INSTITUTO DE ENSEÑANZA SUPERIOR EN LENGUAS VIVAS

“JUAN RAMÓN FERNÁNDEZ”

Trabajo de Adscripción:

A VOICE OF THEIR OWN: OWNERSHIP AND THE RIGHT TO TELL THE STORY IN THREE WORKS BY CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE

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Cátedra: Literatura Inglesa II

2014-2018

Abstract

The aim of this work is both to analyse two novels and one short story by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in the light of post-colonial theories and to establish the importance of such corpus and the approach chosen in the education of future translators of English. The focus will be on two main lines of analysis: the concept of authenticity and the right to speak, and language (both as theme and in its use by the author) in the construction of identity.

This paper will show how Adichie's work reflects on canonical literature in English as well as on the development of different African literatures, shows post-colonial concerns and poses interesting questions to a future translator, whether they be stylistic, linguistic or theoretical.

El propósito de este trabajo es analizar dos novelas y un cuento de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie a la luz de las teorías pos-coloniales y establecer la importancia de este corpus y del enfoque elegido en la formación de los futuros traductores de inglés. El enfoque se centrará en dos líneas de análisis: por un lado, el problema de la autenticidad y el derecho a contar la historia, y por el otro, la lengua, (tanto como un tema dentro de los textos como en el uso que la autora hace de la misma) en la construcción de identidad.

El trabajo mostrará cómo la obra de Adichie reflexiona tanto sobre la literatura canónica en lengua inglesa como sobre el desarrollo de las literaturas africanas, muestra preocupaciones del mundo pos-colonial y genera interesantes preguntas para el futuro traductor, tanto de índole estilística como lingüística o teórica.

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Acknowledgements

First of all, I'd like to thank my dear Dr. Claudia Ferradas, who let me be an *adscripta* in her class at the wonderful *IESLV "Juan R. Fernández"*, and showed me that it was possible to mix high-brow intellectual theory with entertaining teaching, and who made me feel like a peer as well as a student. Thank you for all your help, your advice and your thorough reading.

Also, many thanks to Dr. Álvaro Fernández Bravo and Dr. Cristina Banfi, for their help in many academic matters.

Of course, my heart goes to my parents Pablo Jacovkis and Rosita Wachenchauzer, and my sisters Vera and Natalia for their help, love, their *keep-calm-and-sit-down* and *yes-you-will* mantras, their intellectual exchanges, their academic insight. I also want to thank my grandmothers: Ana, who is living proof that there is no age limit to learning, and Mirian, who knew so much about World Englishes Literature even before the word existed.

Finally, many thanks to my friends, both the "old ones" (Marina Zuccon, Sandra Fink, Clara Marticorena, Lisandro de la Fuente) as well as those who have been so dear to me recently: Claudia Pantoja, Ornela Boix, Miriam Duarte, Marcela Martino, Fernando Folino, José Buschini, Ignacio Portes, Juan Manuel Domínguez, Federico Liptak, Estefanía Pozzo.

1. Introduction

This research paper aims to discuss ways in which a post-colonial approach can throw light into two novels and one short story by Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and whether such reading can contribute to the training of future translators of literature in English into Spanish.

Nowadays, translation theories acknowledge the roles of translators as cultural mediators as well as possible “scouts”, a concept used for those translators who search and find original untranslated material and take it to publishers. According to this view, a translator's job is not only a matter of deciding on language and style. It also involves becoming acquainted with non-mainstream literature in order to find new material and take it to publishers and so make it accessible to a new public. This role will be discussed later in Section 6. 1 “Some Reflections After Teaching as an *Adscripta*”.

It is our contention that approaching African literature through an award-winning writer can encourage students to increase their curiosity on those writers we do not introduce in class and later do further research on their own. In the case of the writer analysed in this paper, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, she is one of Nigeria's most prominent young writers today. Born in 1977 in Nigeria to an intellectual family, she moved to the USA when she was 19 in order to attend college and became a writer there. She is an award-winning author who has published three novels (*Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah*), a collection of short stories (*The Thing around Your Neck)*, and two non-fiction books (*We Should All Be Feminists*, which is the transcription of a TEDTalk she gave, and *Dear Ijewale*, an essay on how to raise a feminist child, written in the form of a letter to a friend). Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, was extremely successful, and it even received praise from Chinua Achebe, one of Nigeria's most important writers. Her latest novel, *Americanah*, is a best-selling book which has made her famous in the English-speaking world.

Adichie has received numerous awards, including the MacArthur grant for genius, the O. Henry Prize for her short story “The American Embassy”, the Commonwealth Writers' Prizes for Best First Book for *Purple Hibiscus*, the Orange Broadband Prize for fiction for *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the National Book Critics Circle Award in the Fiction Category for *Americanah*, among other prizes and nominations.

The writer lives half of the year in Nigeria and half in the United States, and issues of identity and gender are permanently addressed in her works. Adichie has become an intellectual celebrity due to her outspokenness, the clarity of her TEDtalks, and an extensive readership. Part of her TEDtalk “We Should All Be Feminists” was sampled by internationally famous pop star Beyonce in her song “Flawless” (2013) and the slogan appeared stamped on T-shirts in 2017 Dior's spring-summer collection in Paris.

Our analysis of her works will focus on two different yet deeply related issues within a broadly post-colonial perspective: characters' voices and their ability to tell their own story, and the importance of language (both as theme and in its use by the author) to construct identity.

Finally, the paper will reflect on why choosing to read and analyse Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's narrative works in contexts such as IESLV “Juan Ramón Fernández” may be useful for translation students, not only to help them develop a wider panorama of contemporary literature in English and to think about the translation challenges posed by language and style, but also to enable translators to become familiar with new World Englishes Literature. Though Adichie is already a world-known writer, analysing her work can encourage future translators to choose, as “scouts”, untranslated World Englishes literature texts for translation.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Post-colonial Theory

In the second half of the twentieth century, the process of independence of the colonies of various European empires showed one of its many effects in the increasing body of local literature written in the language of the coloniser. The struggle for independence raised questions for most writers in the former colonies, questions of language and identity: What language should they write in? Were they part of a "national" literature? In parallel, scholars from the former central powers became interested in that literature which was being produced in the former colonies. Moreover, these questions were not only about the writing produced after independence, but referred to all the literature produced in the language of the former empire in those colonies. In the 1970's, the word "postcolonial" was frequently used to define the period immediately following decolonisation (Zabus, 2015: 3). However, scholars were already addressing the new writing that was being produced in English from the newly decolonised countries of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean as "Commonwealth Literature", controversially named after the British Commonwealth of Nations (Zabus, 2015, p. 3).

In 1989, *The Empire Writes Back* by Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin was published. In this publication, the authors state (2001 [1989], p. 22) that although the term "Commonwealth Literature" secured much readier acceptance, it had geographical and political limitations, since it rested purely on the fact of a shared history and the resulting political grouping.

