Cultural and Linguistic Liminality:
Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* as (Self-)Translation

Ana Victoria Mazza
University of Glasgow, UNITED KINGDOM
a.mazza.1@research.gla.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Since the end of the 20th century, some postcolonial literatures written in European languages are recognized as a form of (self-)translation, whose contestatory nature lies not only in its content, but also in its re-appropriation of the former colonial language. Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006), a novel with a strong anticolonial standpoint, offers a rich example of this kind of process. However, there seems to be an inconsistency between the text's psychological and sociopolitical message and its formal and linguistic characteristics. This article analyses the Anglophone novel's normalizing and foreignizing strategies (Klinger 2018) through the methodological approach of Descriptive Translation Studies, in order to explore this inconsistency via the identification of Dangarembga's *initial norm* (Toury 1978). It argues that the author resorts to a problematized *adequacy* of her text to more effectively convey her main character's lack of perspective as a native student in the colonial education system.

KEYWORDS: Descriptive Translation Studies; liminality; postcolonial (self-)translation; Tsitsi Dangarembga

RESUMEN

Desde finales del siglo XX, algunas literaturas poscoloniales escritas en lenguas europeas se consideran como una forma de (auto-)traducción, cuya naturaleza contestataria radica no solo en su contenido, sino también en la reapropiación de la antigua lengua colonial. *The Book of Not* (2006), de Tsitsi Dangarembga, una novela con una clara postura anticolonial, ofrece un muy buen ejemplo de este tipo de proceso. Sin embargo, parece haber una inconsistencia entre el mensaje anticolonial del texto y sus características formales y lingüísticas. Mediante el enfoque metodológico de los Estudios descriptivos de traducción, el presente artículo analiza las estrategias de extranjerización y normalización (Klinger 2018) de la novela anglófona, con el objetivo de explorar esta inconsistencia a través de la identificación de la *norma inicial* (Toury 1978) de Dangarembga. Este artículo argumenta que la autora recurre a una *adecuación* problematizada de su texto para representar con mayor efectividad la falta de perspectiva de su personaje principal como estudiante nativa en el sistema de educación colonial.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Estudios descriptivos de traducción; liminalidad; (auto-)traducción poscolonial; Tsitsi Dangarembga

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

39

The Book of Not and Postcolonial Translation Studies

As one of the consequences of the Cultural Turn that took place in the Arts and Humanities during the second half of the 20th century, postcolonial literatures in general and African literatures in particular have broadened the scope of traditional canons and become objects of study in mainstream academia. During the last twenty years, and as a sort of ripple effect of the previously mentioned Cultural Turn, translation studies has fruitfully combined with postcolonial studies, thus giving place in turn to an even greater number of new theoretical and methodological approaches. Research carried out within the area of translation and postcolonialism, or postcolonial translation, offers a refreshing and interdisciplinary approach to both subjects.

Within the field of postcolonial translation studies, numerous critics since the end of the 20th century have understood some literary works from former colonial nations written in European languages as a form of cultural-linguistic (self-)translation. Moradewun Adejunmobi, for example, calls these texts "compositional translations", and defines them as "texts … which are published in European languages and which contain occasional or sustained modification of the conventions of the European language in use, where 'versions' or 'originals' in indigenous African languages are non-existent" (1998:165). The (post)colonial subject is immersed in a constant translation and cultural resignification process between the native and the colonial. Through their work, postcolonial writers transpose their experiences from one space to the other, transcending linguistic, political and ideological frontiers (Tymoczko 1999:19-20).

This type of text usually carries a strong anticolonial political message, conveyed not only through its content and choice of the medium of communication, but also in the concrete and individual moulding of this medium through (self-)translation. According to Maria Tymoczko, the appropriation of the colonizing language and the transposition of a dominant poetics to postcolonial conventions "are potent means of realigning power structures in a shared cultural field and of asserting an independent world-view" (1999:34). Kanavillil Rajagopalan claims that these postcolonial writers "are thus relishing the sweet irony of writing back in a language now fully appropriated and reclaimed to serve their own interests" (2007:175). Denouncing imperial violence in the language of empire makes it their own; it means owning the language of oppression in order to "free the African text from its foreign domination" and give

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

40

"prominence to the African word" (Gyasi 1999:79) while operating within that foreign language.

In Paul Bandia's words, when transposing "African thought into European languages", these writers "have a clear preference for *semantic*, *overt* or *literal* translation" (1993:74), an approach that foregrounds the Other in the European-language text. For most critics, then, in the rendering of these "Africanized varieties" (Bandia 1993:55), those strategies considered to be more linguistically disrupting for the European-language reader are generally understood as contributing to the transmission of the text's challenging nature, while those more accommodating of a non-native reader are considered to be in line with a reinforcement of (neo)colonial frameworks. What happens, then, when a work with a clear anticolonial viewpoint does not seem to follow this norm? In other words, can there be a divergence between the text's alleged contestatory nature and the mechanisms chosen by the author to convey it in a European language, that is, a disparity between content and linguistic characteristics? If this is so, what does this divergence mean?

Tsitsi Dangarembga's trilogy, consisting of *Nervous Conditions* (1988), *The Book of Not* (2006) and *This Mournable Body* (2018), was originally written in English and offers a very rich example of the kind of (self-)translation process that can take place in Anglophone postcolonial fiction. The complete story develops in former Rhodesia and the new Zimbabwe, between the mid-1960s and the beginning of the new millennium, including the liberation struggle from British colonial rule. It tells the story of Tambudzai Sigauke from childhood to adulthood; the story of a woman that at the age of twelve, and after her brother's sudden death, is given the possibility of receiving a colonial education at her uncle's missionary school, and later given a scholarship to attend an elite secondary school. Narratives of colonial education and personal growth almost invariably raise issues related to the power of knowledge and language. In Dangarembga's trilogy, these are complicated by the multiplicity of narrational perspectives and an ever-present attention to the geospatial dimension.

This article focuses on *The Book of Not* (hereafter referred to as *TBN*), the second book of the trilogy, which has been relatively ignored by both literary and translation critics compared to its prequel, and explores how Dangarembga, through her main character, (self-)translates her culture and the story she wants to tell. This second novel is narrated by Tambu in the first person. It describes her years of secondary education at the Young Ladies' College of the

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

41

Sacred Heart, during the bloodiest period of the liberation struggle, and Tambu's unsuccessful attempts to become a member of the new Zimbabwe after finishing secondary school. There is thus a confluence of the main character's most formative years with the new nation's birth.

TBN shares with the other two books in the trilogy an evident preoccupation with physical space and landscape, which becomes a key element in the narrative. Dangarembga weaves into her story multiple allusions, not only to colonial land appropriation but also to how the natural environment has been destroyed as a consequence of the liberation struggle. Moreover, due to the main character and internal focalizer's condition as a black student of Sacred Heart, it is also possible to find in *TBN* a number of references to another kind of space, one that is metaphorical, conceptual, namely, the space that is by necessity occupied by the (post)colonial subject and in which Tambu is trapped to the point of total subjective annulment. This clear denunciation of the damage caused by colonization and its education system, however, does not seem to be fully accompanied by the novel's formal and linguistic features: at first glance, the text does not pose major disruptions for a non-Zimbabwean readership, whether through structural or morpho-syntactical elements. In sum, there seems to be an inconsistency between the text's psychological and sociopolitical message and the author's chosen strategies for rendering her Zimbabwean story in English.

