with an /i:/-like sound, and that they also introduce this as an extra vowel between syllables or to substitute vowel combinations they cannot pronounce. We can find in Table 4 the following representative examples both in the original and in the translation.

	<i>The Lower River</i> (2012)	<i>En Lower River</i> (2014)
(31)	At last he said, ‘Six,’ in the local way, <i>sick-ees</i> . (83)	—Seisdijo— por fin, al modo local, que partía el six inglés en «sik-iis». (101)
(32)	‘Beatriss,’ Gala said. The word was unpronounceable on the Lower River. The Beatles had just reached southern Africa. (99)	—Bitriss— dijo Gala. La palabra resultaba impronunciable en Lower River. Los Beatles acababan de llegar al sur de África. (118)
(33)	In the darkness she was not the bright schoolteacher [...] but an African of wondering bluntness: ‘ <i>What ees eet? And Ees wait and I hev nayvah.</i> ’ (102)	En la oscuridad había dejado de ser la brillante profesora [...] y ahora se parecía a cualquier mujer africana que preguntaba toscamente: ¿qué es? Es blanco. ¡Yo nunca! (121-122)
(34)	[S]poke his one English word –‘fee-dee-dom.’ (109)	[U]tilizó la única palabra inglesa de su vocabulario: – Fi-di-dom –«libertad». (130)
(35)	[A]nd, correcting further, attempted ‘Meeneestah.’ (151)	[Y] llevando al extremo la corrección, aventuró en su precario inglés: – Ministah. (176)

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(36) The boy said in English to Hock, 'Reevah.' (156)	El chico le dijo a Hock en un inglés vacilante: —Río. (181)
(37) 'Jinny,' she said, with effort, her tongue against her teeth. Hock shook his head, squinting at the word. 'Ulendo.' 'Yes, journey,' he said. 'Big journey.' (216)	—Jinny— dijo ella con esfuerzo, chocando la lengua contra los dientes. Hock sacudió la cabeza, intentando descifrar el sentido de la palabra. — <i>Ulendo</i> . — Sí, una travesía— dijo él identificando el « <i>journey</i> » inglés—. Una larga travesía. (250)
(38) 'Give money,' Mantenga said, licking his lips – <i>geev mahnie</i> . The crude demand made all of Manyenga's replies like the grunts of a brute. 'Who am I?' 'Chiff.' 'What do you say to the chief?' 'Puddon?' Hock repeated his question. 'Pliss.' 'I'll give it to you later, when you have food for me.' (218)	—Dinero— dijo Manyenga pasándose la lengua por los labios. La demanda sin ambages de Manyenga transformó todo el resto de sus réplicas en los gruñidos de un bruto. — ¿Quién soy yo? — Jefe. — ¿Qué se dice al jefe? — ¿Perdón? Hock repitió la pregunta. — ¿Por favor? — Te daré lo tuyo después, cuando tú me hayas dado comida. (252-253)

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Table 4. Examples of representations of oral characteristics of the English language spoken in Africa in *The Lower River* and *En Lower River*

Theroux uses eye-dialect (Walpole 1974), alternating nonstandard typographic representations in order to convey the phonetic characteristics of these words and the differences in pronunciation from the standard. For example, these representations include using italics (like *ees eet* from Example 33, or *Sick-iis* in Example 31) and the doubling of the consonant to indicate a long sound like /i:/ (like in Examples 35 *Meeneestah*, or in 31, 33, 34 and 38). Theroux also modifies words, for example by including an extra vowel *i*, as in Example 38: *Chiff*, *Pliss*. These simple changes in spelling are enough to give the reader the impression of a different accent, an “exotic” one.

The readers of the Spanish translation cannot grasp these “translations” of the spoken English language. In almost all cases, the translator decides to leave the word in English and typographically indicate it in the text, then state that the word was said in English before offering a translation into Spanish, using the amplification translation strategy included in Molina and Hurtado Albir’s (2002) taxonomy of translation techniques. The exceptions are in Examples 35 and 36, where no translation is provided and the reduction translation technique is used. In Example 35, “Ministah”, the translator uses the borrowing technique, taking a word directly from another language. By using these translation techniques, the reader still gets

the idea of exoticism transmitted in the original. In Example 36 there is no adaptation or explanation of the word *river*, but an explanation that this word is pronounced in an “unsteady English” (another example of amplification). However, there are certain instances when the translator decides to use the strategy of reduction, as in Example 33, where all the spelling markings of the difference in pronunciation disappear and the words are translated into standard Spanish. This strategy is very effective, as it facilitates the Spanish reader’s understanding of the conversation by avoiding all references to the English language, which the Spanish reader is not expected to know. Thus, the translation is more direct, so the reader can concentrate on the meaning and not get lost trying to infer what the conversation is about.