The aim of Ashcroft et al.'s book was double: while it proposed to discuss the literature written in the language of the imperial power in post-colonial locations (and recognise its long-deserved relevance), it also attempted to discuss and classify the models used to analyse this particular literature. According to Zabus (2015), the importance of this book lies on the fact that it

showed, among other aspects, more complex models than the ones used before, because the authors included cultural syncretism and the creolisation of languages within their analysis. We will deal with this issue in depth in Chapter 3: Language and the Post-colonial Writer.

As Ashcroft et al. claim (2001: 14):

> As writers and critics became aware of the special character of post-colonial texts, they saw the need to develop an adequate model to account for them. Four major models have emerged to date: first, "national" or regional models, which emphasize the distinctive features of the particular national or regional culture; second, race-based models which identify certain shared characteristics across various national literatures, such as the common racial inheritance in literatures of the African diaspora addressed by the "Black writing" model; third, comparative models of varying complexity which seek to account for particular linguistic, historical, and cultural features across two or more post-colonial literatures; fourth, more comprehensive comparative models which argue for features such as hybridity and syncreticity as constitutive elements of all post-colonial literatures (syncretism is the process by which previously distinct linguistic categories, and, by extension, cultural formations, merge into a single new form). (2001: 14)

Although the fourth model is the one which we find of greatest operational value for the analysis developed in this paper, as the authors state, "these models often operate as assumptions within critical practice rather than specific and discrete schools of thought; in any discussion of post-colonial writing a number of them may be operating at the same time" (Ashcroft et al., 2001, pp. 14-15).

In Ashcroft et al., a distinction is made between "post-colonial" and "postcolonial" literature. The authors propose the use of the term "postcolonial" to refer specifically to the literature produced after decolonisation, whereas "post-colonial" is the term that embraces the cultural development which began with the colonisation process.

> We use the term "post-colonial" (…) to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day (…) We also suggest that it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted. (Ashcroft et al, 2001, p. 2)

In this paper, we will use the term “post-colonial” in the sense that Ashcroft et al. use it: not to talk about a time period, but to refer to the effects colonialism has had on both the colonised and the colonisers and their literatures, from colonisation to the present day. In Babha's words (2000, p. 6):

> Postcoloniality, for its part, is a salutary reminder of the persistent “neo-colonial” relations within the “new” world order and the multinational division of labour. Such a perspective enables the authentication of histories of exploitation and the evolution of strategies of resistance. Beyond this, however, postcolonial critique bears witness to those countries and communities - in the North and the South, urban and rural - constituted, if I may coin a phrase, “otherwise than modernity”. Such cultures of a postcolonial contra-modernity may be contingent to modernity, discontinuous or in contention with it, resistant to its oppressive, assimilationist technologies; but they also deploy the cultural hybridity of their borderline conditions to “translate”, and therefore reinscribe, the social imaginary of both metropolis and modernity.

2.2. Beyond the Post-colonial

The “post-colonial” category presents other aspects for contention: if we label all literature which is a by-product of colonisation and independence processes “post-colonial”, we may be oversimplifying the implications, running the risk of erasing everything that renders an experience particular, either because we focus on what is “shared” (having been colonised, suffering marginalisation, experiencing diaspora), or because we assume that, as citizens of a globalised world, there are no “nations” to define us. The word is used here in the sense ascribed by Anderson (2006 [1983]), who defines nations as “imagined communities”:

> In an anthropological spirit, *then,* I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community — and it is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (…)
> The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. (…)

> It is imagined as *sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. (…) The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state.
> Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. (pp. 20-21)

However, even with this disclaimer, talking about national literatures is problematic in literature studies. Scholars may prefer to talk about literatures written in a certain language. For instance, regarding English literature, Clausen (1994) states:

> The concept of "national literatures" in English has outlived its usefulness and should be abandoned, both as a way of thinking about literary history and as a way of organizing curricula. Whatever evaluation one makes of them as political phenomena, the nationalisms that gave rise successively to the concept of a distinctly British literature, then an American literature, and now Australian, Canadian, and a host of what are often described equivocally as "new literatures," constitute a barrier to clear thinking about what has long since become an international enterprise carried on in many cultural settings. As the medium that defines the horizon of intelligibility, language is a more principled and useful (though not absolute) basis than nationality for distinguishing one literature from another. (p. 161)

Nevertheless, some of the issues raised by post-colonial analysis remain central to the understanding of literatures in English from recently independent former British colonies, such as the question on the role of literature in the making of the British Empire, and the problem that the colonies "writing back" in English presents to what "English Literature" is now. This has led, as shown by Clausen's quotation above, to reconsideration of what we mean by English literature, with a preference of the term "Anglophone literature(s)" over the former.

Some scholars, such as San Juan (1999), Jain (2006) and Loomba et al. (2005), point to the need to think beyond the post-colonial approach, or even support a return to certain features of *Weltliteratur* (Apter, 2013), which is a term originally coined by Goethe to refer to "a new literary modality emerging from the progress generated by the increasingly international nature of

discursive interchange" (Pizer, 2000, p. 215).

However, this revival is not exempt of internal criticism, as we can read in Apter (2013, p. 2):

> I endorse World Literature's deprovincialization of the canon and the way in which, at its best, it draws on translation to deliver surprising cognitive landscapes hailing from inaccessible linguistic folds (...). However I do harbour serious reservations about tendencies in World Literature toward reflexive endorsement of cultural equivalence and substitutability, or toward the celebration of nationally and ethnically branded "differences" that have been niche-marketed as commercialized "identities".

Along these lines, Dawson Varughese (2012) wonders whether the post-colonial framework is still useful to analyse the literature of the former British colonies. She prefers to talk about World Englishes Literature:

> [T]he multiple features that determine the voice of a World Englishes writer are not defined by the notion of the voice being that of the subaltern –whether geographic, linguistic, cultural, ideological or all of the foregoing. World Englishes writers are less and less interested in their putative subalternity to a former colonial power and more and more interested in what constitutes (usually), positively, the identity of the culture from which they write. (p. 20)

Contrary to this view, according to Zabus (2015, p. 4), although there was an "interregnum" in theory which proclaimed the imminent death of post-colonial studies, post-colonial studies are reaching a second blooming (2015, p. 5), despite critics' claims that the theoretical framework needs to be remodelled.

For instance, Spivak (2010) highlights the necessity to combine cultural studies with post-colonial theories. Mignolo (2000) proposes his "border thinking" approach, which he considers a direct consequence of colonial difference, while Lugones (2010, p. 742) chooses the term "de-colonial" over post-colonial for her own approach, as it implies not only a theoretical viewpoint but also a political position, as is Mignolo's case.