Building on a spatial literary interpretation of the text, the main aim of this paper is to analyse the Anglophone novel as (self-)translation within the methodological framework of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) and the concrete application of a combination of Gideon Toury's ([1978] 2000) and José Lambert and Hendrik van Gorp's ([1985] 2014) analytical models. It carries out a descriptive study of *TBN* as *compositional translation*, in order to determine, following Susanne Klinger (2018), the effect of the normalizing and foreignizing elements on the rendering of the Anglophone text in terms of *alienation* or *exoticization*. It thus examines the relationship that exists between the novel's content and the author's self-translation strategies via the ultimate identification of Dangarembga's *initial norm* (Toury 2000). The article's objective is to verify the contention that Dangarembga resorts to an overall problematized *adequacy* (Toury 2000) of her (self-)translation, whose function is to faithfully represent colonial Rhodesia's sociocultural landscape and the fruitless liminality in which Tambu seems inescapably trapped.

TBN and Tambu's Liminal Position

This research is built on a series of previous studies of *Nervous Conditions*, which analyse Tambu's position as colonial subject and the linguistic and cultural predicaments that surround her. Biman Basu characterizes Tambu as an "allegor[y] of the transnational intellectual" (1997:7), a recurrent figure among narrators and main characters of postcolonial works. These characters "inhabit a Western intellectual structure, all the while questioning and rejecting the very structure they inhabit" (Ibid.). Although Tambu is conscious of the materiality of colonial power, and of the capacity of this materiality of producing colonial subjects, this consciousness "is not effective as a means of resistance" (1997:10). This is one of Tambu's main problems in *TBN*: being conscious of and rejecting the structural colonial violence of Sacred Heart while at the same time being unable to offer any resistance.

Gilian Gorle, on her part, recurs to Meenakshi Mukherjee's "exile of the mind" (quoted in Gorle 1997:180) to describe the linguistic and cultural situation in the first book, a form of exile suffered by those, both writers and fictional characters, that, even within their own communities, remain alien to them due to specific circumstances in their personal history or education (Ibid.). In *TBN*, the teenage Tambu becomes a stranger in her own land, both to her family and classmates. This is precisely why this second novel exhibits even greater attention to the linguistic sphere than the first book, because now it is Tambu who inhabits a liminality whose potential she still has to discover.

In his discussion of "writer-activists", Rob Nixon presents Tambu as a fictional example of a "highly-motivated translator" ([2011] 2013:27), since she has the power of representation and denounces the injustices of which her family and her people are victim. In a similar vein, Dora Sales Salvador describes "transcultural writers", such as Dangarembga, as "intercultural mediators" (2003:54-5), a label that can also be extended to Tambu at the fictional level.[1] The four authors explore the bilingualism and intermediate positions of these characters inserted in the colonial education system, a position whose relative advantageousness is greatly determined by the (self-)translation strategies activated by the (post)colonial subject, both literally and metaphorically.

---

[1] "escritores transculturales"; "mediadores interculturales". Hereafter, quotes originally in Spanish appear translated in the body of the text, with the original quote reproduced in footnotes. All translations are mine.

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

43

Tambu occupies Homi Bhabha's "third space" ([1994] 2004), an intermediate space that is created in the liminality of empire, born out of those processes entailed in the articulation of cultural differences (Ibid.). The result of these contacts and renegotiations is a cultural hybridity that is inherently transnational and "translational" (2004:7), and which by necessity involves a (self-)translating activity that enables its development. This claim partly resonates with another of Bhabha's concepts, that of "cultural translation" (2004). Harish Trivedi defines Bhabha's *cultural translation* as "the process and condition of human migrancy" (2007:283). This process, which does not involve "two texts from two different languages and cultures" (Ibid.), has been subsequently adopted to denote both "the need of the migrant" to successfully function in the new society and "a requirement of the society and culture to which the migrant has travelled" (2007:284).

Thus defined, the concept of *cultural translation* is not applicable to Tambu, first and foremost, because she is not a migrant. Although it could be said that as a student at Sacred Heart she sometimes is in a similar position to that of the migrant, completely submerged in a foreign cultural system, Tambu stands on "such bilingual bicultural ground" as is mourned by Trivedi were we to give free reign to *cultural translation* (2007:286). Tambu's world is made up of both the Shona and the English cultural and linguistic systems, which is what in fact prompts her to refer to herself and her uncle's family as "the intermediates" (Dangarembga 2006:24), those native inhabitants of Rhodesia that enjoy certain privileges or occupy a special position within the colonial system. In such an intermediate position and in order to narrate her story, Tambu must resort to intercultural and interlinguistic translation. Ultimately, of course, it is the author that, through her narrator, carries out the kind of literary (self-)translation analysed here.

Connected to Tambu's intermediate position, Fetson Kalua elaborates on a definition of *liminality* that is key to this paper's reading of Tambu's character: "a phase in the life of a subject – an individual, a community, or a nation – which belies any attempts at settled assumptions about its identity because of inherent contradictions and instabilities that often come to haunt the subject" (2009:24). Such a phase is the one Tambu traverses in *TBN*. However, even though Kalua identifies this *liminality* as a positive intermediate space that is "the pivot of action" (Ibid.), this paper is based on the idea that the *liminality* Tambu inhabits is negative and fruitless, because the teenager not only does not recognize it, but also attempts to construct her identity guided by the worldview and values of the colonial education system.

The analysis that follows is thus based on a literary reading of *TBN*, which cannot be developed here due to space constraints. Building on previous studies of the novel (Kennedy 2008; Hlongwane 2009; Mustafa 2009; Mabura 2010; Pasi 2016, 2017), this reading understands Tambu's *liminality* as neither positive nor productive, but, on the contrary, suffocating and destructive. This is so because the teenager, victim of a dual discrimination on account of her being both black and female, loses her centre, and is unable to articulate her thoughts and her feelings: to "succeed in hybridising" in order to "make sense out of the situation [she finds herself] in" (Rooney 2007:62). Tambu does not know how to cope with the multiple personal, family and social pressures that cripple her during her secondary school years. After her last failure, the A Level results, she moves to Harare to live an empty life of unspoken words and unfulfilled dreams. Both in colonial Rhodesia and in the new Zimbabwe, Tambu seems unable to find her voice and her place. This isolation and lack of communication go hand in hand with the lack of space, conceptual as well as material, that the narrator experiences since her years at Sacred Heart; and, as longs as she remains "at the margins …, at the centre of exclusion" (Dangarembga 2006:209), nothing will change.