6. Conclusion

This paper uses a holistic approach to ascertain whether readers of the *The Lower River* (2012) and its translation into Spanish perceive a specific representation of Malabo and Malawi in this novel. Images are created for the reader representing the personal opinions of the author on the main topics (such as politics and international aid), thus offering a biased point of view.

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The questions that this literary piece of fiction raises are many and profound, and we can only wonder why this fabricated representation of Malabo and Malawi written by an American author has been so quickly translated in Spain while many African authors offering a different point of view remain untranslated and unknown to the Spanish readers. Venuti states that the “hegemony of English in the current global economy has brought new concerns” (1998b: 140), concerns that over 15 years after this affirmation seem to be more relevant than ever. We agree with wa Thiong’o when he states, reflecting on the importance of languages: “If the globe is seen as a circle, then languages should be seen as occupying their place in the ring, and all contributing to the human centre” (2012: 122). As we have seen, Theroux’s novel has characteristics that make it fit for global distribution by publishing houses, including the fact that the publishing house in Spain (Alfaguara) belongs to the publishing house of the original text (Penguin House) and, as stated in the introduction, that the author was already well known in the international market mostly due to his novel *The Mosquito Coast*.

Publishing market statistics have shown that the market in Spain publishes mostly English translated works, accounting for almost 50% of the total of translated books, which leaves many other languages and literatures largely ignored. We have seen that it seems to be fundamental that books come directly from an Anglo-Saxon publishing market or that the books have been previously translated into

English and received international “recognition”. This gives English a language hegemony that exemplifies wa Thiong’o’s idea that “[i]n more ways than one, the global world is an inheritor of global colonialism. A handful of languages literally dominate all the other languages on the globe. [...] The world of languages and cultures has thus become divided into a dominant few and a marginalised many” (2012: 121).

En Lower River was published in 2014 and more current publications in Spain seem to be driving the Spanish literary market into a more open field, where other depictions of Africa originally published in other languages besides English are now being published by small, independent publishing houses (for example, Lilia Momplé’s *Neighbours*, translated by Alejandro de los Santos and published by Libros de las Malas Compañías). Finally, the main problem in Spain is also that “African writers in Spanish are usually published by small local publishers with a very limited distribution” (Brancato 2009: 5-6). Understanding the singularities of both publishing markets, then, provides us with a first approach to the novel and its translation, one that helps us better understand the context in which *The Lower River* was produced.

By including both a textual analysis and a study of how different languages are used in *The Lower River*, using the software Wordsmith Tools version 4.0, we can approach the novel from a more qualitative perspective, looking for the main themes of the book based on the most frequent words, making concordances to see their collocations (thus better understanding the topics) and analyzing the translation strategies followed by Martínez Llorente when word frequency discrepancies were found in the results.

Thus, thanks to the wordlist option in Wordsmith Tools we were able to provide a list of topics in the novel based on the most frequent words in the text: the clash the main character suffers after returning to Africa (as *Hock* and *Manyenga* are the two most frequent nouns); the representation of Africa (as frequent words include *Malabo*, *Africa*,); the importance of *money* (the term *money* appears 176 times); the opposition between *dark/black* and *white*, and the importance of the Sena language. Following the textual analysis to see if the main words from the wordlist results had positive or negative connotations, we saw that Theroux uses mostly negative terms to refer to Malabo and Manyenga (such as *sick*, *confusion* or *terrible*), as the character represents Malabo’s values, and that the term *money* is the nexus between the different topics present in the text.

The discrepancies in the frequency of certain words found by Wordsmith Tools in the English novel and its translation into Spanish were the result of the translation strategies used by Martínez Llorente. Analyzing these has helped us understand how the Spanish reader is presented with the singularities of the original, such as

Theroux's use of eye-dialect in the original and how this is represented in the translation. Following Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2002) classification of translation techniques, the most frequently used strategies by the translator in the examples analyzed in this article are: reduction (as in the case of *Malabo, Malawi, Manyenga*), amplification (as in the example of *dinero*), particularization (by including the main character's name, *Hock*), description (as in the *Manyenga* example), modulation (as in the translation of *dark*) and borrowing (as in the example of *Ministab*). These strategies help the reader understand the complexities of the novel, and they solve linguistic problems that otherwise would make elements of the text incomprehensible to the reader (such as the representation of English phonetics).

This study has limitations, mostly due to the holistic approach that does not allow us to provide a deeper analysis of each aspect analyzed. For example, a more comprehensive linguistic approach could be pursued to focus predominantly on the translation strategies used by the translator and consequently examine if and how literary translation influences readers' reception of the novel. Also, focusing only on the results provided by the software Wordsmith Tools is a further limitation. Including other software tools to identify keywords or clusters could help us deepen our understanding of the characteristics of this novel.

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Notes

1. This analysis summarizes the results from the research undergone in the Spanish National Library database, searching for translated versions published until the year 2014. For more information on the results, see Cadera and Martín Matas (2017).

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