In this paper, we consider a post-colonial approach still useful for our analysis of Adichie's

writing. Post-colonial analysis of Adichie's work has proved fruitful for several scholars (Anyoku, 2011; Bonnici, 2006; Akpome, 2013), since all her narratives portray hybrid subjects, products of the historical conflicts of their nations as well as their own, who suffer violence within and outside Nigeria and who, many times fearful and doubtful, raise their voices to be heard, experiencing mixed and conflicting identities.

2.3 Diaspora and Diasporic Literature

Another aspect that gained visibility with the surge of post-colonial studies was that of the literature produced by, or connected with, subjects living in post-colonial diaspora. As stated by Aschroft, et al. (2001, p. 8): “A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place”.

As a focus on displacement gained attention, diasporic literature, the specific field which initially studied the literature that portrays and problematises post-colonial subjects away from their homelands, has become an interest area itself. The sense of the term “diaspora” has already broadened, which might render the definition above too limited. According to Safran (1991)

> Today “diaspora” and, more specifically, “diaspora community” seem increasingly to be used as metaphoric designations for several categories of people—expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities tout court—in much the same way that “ghetto” has come to designate all kinds of crowded, constricted, and underprivileged urban environments, and “holocaust” has come to be applied to all kinds of mass murder. (p. 83)

Diasporic identities have come into focus as a phenomenon that has to be studied in its own right, a post-colonial by-product that has produced its own literature, experiences, identity

problems, which has aspects of its own and which could not be analysed only using any framework that applied either to the central power or to the colonies. However, with the thematisation of the plight of the diasporic subject there also appeared a vision which idealised or exoticised it, seeing the diasporic subject as a sort of perfect cosmopolitan subject, while obscuring inequality and economic oppression. Bhabha (1994: xiv) warns against the exoticism and consumerist vision of cosmopolitanism:

> There is a kind of global cosmopolitanism, widely influential now, that configures the planet as a concentric world of national societies extending to global villages. It is a cosmopolitanism of relative prosperity (…) A global cosmopolitanism of this sort readily celebrates a world of plural cultures and peoples located at the periphery, so long as they produce healthy profit margins within metropolitan societies [...] There is, however, another cosmopolitanism of the Trinidadian variety, figuratively speaking (…) Its claims to freedom and equality are marked by a "right to difference in equality" rather than a diversity founded on dual economy.

Diasporic literature is connected to what Bhabha (1994) calls a transnational culture. The author claims that contemporary post-colonial culture is transnational:

> It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement, whether they are the "middle passage" of slavery and indenture, the "voyage out" of the civilizing mission, the fraught accommodation of Third World migration to the West after the Second World War, or the traffic of economic and political refugees within and outside the Third World. Culture is translational because such spatial histories of displacement —now accompanied by the territorial ambitions of "global" media technologies— make the question of how culture signifies, or what is signified by culture, a rather complex issue. (p. 172)

The diasporic area of analysis is deeply relevant to work with Adichie's texts. In *Purple Hibiscus*, diaspora is a fantasy (or a terror) that haunts Kambili, the protagonist, as her aunt and cousins consider moving to the USA during a dictatorship, for political and economic reasons. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, diasporic subjects are people displaced within their own country because of civil war.

In the case of Adichie herself, even her own status as an "African" writer has been put into question because of her living half the year in Nigeria and half in the United States. According to Dawson Varughese (2012, p 85), Adichie "upholds the Nigerian tradition of excellence in Anglophone writing, but as she spends more and more time away from Nigeria it comes into question how Nigerian her writing will remain, and what sense of 'nigerianness' will be manifest in her work".

However, we believe that her living in two continents should not make her writing less "Nigerian" and, even if this were the case, her being in this in-between place makes her view and her depiction of diasporic Nigerian subjects most enriching. As Rushdie says about himself:

> I am speaking now of those of us who emigrated... and I suspect that there are times when the move seems wrong to us all, when we seem, to ourselves, post-lapsarian men and women. We are Hindus who have crossed the black water; we are Muslims who eat pork. And as a result—as my use of the Christian notion of the Fall indicates—we are now partly of the West. Our identity is at once *plural and partial*. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however *ambiguous and shifting* this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy. If literature is in part the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality, then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective, may provide us with such angles. (Rushdie, 1991, p. 15, our italics)

"Plural and partial" are the words used by Rushdie to describe his identity. In this paper, we are going to apply Bhabha's concept of hybridity for this *ambiguous ground*:

> Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the "pure" and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 112)

Hybridity will be an aspect worked on in both lines of analysis: the theme of characters

finding their own voice (See Chapter 3: A Voice of Their Own, p. 18), and the theme of language (Chapter 4: Language, Identity and the Post-Colonial Writer, p. 42). We should remember that it is not just diasporic African people who are hybrid. Subjects' identity in a post-colonial society is hybrid *per se*. In “Jumping Monkey Hill”, the only short story that we are going to analyse in this paper in detail, we will read about the encounter of several writers from different African nations who gather in a workshop. While they each attempt to write their own story, the “authenticity” of their stories is going to be put into question by a non-African authority. In this story, it is precisely the hybridity of African characters that is presented against a monadic discourse of what “authenticity” is. This can be related to Apter's concept of commercialised identities (as seen on p. 11). As they are hybrid, they are not seen as “authentic”, which implies that they are not marketable.

As regards “cultural identity”, we are going to follow Hall's definition:

> There are at least two different ways of thinking about “cultural identity” The first position defines “cultural identity” in terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective “one true self”, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed “selves” which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common […] There is however, a second, related but different view of cultural identity. This second position recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute “what we really are”; or rather —since history has intervened—,“what we have become”. (Hall, 1993, pp. 223-224)

We are going to use the second definition of cultural identity Hall gives. Therefore, differences remain critical, and we can link this notion of identity directly with Bhabha's concept of hybridity. At different moments within their history, characters might be trying to “find” their own identity, but this is not something to be found, but actually a construct, a “suture”, as Hall claims (1996: 3-4), which implies that characters' identities are multiply developed across different (often intersecting and antagonistic) discourses, practices and positions.

2.4 Gender Studies and the Post-colonial

After Ashcroft et al.'s work, various subareas of post-colonial studies have developed and addressed several issues which the authors had already considered. One of these issues is the interface between gender theory and post-colonialism. Although we are not going to deal with gender theory in depth here, it is an approach deeply entwined with post-colonial studies, since the social construction of identity is at its core.

In the essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), Spivak discusses the representation of subjugated subjects in post-colonial discourse. First, Spivak speaks of the subjugated subject of Imperialism and reminds the reader that the colonised subaltern subject is “irretrievably heterogenous” (p. 26). Later, Spivak states that in subaltern studies, “‘the subject’ implied by the texts of insurgency can only serve as a counterpossibility for the narrative sanctions granted to the colonial subjects in the dominant groups” (p. 28). The author ends her essay by analysing the role of women as double subalterns. This point will be addressed in our own analysis, since we will not only analyse how “subalterns speak”, but also what the importance of female characters' voices is in the texts.