Postcolonial Literatures, (Self-)Translation and Descriptive Translation Studies

While the concept of *cultural translation* could be described, at least for translation critics, as an unintended and unhappy consequence of the confluence of translation and cultural/postcolonial studies, the cultural turn in Translation Studies "served to extend and revitalize the discipline and to liberate it from the relatively mechanical tools of analysis available in Linguistics" (Trivedi 2007:280). Cultural studies in general and postcolonial studies in particular give translation studies "an understanding of the complexities of gender and culture" (Simon 1997:463). Within this conjunction, two main lines of research have evolved in the field of translation studies. In the first place, we can mention the area that deals with translation as a metaphor for the postcolonial condition, "as a tangible representation of a secondary or mediated relationship to reality" (Simon 1997:462), which also emerges as a first approach to the relationship between the two disciplines within the area of translation. The second line of research, and the one that is developed here, focuses on postcolonial literatures specifically written in European languages. For these authors, a kind of "translingual, translocational translation has been the necessary first step to becoming a postcolonial writer"

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

45

(Bassnett and Trivedi 1999:12). Unlike Bhabha's *cultural translation* process, these literary works are the product of translations between languages, histories and cultures.

A considerable number of critics that study this kind of postcolonial literatures written in European languages understand it as a specific form of (self-)translation that does not fully correspond with the characteristics of traditional translation. Nonetheless, this is not a metaphorical use of the word, but one which actually makes a more or less conscious use of concrete translation mechanisms and strategies (Bandia 2003:130). Bandia, for example, claims that "[t]ranslating African creative works is a double 'transposition' process", involving a "*primary level of translation*, i.e. the expression of African thought in a European language by an African writer" and a "*secondary level of translation*, i.e. the 'transfer' of African thought from one European language to another by the translator" (1993:61, emphasis in the original). In a later study (2003), this same author analyses Euro-African discourse through the study of its use of translation mechanisms.

Some critics have characterized and given a specific name to these works, such as Adejunmobi's *compositional translations*. Kwaku Gyasi studies how translation becomes "a critical as well as a creative activity in African literature" (1999:80), and designates the "transposition of African oral and traditional literary techniques of storytelling into the European written genre" a "creative translation" (1999:85). Moreover, like Bandia, Goretti López Heredia analyses what she calls "two translation processes, that respectively involve the postcolonial writer and the translator of postcolonial literature" (2003:161). López Heredia terms the process that involves the postcolonial writer "translation-creation" and defines it as the process by which "certain postcolonial writers mould the colonial languages" (2003:162).[2] Last but not least, Sales Salvador introduces the term "transcultural fiction" (2003:47) to refer to works "by bilingual and bicultural authors [that] fictionalize a communicative predicament which is solved, in some way, through a translation process" (2003:48).[3]

Sales Salvador describes the *transcultural writer* as an "author-translator" (2003:48) and agrees with Adejunmobi (1998:167) and Gyasi (1999:77-8) in that, in these works, the language

---

[2] "dos procesos traductológicos, que conciernen respectivamente al escritor poscolonial y al traductor de literatura poscolonial"; "traducción-creación"; "ciertos escritores poscoloniales moldean las lenguas coloniales".
[3] "ficción transcultural"; "de autores bilingües y biculturales [que] ficcionalizan una problemática comunicativa que queda resuelta, de algún modo, mediante un proceso traductor".

chosen for writing is sometimes not enough to transmit "the linguistic and cultural diversity" that nourishes them (Sales Salvador 2003:49).[4] It is that insufficiency which produces in the texts "the hybridity inherent to postcolonial societies" (López Heredia 2003:162).[5] Putting it in translation terms, Adejunmobi claims that the author of a "compositional translation" attempts to "move the European-language reader towards the African author and his or her mother tongue" (1998:166). As both she (Ibid.) and Bandia (2003:165) point out, this is not only directly opposed to what Lawrence Venuti calls a "domesticating method, an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home" (1995:20), but also adopts what Venuti terms "a foreignizing method, an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad", achieved "by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language" (Ibid.).

Susanne Klinger (2018) provides us with a fresh perspective when she analyses instances of de- and recolonization of a source cultural system in postcolonial texts written in European languages, and their translations. Klinger claims that "postcolonial writing is a form of translation … Hence, as in any translation that signals the foreign, foreignizing strategies [those which foreground the otherness of elements in the translated text] are to be found in postcolonial writing" (2018:148). According to Klinger, recolonization in translation, which she equates with Venuti's *domestication*, may be achieved not only through strategies of "normalization", or erasure, of source cultural differences (Ibid.), but also through those foreignizing strategies that have an *exoticizing* effect (Ibid.), or what López Heredia calls a "gratuitous exoticism" (2003:169).[6] This *exoticization*, which may be conscious or unconscious, can entail an unjustified or cushioned accentuation of difference and/or the (*author-)translator*'s reinforcement of stereotypes the target culture may already have regarding the Other present in the text (Klinger 2018:148).

On the other hand, for Klinger, decolonization in translation can be achieved either through normalization, when this serves the purpose of avoiding *exoticization* (Klinger 2018:152), or through foreignizing strategies that have an "alienating" effect: those that "challenge the domestic canon" and are usually aimed at "subverting the dominant, colonial culture and

---

[4] "autor-traductor"; "la diversidad lingüístico-cultural".
[5] "la hibridación inherente a las sociedades poscoloniales".
[6] "exotismo gratuito".

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

47

simultaneously at asserting the author's own cultural identity" (2018:148). In sum, Klinger complicates the established idea, supported in a way by Adejunmobi (1998) and Bandia (2003), that normalization necessarily leads to recolonization and foreignization to decolonization. Ultimately, what must be examined is the *alienating* or *exoticizing* effect of these strategies, and this can only be done through "[a] careful, contextualized analysis" (Klinger 2018:52) of the *compositional translation* in question.

The present research aligns itself with these critics to understand *TBN*, a postcolonial Zimbabwean novel written in English, as a specific kind of (self-)translation, a *compositional translation* and an example of *transcultural fiction*. The paper goes a step further and frames the above arguments within the methodological approach of DTS, as a tool to determine, following Klinger, the effect of the novel's normalizing and foreignizing elements on the rendering of the English text. The paradigm proposed by DTS, which began to take form in the mid-1970s, is flexible and dynamic (Hermans [1985] 2014). It conceives of translation as a communicative act that constitutes a form of norm-governed social behaviour (Hermans 1996:29-35). Unlike the "conventional approach to literary translation" (Hermans 2014:8), which espouses a "repetitive, predictable and prescriptive" study of translations as "a source-oriented exercise" (2014:9), DTS adopts "an approach to literary translation which is descriptive, target-oriented, functional and systemic; and an interest in the norms and constraints that govern the production and reception of translations" (Hermans 2014:10-1). The focus here is placed not on the quality of the translation as a reproduction of the original, but on describing the norms and constraints that regulate the production and reception of the target text. These norms, moreover, are not pre-established but emerge from the study of the target text.