With the surge of post-colonial studies, a criticism of white-Eurocentric feminism has developed. As Storni Fricke states (2012, p. 12), acknowledgment of diversity among women is an important feature of the most recent feminist theory, particularly relevant in our globalised context. In her paper “Toward a Decolonial Feminism” (2010, p. 743) Lugones claims that gender is a system imposed by colonial situations in the first modernity.

However, Segato (2016, p. 112) does not agree with this view entirely. Unlike Lugones, Segato claims that, before modern colonialism, non-European villages had gender category divisions and patriarchal organisations, but she agrees that these organisations were deeply affected

by colonial modernity:

> [C]uando esa colonial modernidad se le aproxima al género de la aldea, lo modifica peligrosamente. Interviene la estructura de relaciones de la aldea, las captura y las reorganiza desde dentro, manteniendo la apariencia de continuidad pero transformando los sentidos, al introducir un orden ahora regido por normas diferentes.[1]. (Segato, 2016: p. 113)

Both authors agree that Eurocentric feminism does not address this matter. In the case of Lugones, she proposes a decolonial feminism (2010, p. 746), while Segato considers herself in a middle position between the Eurocentric feminism which claims that "all gender problems are equal" and Lugones' idea of gender as a colonial European imposition on previously non-gendered colonised societies (Segato, 2016, p. 111-112). As we can see, a strong relation between feminism and post-colonial studies is self-evident.

As regards Adichie, the writer is a self-proclaimed feminist, which is stated in her *TEDTalk* "We should all be feminists" (2012) and in the book of the same name (Adichie, 2014), a print transcription of the talk. Adichie embraces her cultural heritage and portrays the beauty of Igbo customs. However, she is very emphatic in showing the contradictions of systems of values. For instance, in her talk she complains that, although she is the one in her family who is most interested in old traditions, she cannot be present in some ceremonies because only men are allowed to. In her most recently published book, *Dear Ijeawele, or a Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* (2017), she addresses the preconceptions of those who have told her she could not be a feminist because she is African, as well as other well-spread anti-feminist stereotypes. As she shows throughout her works, gender issues are a cause of trouble and distress of different kinds in both Western and non-Western cultures. As we will see especially in Chapter 3: A Voice of Their Own, in the three works analysed here gender issues, domestic and institutional violence and autonomy

1 "[When] that colonial modernity approaches gender in the village, it modifies it dangerously. It intervenes in the structure of relationships in the village. It seizes and reorganises them from within, keeping the appearance of continuity, while changing the meanings, as it inserts an order which has new rules now". (Our translation)

constitute fundamental problems for all of Adichie's main characters.

3. A Voice of Their Own

In another now famous TED talk, "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009c), Adichie discusses a theme deeply related to the aforementioned: not *who* speaks, but *whose* stories are told. As the writer herself claims in this talk: "The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story" (Adichie, 2009c). In this talk she portrays, through personal anecdotes and reflection, several stereotypes she encountered when she first met non-African people. She also tells the story of how, when she started writing, her fictional models were those of canonical literature in English, which is why by discovering writers such as Chinua Achebe, one of the founding fathers of Nigerian literature, she would understand that it was possible to write about the world she knew. The writer is even self-critical when she acknowledges the fact that, when she first visited Mexico, she was shocked by the difference between the representation of "the Mexican" in USA media and the real Mexicans she got to know. Unless a plurality of voices are heard, we believe in "the single story" and take it as true.

The problem of finding a voice of one's own and telling multiple stories appears in most of Adichie's writing, as we will later see in the analysis of her works. In *Purple Hibiscus*, the "single story" to be argued against is that of the narrator's father. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, it is Europe's vision of the Nigerian Civil War. In "Jumping Monkey Hill", it is a Eurocentric scholar's idea of what "authentic" African writing is, what deserves to be narrated, and what does not.

Throughout her narratives, we will find that this question is addressed in several ways: by narrating the stories of those usually not represented, by making them focalisers of the story

(especially in *Half of a Yellow Sun*) and by making the characters themselves reflect on this topic. As Spivak (1988) claims: “one must (...) insist that the colonized subject is irretrievably heterogeneous” (p. 26). A struggle to be heard is also a struggle to build and discuss cultural identity and fight stereotypes.

3.1. *Purple Hibiscus* and the Struggle to be Heard

Adichie's first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), has been critically acclaimed since its publication, and has been the subject of several post-colonial readings (Bonnici, 2006; Okuyade, 2009; Nwira, 2013). The main character is a young woman struggling to find her place in the world, torn between the ultra-westernised views of her despotic father, the progressive syncretism of her aunt and the values of the grandfather she knows little of. This conflict proves ideal for post-colonial analysis. According to Hanif (2012): “The world of *Purple Hibiscus* reveals the human face of Africans who, in the hands of a mature storyteller, become what they truly are” (31).

Adichie is considered to be part of what has been called “third generation Nigerian writers”. The first generation can be said to be that which was published between the 1960's and the early 1970's (including writers such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and Zulu Sofola). The second generation refers to Nigerian writers whose books were published from the 1970's to the late 1980's (e.g. Tunde Fatunde, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Buchi Emecheta). The third generation, apart from Adichie, includes Unoma Azuah, Chim Newton, Akin Adesokan, Sefi Atta and many others.

Nadaswaran (2011) states that, in the texts of third-generation women writers, masculine authoritarian power is exposed as a tool to manipulate female characters into actions and decisions desirable to the father figure. The young female character's response to the father figure / patriarch in the family usually begins with undue admiration. It is the experience of some act of violence, the recognition of unfair treatment and the search for self-agency that causes the female character to

evolve. This is key to reading the three texts selected for this paper, especially the first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003).

Purple Hibiscus focuses on a global conflict, violence, from a local perspective. The main character, Kambili, is the daughter of one of the Great Men in Nigeria. Her father is a very powerful man, rich and politically committed. Although in public he is a hero for his community, the owner of a newspaper which stands against the dictatorship and a man who pays for the education of practically all the children of his hometown, in private he beats his wife and children and subjects them to all kinds of physical and psychological abuse. The father's conflict may be said to be derived from his unresolved identity conflict. Having been educated by Christian missionaries, he rejects his family traditions, to the point that he even considers his own father “heathen” because he still observes traditional Igbo customs and religious beliefs. Kambili's father is ultra-zealous about religion and expects his children to be the best students in their course. He punishes them for not coming first but second in class, for not giving the right religious answer, yet, he is convinced that this is for their best, since he had a non-Christian illiterate father himself and had to struggle for success all alone.

The story starts *in medias res*, on Palm Sunday, when we learn that Jaja, Kambili's brother, rebels against his father and chooses not to attend mass. This makes the father break an *étagère*, which is Kambili's mother's most beloved object, and we see that something has strongly changed, but we do not know exactly what. It is only later in the novel, when we learn about how things used to be before this moment, that we can value how brave Jaja is when he refuses to follow his father's command.

Later, the plot brings us to what has led the characters to this climax, as we are taken “before Palm Sunday”. We see Kambili and Jaja are subjected to their father Eugene's will, following the schedule he has arranged for each of them, including their study and praying time. Everything is

disrupted after something about which the readers do not get much detail, but which allows us to infer that Eugene has inflicted violence upon his wife, an episode of domestic violence that seems to have led to her having a miscarriage, which increases her husband's anger. Later, when Aunty Ifeoma and her children visit, Aunty asks her brother Eugene if she can invite Kambili and Jaja to stay with her and her children at Nsukka campus. Though reluctant, Eugene accepts. At first Kambili cannot relate to her cousins, especially Kamara, a girl of her age who regards Kambili with contempt and assumes she is spoilt because she is rich.

When Kambili meets father Amadi, a friend of her relatives', things start to change for her. Her own religious education contradicts that which Amadi practises -a more humanistic approach to loving and following the commandments. He is the opposite of Father Benedict, who her father admires. Father Benedict is a traditional priest who praises Kambili's father and has decided to go back to mass in Latin, whereas Father Amadi, the newcomer, respects traditional beliefs but has a more tolerant approach to non-orthodox religious practices.

Therefore, Kambili learns that she can be religious in more than one way, and that being a good Christian is closer to Father Amadi and her relatives' behaviour than her father's, even though he is the one most people respect. It is at Ifeoma's household that Kambili's self-perceived identity, which used to be a pure attempt to mirror all that her father expected her to be, begins to shatter, leaving her full of questions about those values and codes of conduct instilled into her.

Ifeoma and her children are educated, middle-class Nigerians who struggle for a living; they are very well-read in Western culture. However, they do not despise old Igbo beliefs, and love and respect Kambili's grandfather, Papa-Nnuku. At her aunt's house, Kambili gets in contact with her grandfather, who Kambili and her brother have been estranged from before, since their father does not let them share time with a person he considers “heathen”. This makes Kambili feel frightened and doubtful. She is afraid of what will happen when her father finds out she has been sharing a

house with him. Despite this fear, because Aunty Ifeoma talks to her about Papa-Nnuku's religion, she comes to see that it may not be so different from hers.

The figure of Aunty Ifeoma can be considered a foil for her brother Eugene. Unlike Eugene, Ifeoma “breaks down the iron walls of hate, intolerance, insensitivity, religious extremism and opens new vistas of peace in the real world” (Hanif, 2012, p. 27).

When Kambili's father finds out about Papa-Nnuku, he takes Kambili and Jaja back to Enogu, where he physically punishes them so hard that Kambili has to be hospitalised and is close to death. This makes Kambili and Jaja reunite with their Aunty and her children. This goes well until Kambili's father joins them and tells them that their mother has had a miscarriage, which the reader knows is the result of his beating her. Although Aunty Ifeoma begs them not to leave, Kambil and Jaja return to Enugu, and then the Palm Sunday incident occurs.

Aunty Ifeoma faces her own dilemma: whether to leave Nigeria or not. As we have seen before (p. 12), Aschroft et al. claim that a major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement: “It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place” (Aschroft et al., 2001, p. 8).

After Palm Sunday, Kambili and Jaja go to Nnsuka again, but the economic crisis is affecting Aunty Ifeoma very harshly and she has decided to leave for the USA with her children. Moreover, Father Amadi has been called to go on a mission to Europe, and Kambili realises that she is in love with him. The situation worsens when her mother calls to inform that their father has died. Kambili and Jaja go back to Enugu, and there is a police investigation which shows the man has been poisoned. Although it was his wife Beatrice who poisoned him, Jaja takes the blame and is sent to prison. In the third part of the novel, “The Present”, we learn that three years have passed, Kambili and her mother visit Jaja in prison and they tell him that he will soon be released. Aunty

Ifeoma and her children are living in the USA and Father Amadi and Kambili exchange letters.

Several post-colonial readings of this novel have seen a clear parallelism between Kambili's search for her own voice and Nigeria' s search for self-definition and nationhood (Sackeyfio, 2015 and 2017; Okuyade, 2009). Moreover, the story is set in the middle of political struggles and a coup-d'etat. [i] According to Okayude:

> [J]ust as Kambili continues to search for her voice, so also Nigeria continues her search for self-definition and nationhood. Chimamanda Adichie employs a rhetorical device through which she interrogates the Nigerian socio-political situation. Just like Kambili, Jaja and their mother, the Nigerian people continue to be subjected to silent spaces. The novel displays the imperceptibility of government to the plight of the people who continue to wobble in their zigzagging fate and the insidious character of government. (Okayude, 2009: 7)

According to Spivak (1988) women in many societies have been relegated to the position of “Other”, marginalized and, in a metaphorical sense, “colonised”, forced to pursue guerrilla warfare against imperial domination from positions deeply embedded in, yet fundamentally alienated from, that empire. Women, like post-colonial peoples in general, have had to construct a language of their own when their only available “tools” are those of the one in power (Ashcroft, et al., 2001: 172). As Segato claims (2016, p. 115), modernity has not brought equality, but the superinflation and universalisation of the public (male) sphere, and the decay and privatisation of the domestic (female) sphere, which fossilises the binarisation of gender duality.

One very important fact about this story is that it is told from a first-person perspective. This is remarkable, since Kambili's story is the story of a girl attempting to tell her own story and distance herself from the words that her father has imbedded in her. In the other works analysed here, there is a third-person narrator, focalising on one or many characters. Yet this story, a story of voice-searching, is narrated in the first person, and the importance of this will be shown below.

Kambili, the protagonist of this story, is an obedient daughter. At first, she is unable to

distance herself from the family discourse. Whenever she answers, she expects to be saying something her father would approve of. According to Nadaswaran (2011), “Adichie describes the twisted psychological power held by the father figure that moulds the female character's mind not only into fearful obedience but also undue admiration” (p. 23).

Eugene's discourse, which is monolithic and internalised by Kambili at first, is deeply contrasted with that of Aunt Ifemelu and Father Amadi. They not only contradict his sayings, but also his actions. The first night Kambili and Jaja spend in Nnsuka, Kambili is perplexed to find that, after saying their Hail Marys, Ifeoma and her children sing songs in Igbo. Kambili, still following all her father's rules, wants to tell Jaja with her eyes that this is not right: “It was not right. You did not break into the song in the middle of the rosary. I did not join in the singing, and neither did Jaja” (Adichie, 2003, p. 125).