It is the flexibility and functionality of DTS that allows us to claim that there exists some equivalence relationship between Dangarembga's source Shona culture and language and the Anglophone novel as target text. *Equivalence* here is a "*functional-relational concept*, … that relationship … which, by definition, distinguishes between translation and non-translation in certain specific sociocultural circumstances of the target language" (Toury [1985] 2014:36, emphasis in the original). Consequently, it is no longer a unique, stable and invariable relationship and becomes any relationship that can be observed as having characterized translation in a given circumstance. Moreover, explains Toury, "it is [applied] norms that determine the … equivalence manifested by actual translations" (2000:204). In each concrete

situation, the base of the model has to be interpreted in terms of priorities, or the prevalence of some norms over others, and the central issue then is the *type of equivalence* observed between the two communicational schemes (Lambert and van Gorp 2014:45).

Lambert and van Gorp (2014:45-6) apply the two poles of Toury's "initial norm", a sort of general norm affecting all other decision-making levels (2000:201), to define the two extremes on each side of the *equivalence continuum*: on the one hand, the *adequacy* pole, oriented towards the source culture and text, on the other, the *acceptability* pole, oriented towards the target culture and text. If we combine Toury's and Lambert and van Gorp's models, we can claim that, through the analysis of the "dominant norms" (Lambert and van Gorp 2014:46) that determine the translation strategies applied to the target text in a specific context, it is possible to identify the *equivalence* relationship existing between both texts, as well as the *initial norm* which, reversely and consciously or unconsciously, guided the translator's decisions during the process (Toury 2000:201).

Toury argues that "[t]he apparatus for the description of these [translation] relationships … is one of the tools that DTS should be supplied with by the *theoretical* branch of translation studies" (2014:34). It is the above discussed issues surrounding postcolonial translation which provide, in this case, the theoretical framework within which this descriptive translation study of Dangarembga's novel is carried out. If we return to Adejunmobi's (1998) and Bandia's (2003) claims, it can be said that, for these authors, *compositional translations*, which seek to move the reader towards the author through the text's *foreignization*, will mainly tend towards the *adequacy* pole in terms of Toury's *initial norm*, since, through their text's hybridization, their authors seek adherence to the norms governing their source culture. As Klinger (2018:147-8) points out, this seems to be the dominant view among critics. Our research problem can now be phrased in terms of an inconsistency between *TBN*'s message and its high degree of *acceptability* due to the relatively low level of formal and linguistic disruption encountered by the reader.

Notwithstanding, we must also consider here Kilnger's complication of the dominant view, in which hybridization does not necessarily lead to *adequacy*. Instead, what she identifies as *alienating* strategies would correspond with an *initial norm* that tends towards *adequacy*, since they follow the norms of the source cultural system. On the contrary, *exoticizing* strategies would tend towards *acceptability* because they follow the norms operative in the target cultural

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

49

system. This means that, if we Follow Klinger, what actually indicates whether a translation tends towards *adequacy* or *acceptability* would not be the text's foreignization per se, but the *effect* of the foreignizing and normalizing elements in the text. This is what the following analysis sets out to establish.

A Descriptive Study of *TBN* as (Self-)Translation

1. Preliminary Data (or Toury's Preliminary Norms)

The first level of Lambert and van Gorp's model is *preliminary data*, where they include the title and title page, paratextual elements and the general translation strategy (whether it is a complete or a partial translation) (2014:52). This first level coincides with Toury's *preliminary norms* (2000:202), among which he includes translation policy and directness of translation, whether it is a translation of the original source text or a translation of a previous translation into a "mediating language" (Ibid.).

1.1 Title

Regarding the title of the novel, from the beginning the reader encounters a foreignized element that produces *alienation*, since it is a structure that does not belong to standard English grammar, nor is it familiar to an English-speaking audience. "Not" is an adverb of negation, so it should be accompanied by a verb or adjective, which it modifies. However, in the novel's title, the adverb "not" appears on its own, as if that was enough to understand what is being modified by it. In the light of the novel's anticolonial message and the standard English of its prose, this article argues that this is not merely foregrounding difference, but that "not" actually means a totality of negation; it includes everything that does not grow or progress in Tambu's life. This "not" accounts for an emptiness and a destruction that can only be born out of the experience of colonialism, which standard English grammar cannot totally express. Dangarembga's self-translation makes this inadequacy patent from the start. Instead, the *author-translator* has left the adverb of negation by itself and makes the reader complete the title with their own words, after their own reading experience.

1.2 Metatext

Here we discuss *TBN*'s glossary, divided into words and expressions (Dangarembga 2006:247-50), which may be inferred to have been included by the publishing house on account of it

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

50

being the sequel to an extremely successful novel, since it cannot be found either in *Nervous Conditions* (2004) or *This Mournable Body* (2018).

What is interesting about this glossary, usually an *exoticizing* element because it invalidates foreign words as a source of unfamiliarity and, thus, *alienation* (Klinger 2018:149), is that it sometimes seems to take into account not only an Anglophone, or European, reader but also a Zimbabwean one, who Dangarembga definitely includes in her audience (Dangarembga 2004; Dangarembga and Lee 2006; Rooney 2007). In a list of words and expressions where most of them belong to the *author-translator* and her character's Shona, we can also find a Ndebele word and a handful of terms from other languages without any clarification whatsoever as to their origin, such as: *biltong, kraal, doek, dagga, veld* (Afrikaans); *coup de grâce* (French); *in flagrante* (Latin); *ganja* (Hindi); *munt* (Zulu). Moreover, all non-English words, and not just Shona ones, are typographically marked in the text through the use of italics, which also has an *exoticizing* effect because it foregrounds the otherness of the terms (Klinger 2018:151).

For a Zimbabwean audience, it would not be necessary to include words from other African languages which are clearly part of their every-day exchanges, but it might be necessary to explain the meaning of terms in French and Latin, which most speakers of a European language may be familiar with. What is also worth noting is that only the origin of the Ndebele term has been specified, especially when we take into account Tambu's comment about the "great ignorance of other Zimbabweans' ethnicities" (Dangarembga 2006:197) and the disregard with which Tambu's Shona classmates refer to the Ndebele girls at the university. This resonates with the inter-ethnic violence that exists between the groups that "eventually spilled into the twentieth century" and led to a division of libertarian armed forces during the war of independence (Mabura 2010:89-90). The university episode leads us to think that the inclusion of the explicitly Ndebele term in the glossary may have also had a Shona audience in mind and this further complicates the glossary's *exoticizing* nature. Whose norms are the glossary and typographic foregrounding complying with?

1.3 General Strategy (or Toury's Translation Policy)

Although *general strategy* and *translation policy* do not refer exactly to the same issues, they are here analysed jointly because we can make the same observations about them for *TBN*. To Lambert and van Gorp's (2014:52) question about whether it is a *partial* or a *complete*

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

51

translation (which, in fact, coincides with the first of Toury's *matricial norms* (2000:202)), we have to answer that all *transcultural fiction* is a partial translation, and this is also true of *TBN*. As Tymoczko (1999:21), López Heredia (2003:163) and Sales Salvador (2003:55) explain, the *author-translator* as *intercultural mediator* must necessarily select which cultural elements shall be included in their work, since it is impossible to translate into a text a complete cultural reality and, in any case, this translation is also the result of the *author-translator*'s own experience and interpretation of this reality. Just like the translation of linguistic material, the selection of cultural material and its contextualization will prove more or less disruptive, or *alienating*, for the non-native reader.