When her grandfather joins them in the house and Aunt Ifeoma prays for him, Kambili asks how the Lady could intercede on behalf of a heathen, to which Aunt Ifeoma replies: “Your Papa-Nnukwu is not a pagan, Kambili, he is a traditionalist” (Adichie, 2003: p. 81). Later in the novel, she insists that “he is not a heathen but a traditionalist, that sometimes what is different is just as good as what is familiar", that when Papa-Nnukwu did his itu-nzu, his declaration of innocence in the morning, it was the same as saying the rosary (Adichie, 2003: 166). Ifeoma and her daughter Encourage Kambili to reconsider her own beliefs and speak for herself.

Initially, Kambili's own tone of voice is so low that is almost impossible to be heard. Her cousin Amaka asks:

> “Why do you lower your voice?”
> “What?”
> “You lower your voice when you speak. You talk in whispers.” (Adichie, 2003: 117)

Kambili is also amazed by how easy it is for her brother Jaja, who in many aspects is so

similar to her, to speak and articulate his ideas: “How did Jaja do it? How could he speak so easily? Didn't he have the same bubbles of air in his throat, keeping the words back, letting out only a stutter at best?” (Adichie, 2003: 145).

Moreover, Jaja does something they never do, which is reveal the family secrets. Jaja tells his aunt that his finger is deformed because of a physical punishment inflicted by their father:

> Had Jaja forgotten that we never told, that there was so much that we never told? When people asked, he always said his finger was “something” that had happened at home. That way, it was not a lie and it let them imagine some accident. (Adichie, 2003, p. 154)

Actually, Kambili allows herself to show her own feelings for the first time in her Aunty Ifeoma's house when she is disdained by her cousin Amaka. Her aunt encourages her to speak out:

> “*O gini*, Kambili, talk back to her!”
> I watched a wilted African lily fall from its stalk in the garden. The crotons rustled in the late morning breeze. “You don't have to shout, Amaka", I said, finally. “I don't know how to do the orah leaves, but you can show me.”

To which her cousin replies in surprise:

> “So your voice can be this loud, Kambili.” (Adichie, 2003: 170)

There is another aspect of her voice that Kambili expresses for the first time while at her aunt's, and it is her own laughter, which Father Amadi is the first to succeed in provoking, as Kambili herself shows: “I laughed. It sounded strange, as if I were listening to the recorded laughter of a stranger being played back. I was not sure I had ever heard myself laugh” (Adichie, 2003, p. 179).

Therefore, we can see that Kambili's voice, not just what she says but its sound, is another means of communication that has been so far denied and repressed. It is not just that Kambili may be happy for the first time, it is also that this is the first time that she can express how she feels without fearing the repercussions this may have, the way her father may react to this.

Kambili's greatest rebellion, however, is not against her father, but against Father Amadi. When he informs her that he will be leaving and tells her that he will visit her for the first time, she openly tells him not to come.

> "No."
> He stopped to stare at me. "Why?"
> "No. I don't want to." (Adichie, 2012, p. 280)

We can see that the main triumph is the novel itself, a novel written in the first person. It is precisely the voice of a character who was a prisoner of her father's discourse, a voice which was almost inaudible, that is telling us the story, revealing unpronounceable secrets of violence, fear, and discipline. Kambili is revealing that her life is exactly the opposite to what many people, including her own cousin, might think she has because of her material advantages.

Though Kambili and Jaja manage to free themselves from their father's discourse in many aspects of life (religion, virtue, work), there are social discourses which remain too strong. When Jaja learns that his mother has poisoned Eugene, he decides to take the blame. Unlike his father, Jaja aims to protect the women in his family and he knows that his mother could not survive prison. He also knows he is the only one who could endure it, so he sacrifices himself for his mother and sister, taking a traditionally male role, though opposed to that of his father.

3.3. *Half of a Yellow Sun*. History, Identity and Authorship

Half of a Yellow Sun (2009a), Adichie's second novel, is also set at a crucial moment in Nigeria's history. In this case, the novel narrates the story of two sisters in the days before and after Nigeria's independence and the Igbo attempt to establish their own nation, Biafra. This is not accepted by the government of Nigeria, which leads to Civil War. There is a clearly political presentation of the conflict, even from the beginning of the novel, which Adichie dedicates to her

own family:

> My grandfathers, whom I never knew,
> Nwoye David Adichie and Aro-Nweke Felix Odigwe,
> did not survive the war.
>
> My grandmothers, Nwabuodu Regina Odigwe and
> Nwamgbafor Agnes Adichie, remarkable women
> both, did.
>
> This book is dedicated to their memories:
> ka fa nodu na ndokwa.
>
> And to Mellitus, wherever he may be.

We should remember here what we have stated above: The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored (Spivak, 1998, p. 859). Therefore, a decision to write a novel set in the times of the Nigerian Civil War is definitely a political one. Apart from being a literary success, the novel put Biafra (and Nigerian literature) into focus, and it was even made into a film.

It is very interesting to notice that the title of the book refers to the flag of Biafra, a country which only existed for almost three years but which has remained in the mind of the Igbo as a vision of what could have been, like a ghost. Here, the words used by Salman Rushdie to describe what India meant for him before he and his family moved to the UK come to mind. The former is a nation that only existed briefly as such, the latter is a country that still exists, but which will never coincide with the India that existed for Rushdie in the stories told by his family and memories shaped by imagination and photographs. In this sense, we can draw a parallel between Rushdie's India and Adichie's Biafra:

> [M]y India was just that: “my” India, a version and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions. I tried to make it as imaginatively true as I could, but imaginative truth is simultaneously honourable and suspect, and I

> knew that my India may only have been one to which I (who am no longer what I was, and who by quitting Bombay never became what perhaps I was meant to be) was, let us say, willing to admit I belonged. (Rushdie, 1991: 10)

As Rushdie does for *his* India, *Half of a Yellow Sun* attempts to reconstruct Biafra through fiction, not history. The novel tells the story of Olanna, the daughter of a rich man who is living with Odenigbo (a professor at Nsukka University), of their houseboy Ugwu, and of Kainene and Richard —Olanna's sister and her British boyfriend.

The story is not told chronologically but presented in an alternation of flashbacks starting from the early sixties, later moving on to the late sixties, back to where the first part was interrupted, and then moving forward to the late sixties again. At the beginning, Ugwu moves into Odenigbo's house to work as his houseboy. Ugwu is a poor child from a small village, and is impressed by Odenigbo's culture, his middle-class lifestyle, and his girlfriend Olanna. The couple, in a protective and somewhat paternalistic way, take care of him, make him go to school, and ensure that he becomes a well-read boy.

Meanwhile, Olanna's sister, Kainene, materialistic and business-minded, meets Richard, a British journalist who is in Nigeria attempting to write a book about some art pieces. They start a romantic relationship. Kainene is the “ugly” sister, or so she has been labelled, but is also the “good” daughter who takes care of the family business, whereas Olanna is doing everything her family stands against: living with a man, unmarried, and joining a circle of left-wing intellectuals who advocate revolutionary causes.

The novel then shifts to the late sixties. The Igbo people announce that they will be forming a state separate from Nigeria: Biafra, and this intensifies social violence. We learn that something terrible has happened between Olanna and Kainene. The sisters are not talking anymore, and we suspect what will later be revealed in the third part of the novel, which goes back to the early

sixties: Olanna, drunk and angry, has slept with Richard, her sister's boyfriend. Her shocking behaviour is caused by Odenigbo's infidelity. Her boyfriend has not just cheated on her with a young woman employed by his mother, but he has also impregnated her. As the political situation worsens, however, Olanna and Kainene reunite. Since the war started, they have moved and are living precariously; Kainene is also working in a refugee camp.

Diaspora in this novel is the displacement of characters within their own country, not to another continent as in *Purple Hibiscus*[ii]. Besides, diaspora here in not a possibility characters such as Aunty Ifeoma may choose, but a forced escape about which they have no choice. If they do not leave their hometowns, they will be most likely killed by the Hausa soldiers. The dramatic situation forces them to revise their opinions, lower their standards, minimize problems they considered serious before war, death and hunger. In Richard's case, we cannot talk about diaspora: this is a single expatriate who could live comfortably in Europe. Still, what is interesting about him is that he wishes to belong to a group of people that will never consider him one of their own.

Richard's presence is the vehicle used to discuss the existence of an Igbo identity. This character suffers a strong transformation from the beginning of the novel, where he shows his good intentions but deep ignorance about Igbo culture. At the beginning of the novel, Richard visits a local village to find information about Igbo artworks, and he unwillingly insults Pa Anozie, an elderly man, when he asks him about Igbo kings, therefore showing his ignorance of Igbo culture, since there was never an Igbo monarchy:

> Pa Anozie gave Richard a long, pained look and mumbled something for a while, looking grieved. Emeka laughed before he translated: “Papa said he thought you were among the white people who know something. He said the people of Igboland do not know what a king is.” (Adichie, 2009a, p. 71)

At one point in the story, Richard encounters some European reporters in Nigeria and is appalled by their lack of understanding and their racism. It is only by experiencing life in Nigeria

and his personal relationships that he has been able to understand Nigerian (especially Igbo) idiosyncracies and the complexities his European colleagues ignore. There is definitely a link here to Adichie's own words in "The Danger of a Single Story" (2009c). Poverty and famine are part of Nigeria's story, but they are not the only story to be told, not even in a novel set in the Civil War.

The question of Richard's voice is also addressed by Richard himself. When Madu, a friend of Kainene's who is a military man, asks Richard to write about the situation in Nigeria, Richard answers indignantly that he has only asked him to do so because he is white. Madu answers: "Of course I've asked you because you are white. They will take what you write more seriously because you are white. The truth is that this is not your war. (…) So if you really want to contribute, this is the way you can" (Adichie, 2009a, p. 305).

Madu does not consider Richard a true voice of the Biafran people, but he does know that his voice is the one that will be heard "outside", in the heart of the Empires, because the voice of the Igbo (and Africans in general) is not heard in Europe, even though they are the ones who are suffering the consequences of the war which British rule has fueled. This is what Richard explains in an article addressed to a British newspaper, acting as a sort of "ambassador" of Igbo politics for Western readers:

> It is imperative to remember that the first time the Igbo people were massacred, albeit on a much smaller scale than what has recently occurred, was in 1945. That carnage was precipitated by the British colonial government when it blamed the Igbo people for the national strike, banned Igbo-published newspapers, and generally encouraged anti-Igbo sentiment. The notion of the recent killings being the product of "age-old" hatred is therefore misleading. The tribes of the North and the South have long had contact, at least as far back as the ninth century, as some of the magnificent beads discovered at the historic Igbo-Ukwu site attest. No doubt these groups also fought wars and slave-raided each other, but they did not massacre in this manner. If this is hatred, then it is very young. It has been caused, simply, by the informal divide-and-rule policies of the British colonial exercise. These policies manipulated the differences between the tribes and ensured that unity would not exist, thereby making the easy governance of such a large country practicable. (Adichie, 2009a, pp. 166-167)

Richard's identity is problematic. He perceives himself as Igbo, feels more at home in Africa than in England. For him, Biafra's declaration of independence represents the possibility of starting over. However, he is not taken as an equal by native Igbo people. He is torn between the identities others ascribe to him and the one which he perceives, fragmented or incomplete in terms of Hall (1996, p. 4):

> Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity —an “identity” in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation). Above all, and directly contrary to the form in which they are constantly invoked, identities are constructed through, not outside, difference.

In this sense, violence is constitutional to the characters in the novel, whose identities are constructed in opposition to each other, not just symbolically, but actually in a war setting. Violence is also symbolic, especially represented through stereotyping. Richard's dialogues with Europeans show him confronting stereotypical visions of African problems. For instance, there is a secondary character in the novel, Susan (who is initially Richard's girlfriend until he leaves her for Kainene), who is the embodiment of European prejudice. At one moment she gives Richard her explanation of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria:

> There are lots and lots of Igbo people here —well, they are everywhere really, aren't they? Not that they didn't have it coming to them, when you think about it, with their being so clannish and uppity and controlling the markets. Very Jewish, really. And to think Yoruba, for example, who have had contact with Europeans on the coast for years. I remember somebody telling me when I first came to be careful about hiring an Igbo houseboy because, before I knew it, he would own my house and the land it was built on. (Adichie, 2009a, p. 154)

Her stereotypical representation of Igbo people is challenged throughout the novel. Hers is the personification of those views on African matters that Richard tries to disarticulate in his texts.

However, as a European, he is constantly challenged on his right to tell the story or to consider himself Biafran. The question of who can speak and tell the story is shown not only through Richard's paradox, but also in the narratological structure of *Half of a Yellow Sun*.[iii] Though narrated in the third person, the novel shifts from Olanna's focalisation to Ugwu's and Richard's. Moreover, there is a story-within-the-story, a framed narration. This has the title “The Book: The World Was Silent When We Died” and it explains the political and economic context of the war. It narrates some violent episodes the characters have experienced. The identity of the author of this book-within-the-book is only revealed at the end of the novel.

Initially, readers may be led to believe that it is Richard, the non-Nigerian, who is writing this text. This is deeply related to the language question posed at the beginning of this paper: Is it acceptable to write in the language of the coloniser? Is it fine to let a foreigner tell the story? Or is language just another tool, a possibility to take, as useful as others?