Regarding Toury's *translation policy*, if "the choice of means of literary expression is never innocent" (Sales Salvador 2003:49),[7] the same can be said regarding the choice of cultural elements to translate. In Dangarembga's case, throughout the trilogy, she focuses specifically on the situation of women, and she does this through a postcolonial lens with a clear ecological and geospatial awareness. This particular approach responds to the historical disenfranchisement of women in colonial Rhodesia, their traditional connection with land and agriculture and colonial geographical modification (Mabura 2010; Pasi 2016, 2017). These are aspects that the *author-translator* has chosen to make prominent in her work. This can be analysed as an *alienating* foreignizing strategy of self-translation in so far as these aspects are highly culturally- and historically-specific, and this context is not provided in the novel itself, it is left for the reader to fill in extra-textually.

2. Macro-Level (or Toury's Operational Matricial Norms)

The *macro-textual level*, is the level in which Lambert and van Gorp include the text's structure and organization, the relationship between the different narrative elements, internal narrative structure and authorial commentary (if any) (2014:52). It coincides with what Toury calls *operational matricial norms* (2000:202-3), which contemplate the "degree of fullness of translation" (analysed above) and the translated text's "distribution" and "segmentation" (Ibid.).

---

[7] "la elección del medio de expresión literaria nunca es inocente".

TBN, clearly identified as belonging to the genre of the novel, is divided into fourteen untitled chapters of similar length. This structure is a normalizing element, because the narrative adopts a very familiar form for Anglophone readers which does not foreground difference. This would usually be considered a domesticating decision on Dangarembga's part (in Venuti's sense). However, the effect of this normalization is analysed within the systemic context.

3. Micro-Level (or Toury's Operational Textual-linguistic Norms)

The *micro-textual level* is where we can find considerations related to a semantic and grammatical analysis of the text, speech reproduction forms, point of view, modality and linguistic register (Toury 2014:52-3). Disruptions at this level tend to be the most evident at first sight and are in fact the ones alluded to by Adejunmobi (1998) and Bandia (2003) when they refer to Venuti's *domestication* and *foreignization*. Toury calls these *textual-linguistic norms*, and includes here *general and particular* norms that govern the selection of linguistic materials used to create the target text (2000:203). Here, this level is mainly devoted to *TBN*'s hybridizing elements, through which, like all *transcultural fiction*, it evokes "two alien, or remote, language cultures simultaneously" (Bandia 2003:131).

3.1 Narrator and point of view

The novel is narrated by its main character, Tambudzai Sigauke, intra- and autodiegetic narrator with internal focalization. While the story is told from the point of view of a teenage girl completely immersed in the colonial system, Dangarembga makes it clear that it is the adult Tambu that narrates her experiences and sporadically intervenes with a critical eye, removed from the facts (Rooney 2007:58). An excellent example of this is when the adult Tambu emerges after the prize ceremony in which Tambu is denied her well-deserved trophy:

> Could I conceive of standing up and looking around me in a different manner? I could not. Truly, I could not imagine that I should have looked around me in another way, and analysed what was taking place from my own perspective. For to do that, one requires a point of view, but it is hard to stand upon the foundations you are born with in order to look forward, when that support is bombarded by all that is around until what remains firm and upright is hidden beneath rubble and ruins (2006:164).

This is the climactic moment when the adult Tambu acknowledges her younger self's lack of centre. If, as Sheena Patchay interprets, in *Nervous Conditions* Dangarembga seeks to

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

53

challenge "the notion that African women's voices constitute a homogeneous 'third world voice'" (2003:145) through the representation of a plurality of female voices, in *TBN*, the only voice that seems to matter is Tambu's, since her world ends up reducing to herself and no one else. Because *TBN* portrays how colonial education alienates the black students from everything including themselves (Hlongwane 2009:450), Tambu's constitutes a particular narrative voice that proves, indeed, an *alienating* foreignizing element for a reader unfamiliar with life as a (post)colonial subject. The *author-translator* has chosen a highly specific focalizer through which to carry out her transposition process. Tambu's narrative voice does not only speak of racist colonialism, it painfully embodies its destructive effects and forces the reader to suffer them with her.

3.2 Multilingual text

TBN is a text in which more than two languages coexist. Apart from English and Shona, it also features the participation of Ndebele, previously explained, and Latin (both taught at the missionary school and Sacred Heart).

Moreover, the terrible Miss Plato, in charge of controlling the order and cleanliness of Sacred Heart dormitories, comes from "some middle, unmentionable part of the European continent" and has a "guttural growling accent" (Dangarembga 2006:50). Miss Plato speaks English, but her represented direct speech has every mark of this singular accent: **"Can you not hear the ring of the bell that says up you must be standing! … Vy have I everyday in this vay to talk, when it should be enough vonce to tell you!"** (2006:54). This could be an example of Meir Sternberg's "verbal transposition" (1981:227), since Miss Plato's utterances in English show both "phonic … idiosyncrasy" and "grammatical irregularity" (Ibid.), product of the interference of her native language. However, *verbal transposition* is defined as the "(mis)rendering of an originally heterolingual utterance" (1981:228). In Miss Plato's case, the reader is led to believe that Tambu is faithfully reproducing the matron's originally flawed English utterances, not translating them into English herself.

This is how great part of Miss Plato's authority and the fear she instils in the girls disappears, when the reader comes across this direct speech thus reproduced to add an element of humour to the character that embodies order and terror among Sacred Heart's pupils. In fact, even the girls mock her behind her back. Miss Plato's speech reproduction complicates the classification

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

54

of this foreignizing element. In fact, analysing similar examples by Wole Soyinka and Binyavanga Wainaina, Kilnger argues that "as it is the Westerners … who are exoticized, … this exoticization can be interpreted as decolonizing" (2018:154), that is, an *alienating* strategy for the non-Zimbabwean reader because the English language is being disrupted to foreground, in a humorous way, the non-native's difference.

3.3 Diglossia and direct speech

The majority of diglossic situations take place when Tambu speaks with her roommates of the "African dormitory" (2006:51) or with her aunt, uncle and cousin. There are instances in the novel in which it is clear that the dialogues take place in English and the speakers resort to Shona when the European language is not enough to express themselves freely. Notwithstanding, the reader only knows this because the narrator explicitly says so, through "explicit attribution" (Sternberg 1981:231), but the dialogue is still reproduced in English.

In many other cases, there is a certain ambiguity regarding what language is being used. In a normalizing move, direct speech of Zimbabwean characters, even of those who do not speak English, such as Tambu's mother, is always reproduced in a relatively standard English, with more or less Shona interference, but never in a comical or exaggeratedly different manner, as in Miss Plato's case. As in Klinger's examples cited above, the relative normalization of native direct speech, when paired with the foreignization of the European's speech, can actually be considered an *alienating* strategy, since it subverts the target-language norms. It must be remembered, however, that Dangarembga only does this with Miss Plato, but not with the American nuns.

Foreignization of Zimbabwean speech is achieved through three different elements, with varying effects:

- Pleonasms or indirect language (Bandia 2003:133):

  'That is when people there at home started saying, look at Sigauke, he is selling out! Could it be my own brother, Tambudzai? These things were being suggested, as they were happening, so I had to consider them. But no,' he went on. 'I could not believe it.' (Dangarembga 2006:188)

  This is how Babamukuru tells Tambu that it was her own mother who accused him. Apart from the absence of contractions that elevates the register, it is possible to see how he talks

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

55

around the matter without actually saying anything explicitly, a characteristic of his speech in general. As head of the family and learned person, Babamukuru traditionally exhibits his wisdom and oratory in daily interactions (Bandia 2003:133). Although otherwise free of deviations from standard English, Dangarembga's rendering of Babamukuru's speech adheres to traditional source-culture norms when it comes to register and directness of manner, which help construct the patriarch's character. Since these are not accounted for in-text, this can be classified as an *alienating* strategy for readers unfamiliar with Shona cultural idiosyncrasies.

- lexical-grammatical marks (Bandia 2003:135):
  - **"'Tell me!' The command came. 'Tell me, what I have just heard is wrong, Tambudzai, that it is wrong, the thing I am hearing!'"** (Dangarembga 2006:90). Here we can see repetition and non-standard word order that seems to result from Babamukuru's anger. Even the coma between "me" and "what" shows an unusual pause between verb and direct object. The interference seems to be caused by Babamukuru being in a particularly emotional state.
  - **"'Waiting, Mai! Surely, no. What I heard people talking of that time was coming.'"** (2006:227). This is Tambu having an unpleasant conversation with her mother and we can again see an unusual word order. If, as the reader is led to believe, these exchanges between mother and daughter originally take place in Shona, this is a clear instance of Sternberg's *verbal transposition*, in which Dangarembga's translation of Tambu's Shona utterance exhibits *grammatical irregularity*.

Because these interferences are not disruptive enough to undermine the comprehensibility of the utterances, nor are they serving any particular purpose, they can be classified as an *exoticizing* strategy. Dangarembga here seems to be simply foregrounding her characters' otherness through deviant direct speech.

- "selective reproduction" (Sternberg 1981:225), the "intermittent quotation" (Ibid.) of Shona words and expressions. According to Klinger (2018:150), this can have either an *alienating* effect (when it makes reading more difficult), or an *exoticizing* one (when it can

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

56

be easily understood, is immediately glossed or reinforces stereotypes). In the case of *TBN*, *selective reproduction* can have either effect:

> "markers of social relations" (Bandia 2003:132): **"'*Manheru, shewe*! Good evening, my lord,'** put in Maiguru, sweetening her voice to smother a pout, as it was not proper for Babamukuru to greet the young person I was before recognizing the woman he married" (Dangarembga 2006:80). Here, the Shona expression is followed by the English translation as well as included in the glossary. Tambu also explains the expected order of traditional greetings in Shona. Thus, this source-culture element loses its power of disruption when immediately translated and explained. The in-text translation and the glossary entry both make this an example of an *exoticizing* foreignizing strategy, where there is a deviation from standard English that is resolved for the reader both in and outside the text. This said, this double greeting could also be an indication of Tambu's family's bilingualism, in which case its classification would not be so straightforward.

> When her aunt and uncle tell Tambu that it was her own mother that accused Babamukuru of treason, they use the Shona terms *vatengesi* (the betrayer) and *tshombe* (sell out). Tambu explains the reason for this interference when she says that Babamukuru continues in English, "as though he wished to keep the matter more distant and clinical" (2006:188). Her aunt and uncle turn to Shona because they are treating a very emotional topic but they make an effort to continue in English to distance themselves from the facts. This is a clear instance of the previously explained inadequacy of the English language that makes Dangarembga resort to the Shona terms, with the former translated in-text by Babamukuru and both included in the glossary. Here, although the missing information is supplied one way or another, I argue that, through the use of the Shona *culturemes* (explained in the following section), Dangarembga explicitly signals that which the English language cannot convey through translation, the trauma of war and family treason. This is why, even if the effect is partly undermined by the glossary, probably not an *author-translator*'s decision, this should be classified as an *alienating* strategy which ultimately distances the text from the reader.

> **"'Ko! So that's what you're doing now! *Kushinga makadaro*! Being that tough. *Rambai makashinga*! Well, keep on doing it!'"** (2006:225). This is Dangarembga's translation of Tambu's mother's speech from Shona to English.

Instead of *verbal transposition* as in Tambu's case, here we see the insertion of untranslated Shona terms in between the English phrases. This is the perfect example of *alienating selective reproduction*, since its understanding is not facilitated by the *author-translator*. It is the character who is most strongly opposed to Tambu's colonial education whose speech the non-native reader would find hardest to access. In her translation of Mai's Shona, Dangarembga mirrors the woman's resistance to the colonial system and her daughter's choices. However, once again, the paratextual glossary undermines this *alienation* by translating the two Shona phrases.

The analysis of *selective reproduction* continues in the following section under the subheading *Culturemes*.

3.4 Culturemes

This analysis is based on the definition of *cultureme* by Lucía Luque Nadal, who characterizes it as

> any symbolic, specific cultural element, simple or complex, that corresponds with an object, an idea, activity or fact, which is well-known among the members of a society, which has symbolic value and can serve as … reference … to the members of said society (2009:97).[8]

In *TBN*, most *culturemes* are inserted in the text through *selective reproduction* and they refer to various aspects of the source culture: food, games, flora and fauna, history. When not glossed or translated in-text, their presence has initially an *alienating* effect. Notwithstanding, the glossary again fills in the gaps left by the absence of a textual gloss.

Sometimes the narrator herself bridges this gap for the reader in an almost didactic manner, as in the case of the winnow basket, "the first transport choice of local magical people, as others board a flying saucer or a magic carpet" (2006:49). This textual explanation is an *exoticizing* strategy, designed to bring the text closer to the non-native reader. In sum, Dangarembga makes extensive use of *culturemes* in her (self-)translation, most of them in Shona, but their effect will partly depend on the accessibility of these to the non-Zimbabwean reader. Most

---

[8] "cualquier elemento simbólico específico cultural, simple o complejo, que corresponda a un objeto, idea, actividad o hecho, que sea suficientemente conocido entre los miembros de una sociedad, que tenga valor simbólico y sirva de … referencia … para los miembros de dicha sociedad".

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

58

prominently, the paratextual glossary dilutes somewhat the *alienating* force of otherwise unexplained Shona terms.

4. Systemic Context

The fourth level of Lambert and van Gorp's model is the systemic context, which considers contradictions between the three previous levels and between the text and the applied theory, as well as analysing identifiable inter-systemic relationships (2014:53). While this study is not comprehensive enough to properly analyse the systemic context, we can make two observations at this level that provide the basis for further research.

4.1 Intertextual relationships

We have to mention here Dangarembga's explicit allusion to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967). When Tambu sees Nyasha reading the novel, she misjudges it as a book "about agriculture" written "by someone like poor Bongo in the Congo, a starving Kenyan author" (2006:117). Apart from exposing Tambu's ignorance despite her elite education, this mention is especially significant due to *A Grain*'s strong anticolonial message and the similarities between the two countries in terms of the devastating effects of colonialism on women and the violence of their liberation movements. Although non-African readers may well be familiar with this, it is an *alienating* element in the sense that it establishes a kind of solidarity in the face of shared colonial experiences.

4.2 Inter-systemic relationships

Here it is interesting to mention Dangarembga's choice of the novel genre, and, particularly, the traditionally Western *bildungsroman* to tell her story. In the first place, with this choice, Dangarembga joins a long list of African authors (Achebe, Adiche, Amadi, Armah, Cole, Emecheta, Ngũgĩ, Okri, Quartey, Salih, to name a few) that adopt the genre of the novel to then mould it according to their transcultural narratives. Like writing in the language of the former colonizer, the adaptation of the novelistic genre can be understood both as a form of subjection to colonial cultural domination or as a form of cultural re-appropriation that reinforces the anticolonial message of the narrative.

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

59

This research agrees with the latter position that makes the choice of genre yet another *alienating* strategy. Dangarembga's (self-)translation challenges the idea of progression and the promises of growth and expansion made at the beginning of *Nervous Conditions*. Due to her lack of personal perspective and the annihilation of her subjectivity, Tambu's successful future never materializes. When the adult Tambu finally finds her place and her words, it is only natural that she adopts a Western textual genre and subjects it to a process of hybridization to communicate her experiences as an intermediate subject. In Dangarembga's words, *TBN* is "a painful read" through which one sees "that whole world unfolding as Tambudzai herself experiences it" (Rooney 2007:62). Expecting a conventional *bildungsroman* only increases the sense of *alienation* when the reader encounters a narrative of negation and stagnation.

Conclusion: Toury's Initial Norm, Adequacy or Acceptability?

This article has carried out a descriptive translation study of *TBN* to explore Dangarembga's (self-)translation devices. More specifically, it has examined how the *author-translator* deals with the transposition of Shona elements to her English text, since this treatment seems to be at odds with prevalent notions in the field of postcolonial translation studies regarding the "indigenization" (Zabus [1991] 2007) of European languages. The ultimate goal of this paper is to determine, as far as possible, the author's overall translating strategy or *initial norm*. This is not initial in a chronological sense but in so far as it works as "an *explanatory tool*" due to its "superordinance over particular norms" (Toury 2000:201). Both Toury's and Lambert and van Gorp's models understand that a translation will always be a combination of strategies tending towards one or the other pole and what can be observed is a prevalent inclination towards one of the extremes of *adequacy* and *acceptability*. Here, moreover, a tendency towards the former would indicate decolonization in the translation discourse, whereas a tendency towards the latter would indicate recolonization.

This is why the analysis of the *initial norm* has been left for the end of this study of the postcolonial Anglophone novel as translation, in the place of a conclusion and as an explanation of the initially identified discrepancy between *TBN*'s purpose and its apparent high level of *acceptability*. The analysis is summarized in Table 1:

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

60

Table 1: classification of *TBN*'s foreignizing and normalizing strategies. (F) indicates a foreignizing strategy and (N) a normalizing one.

Alienating	Exoticizing	Complex
▪ Title (F) ▪ Translation policy (F) ▪ Narrator and point of view (F) ▪ Foreignization of Miss Plato's speech (F) ▪ Pleonasms and indirect language (F) ▪ *Selective reproduction* and *culturemes* without in-text gloss or translation (F) ▪ Intertextual relation (F) ▪ Genre and structure (N)	▪ Lexical-grammatical marks whose only purpose is to foreground otherness (F) ▪ In-text explained cultural aspects, such as greetings and social relations (F) ▪ In-text glossed or translated *selective reproduction* and *culturemes* (F)	▪ Normalization of Zimbabwean and Euro-American speech (only Miss Plato's speech is foreignized) (N) ▪ Glossary (F) ▪ Typographical foregrounding of all non-English terms (F)

From this table it is possible to extract three observations that lead us to our main argument. First, the clearly *exoticizing* strategies, those that bring the text to the reader and conform to target-culture norms, are all observable at the micro- or textual-linguistic level; a high level of *acceptability* can be indeed observed in the way Dangarembga transfers cultural-linguistic aspects to the English prose and direct speech. In general terms, what disruption there is, is oftentimes solved for the reader within the text. This would explain the apparent accessibility of the novel when we focus solely on its linguistic characteristics.

Second, the clearly *alienating* strategies, those that move the reader to the text and make the reading less comfortable, which exceed in number the *exoticizing* ones, can be found in and beyond the purely linguistic level. Temporarily leaving aside the problematic glossary, we include here *selective reproduction* and *culturemes* without in-text translation, especially those related to the liberation struggle, another character in the novel (Rooney, 2007:59): *mutengesi*, *chimbwidos*, *mujibas*. With these, the reader comes across an underlying Shona cultural system and a (post)colonial experience that are not entirely accessible to the non-native (Kennedy 2003:130-1). Dangarembga's *initial norm* exhibits an overall tendency towards *adequacy*, mostly contained in its non-textual-linguistic characteristics.

Third, *TBN*'s *adequacy* is problematic, not only due to the high level of *acceptability* of its textual-linguistic elements, but also due to the presence of three complex strategies. In the third column, we find the glossary and typographical foregrounding, which exoticize both African

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

61

and European terms, and the predominant normalization of Zimbabwean speech, whose *alienating* potential is undermined by the concurrent normalization of all Euro-American speech except for Miss Plato's. Indeed, the latter also sabotages the *alienating* effect of the foreignization of Miss Plato's speech. These three aspects indicate a lack of consistency regarding whose cultural-linguistic system is being marked as foreign, and whose, as the norm.

This paper's main contention is that this problematization of *TBN*'s *adequacy* is what enables Dangarembga to reproduce in her (self-)translation not only Rhodesia's colonial system, but also what it was like to struggle to survive and develop as a young, colonially-educated black woman in that system. Being a failed *bildungsroman*, the narrative exposes how Tambu's elite education has left deep scars in her. The alternative focalization between the young and adult Tambu would not be effective if the language itself did not fully convey the former's perspective and how she has failed to emerge victorious from her liminal space. Tambu the narrator has an excellent command of the English language and explicitly addresses both a Zimbabwean and a non-native audience, as evidenced in her explanation of Shona cultural elements, such as the reciprocal greeting (2006:65).

Tambu the narrator addresses an Anglo-American audience and says: this what you have done to me, this what I have suffered and this is how I write of it. The high *acceptability* of Tambu's narration reflects her bilingual position as intermediate subject, her bicultural audience and, above all, her loss of centre: her complete immersion in a colonial cultural system that has convinced her that her native one is not valid.

As Dangarembga herself says, *TBN* "is not a comfortable read" (Rooney 2007:62), it cannot be. It is the story of a girl whose education has altered her centre, forcing her to see everything from the colonizer's perspective. Through the *exoticizing* and complex strategies, Dangarembga *translates-creates* this decentred girl's story and "make[s] Tambudzai's reactions credible" (Rooney 2007:58). At every other level, this problematized *adequacy* estranges the non-Zimbabwean reader, who has to fill in the gaps left by the translation process while falling into the cracks of the narrative, thus becoming aware of the incommensurability of Tambu's liminal suffering.

References

Adejunmobi, Moradewun (1998) 'Translation and Postcolonial Identity', *The Translator*, 4(2): 163-181.

Bandia, Paul (1993) 'Translation as Culture Transfer: Evidence from African Creative Writing', *TTR*, 6(2): 55-78.

Bandia, Paul (2003) 'Postcolonialism and Translation: The Dialectic Between Theory and Practice', *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, 2: 129-142.

Bassnett, Susan and Harish Trivedi (1999) 'Introduction: Of Colonies, Cannibals and Vernaculars', in Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (eds) *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, London/New York: Routledge, 1-18.

Basu, Biman (1997) 'Trapped and Troping: Allegories of the Transnational Intellectual in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 28(3): 7-24.

Bhabha, Homi K. ([1994] 2004) *The Location of Culture*, Oxon/New York: Routledge.

Dangarembga, Tsisi ([1988] 2004) *Nervous Conditions*, Banbury: Ayebia Clarke Publishing.

Dangarembga, Tsitsi (2006) *The Book of Not*, Banbury: Ayebia Clarke Publishing.

Dangarembga, Tsitsi (2018) *This Mournable Body*, Minneapolis MN: Greywolf Press.

Dangarembga, Tsitsi and Christopher Joon-Hai Lee (2006), 'Desperately Seeking Tsitsi: A Conversation with Tsitsi Dangarembga', *Transition*, 96: 128-150.

Gorle, Gilian (1997) 'Fighting the Good Fight: What Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* Says about Language and Power', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 27: 179-192.

Gyasi, Kwaku (1999) 'Writing as Translation: African Literature and the Challenges of Translation', *Research in African Literatures*, 30(2): 75-87.

Hermans, Theo ([1985] 2014) 'Introduction: Translation Studies and a New Paradigm', in Theo Hermans (ed.) *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, Oxon: Routledge, 7-15.

Hermans, Theo (1996) 'Norms and the Determination of Translation: A Theoretical Framework', in Román Álvarez and M. Carmen-África Vidal (eds) *Translation, Power, Subversion*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 25-51.

Hlongwane, Gugu (2009) '"A piece of person": Fractured Selves and Colonial Education in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 45(4): 449-458.

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

63

Kalua, Fetson (2009) 'Homi Bhabha's Third Space and African Identity', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 21(1): 23-32.

Kennedy, Rosanne (2008) 'Mortgaged Futures: Trauma, Subjectivity, and the Legacies of Colonialism in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*', *Studies in the Novel*, 40(1 and 2): 86-107.

Klinger, Susanne (2018) 'De/Recolonization in Translation', *Selcuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 40: 146-160.

Lambert, José and Hendrik van Gorp ([1985] 2014) 'On Describing Translations', in Theo Hermans (ed.) *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, Oxon: Routledge, 42-53.

López Heredia, Goretti (2003) 'El traductor visible de literatura poscolonial ante la tentación del exotismo' ['The Visible Translator of Postcolonial Literature and the Temptation of Exoticism'], *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, 2: 161-173.

Luque Nadal, Lucía (2009) 'Los culturemas: ¿unidades lingüísticas, ideológicas o culturales?' ['Culturemes: Linguistic, Ideological or Cultural Units?'], *Language Design*, 11: 93-120.

Mabura, Lily N. G. (2010) 'Black Women Waling Zimbabwe: Refuge and Prospect in the Landscapes of Yvonne Vera's *The Stone Virgins* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and its Sequel, *The Book of Not*', *Research in African Literatures*, 41(3): 88-111.

Mustafa, Fawzia (2009) 'Reading Development and Writing Africa: UNFPA, *Nervous Conditions*, and *The Book of Not*', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 46(2): 379-406.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o ([1967] 2002) *A Grain of Wheat*, London: Penguin Books.

Nixon, Rob (2013) *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Pasi, Juliet (2016) 'Writing Nature from the Feminine: An Ecofeminist Analysis of the Gardens in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*', *Journal of Literary Studies*, 32(1): 17-31.

Pasi, Juliet (2017) 'Theorising the Environment in Fiction: Exploring Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism in Selected Black Female Writers' Works' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of South Africa). Available online at [http://uir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/23789] (accessed 11 June 2019).

Patchay, Sheena (2003) 'Transgressing Boundaries: Marginality, Complicity and Subversion in *Nervous Conditions*', *English in Africa*, 30(1): 145-155.

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

64

Rajagopalan, Kanavillil (2007) 'Postcoloniality as Translation in Action', *Revista do GEL*, 4(1): 169-186.

Rooney, Caroline (2007) 'Interview with Tsitsi Dangarembga', *Wasafiri*, 22(2): 57-62.

Sales Salvador, Dora (2003) '"I translate, therefore I am": la ficción transcultural entendida como literatura traducida en el polisistema colonial' ['"I translate, therefore I am": Transcultural Fiction Understood as Translated Literature in the Colonial Polysystem'], *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, 2: 47-69.

Simon, Sherry (1997) 'Translation, Postcolonialism and Cultural Studies', *Meta*, 42(2): 462-477.

Sternberg, Meir (1981) 'Polylingualism as Reality and Translation as Mimesis', *Poetics Today*, 2(4): 221-239.

Toury, Gideon ([1978] 2000) 'The Nature and Role of Norms in Translation', in Lawrence Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader*, London/New York: Routledge, 198-211.

Toury, Gideon ([1985] 2014) 'A Rationale for Descriptive Translation Studies', in Theo Hermans (ed.) *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, Oxon: Routledge, 16-41.

Trivedi, Harish (2007) 'Translating Culture vs. Cultural Translation', in Paul St-Pierre and Prafulla C. Kar (eds) *In Translation – Reflections, Refractions, Transformations*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 277-287.

Tymoczko, Maria (1999) 'Post-colonial Writing and Literary Translation', in Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (eds) *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, London/New York Routledge, 19-40.

Venuti, Lawrence (1995) *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, London/New York: Routledge.

Zabus, Chantal ([1991] 2007) *The African Palimpsest: Indigenization of Language in the West African Europhone Novel*, Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Ana Victoria Mazza, Cultural and Linguistic Liminality: Tsitsi Dangarembga's The Book of Not as (Self-)Translation, 39-65

65