There is a revealing moment in the novel when we learn that the book-within-the-book is not Richard's. Ugwu asks him:

> “Are you still writing your book, *sah*?’
> “No.”
> “‘The World Was Silent When We died’. It is a good title.”
> “Yes, it is. It came from something Colonel Madu said once.”
> Richard paused. “The war isn’t my story to tell, really.”
> Ugwu nodded. He had never thought it was. (Adichie, 2009a, p. 425)

The novel narrates a war and it is a man who will tell the story, yet it is the two sisters’ struggle which, like other women's, actually keeps the community together while men are fighting. Kainene makes use of her business-oriented mind to organize shelters, markets, distribution of food, while Olanna decides to focus on children's education. These heroines/victims of war sustain the Igbo community, aid the sick, protect their family, fight with each other. The novel gives not only

visibility, but also voice, to women fighting in ways traditionally considered more “feminine” (as Olanna with her organization of the school) and those which are considered to be more “masculine” (Kainene planning the supply of food, organizing the markets, being a manager).

Spivak's postulation (1988) about the role of women in colonialist and revolutionary narratives comes to mind:

> Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is double effected. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labor, for both of which there is "evidence." It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has not history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. (p. 28)

Adichie reproduces this idea: female participation in insurgency is not only accounted for, it is in the heart of the story, yet the male role is kept dominant, both during war and after it (it is Ugwu, not a maid, or the girl he raped, who will be writing). Paradoxically, as a writer, Adichie herself is one element against this ideological construction.

As regards style, the novel is full of visual, olfactory and gustatory images. We can clearly see this in the importance of food in the text. Bodies (and voices) are those on whom violence is inflicted. Using food, flavours, smells, Adichie gets to represent pleasure and pain before, during and after the war. This is a deliberate choice, the choice to highlight what is material and therefore bring to the forefront what is “feminine”. According to Butler (1993):

> The classical association of femininity with materiality can be traced to a set of etymologies which link matter with *mater* and *matrix* (or the womb) and, hence, with a problematic of reproduction. The classical configuration of matter as a site of *generation* or *origination* becomes especially significant when the account of what an object is and means requires recourse to its originating principle. When not explicitly associated with reproduction, matter is generalized as a principle of origination and causality. (p. 31)

In this sense, we can think of Adichie's own words in her TEDtalk “We Should All Be

Feminists" (2012), and her later publication of this talk as a book (Adichie, 2015). In this text, the author highlights the importance of food and how leaving boys out of the knowledge of cooking because it is "feminine" is actually impoverishing for them (37).

We can see that, when Ugwu arrives at Odenigbo's house to work as a houseboy, he is impressed by the abundance of food in the fridge, and also by the fridge itself, an artifact he has never seen before. When Olanna arrives at Odenigbo's house. Ugwu attempts to please her by preparing a *jollof* rice, a typical Nigerian dish. Though his cooking does not impress, she decides to teach him to cook, and makes him a refined cook who knows a lot about traditional dishes but can handle modern kitchen hardware as well. The hybrid post-colonial context is portrayed in these domestic scenes: a town boy who works for a middle-class university professor who discusses Marxism and Pan-African ideas with his colleagues, who buys Western houseware and favours traditional Igbo dishes.

Female bodies are described and admired. Ugwu compares Olanna to a cashew nut because of her shape and likens her skin to butter (Adichie, 2009a, p. 25). This beauty is also a disadvantage to her when her own parents try to use her as merchandise to get an important business deal. On the other hand, since Kainene is "the ugly sister", she cannot fulfill this duty, but she is the one who takes care of the family business.

By the end of the novel, we learn that Kainene, who has ventured outside the camp to try to get supplies, has disappeared and her body is never found. The importance of her physical absence is heavy against all the material descriptions in the text.

As in *Purple Hibiscus*, violence is a theme in itself, and it is intrinsically linked to gender roles. Violence is a constitutional part of conflict in *Half of a Yellow* Sun [iv]. Violence affects the country, its citizens, and their relationships.

One of the scenes where we can read about bodies and their maiming takes place when Olanna travels to Sabon Gari to visit her relatives, only to find them massacred:

> Uncle Mbaezi lay facedown in an ungainly twist, legs splayed. Something creamy-white oozed through the large gash on the back of his head. Aunty Ifeka lay on the veranda. The cuts on her naked body were smaller, dotting her arms and legs like slightly parted red lips. Olanna felt a watery queasiness in her bowels before the numbness spread over her and stopped at her feet. (Adichie, 2009a, p. 148)

On her way back to Nsukka, Olanna travels with Igbo survivors of Hausa attacks. A woman carries a calabash on her lap, which she opens and forces Olanna to look into: the woman's daughter's head is there, she has been mutilated by Hausa rioters. After doing this, the woman talks to Olanna about her daughter's hair and how hard it was for her to braid it (Adichie, 2009a: 149). Through this image, domestic care and intimacy are contrasted against the bestiality of the mutilated body. After this horrendous experience, Olanna arrives at her home and suffers a nervous breakdown.

Yet, the characters not only suffer violence, they inflict it as well. Odenigbo, a progressive intellectual, cheats on Olanna with a young girl whose consent is strongly debatable, since she is his mother's servant and follows her commands. When she delivers the baby, it is evident that she has been left absolutely traumatised by the event. She cannot take care of her daughter, she feels no affection towards her. Olanna decides to keep the baby and some kind of happiness is restored for the couple. Yet, we will never get to know more about the young girl and how life continues for her after the experience. Cooper (2008, p. 149) is deeply critical of Adichie's handling of the topic and the way Olanna forgives Odenigbo for his infidelity --the novel does not even seem to take into account the abusive nature of the sexual relationship-- and the way it seems to condone men since “it is in their biological make-up to be sexually promiscuous” (Cooper, 2008, p, 149).

In one of the most violent scenes in the novel, Ugwu, drunk and angry, enters a bar only to find out that one of his fellow soldiers is raping a young girl while his mates cheer him.

> The bar girl was lying on her back on the floor, her wrapper bunched up at her waist, her shoulders held down by a soldier, her legs wide, wide ajar. She was sobbing, "Please, please, *biko*." Her blouse was still on. Between her legs, High-Tech was moving. His thrusts were jerky, his small buttocks darker-colored than his legs. The soldiers were cheering.
> "High-Tech, enough! Discharge and retire!"
> High-Tech groaned before he collapsed on top of her. A soldier pulled him off and was fumbling at his own trousers when somebody said, "No! Target Destroyer is next!"
> Ugwu backed away from the door.

This soldier encourages Ugwu to rape the girl too, to which he concedes:

> "*Ujo abiala o!* Target Destroyer is afraid!"
> Ugwu shrugged and moved forward. "Who is afraid?" he said disdainfully. "I just like to eat before others, that is all."
> "The food is still fresh!"
> "Target Destroyer, aren't you a man? *I bukwa nwoke?*"
> On the floor, the girl was still. Ugwu pulled his trousers down, surprised at the swiftness of his erection. She was dry and tense when he entered her. He did not look at her face, or at the man pinning her down, or at anything at all as he moved quickly and felt his own climax, the rush of fluids to the tips of himself: a self-loathing release. He zipped up his trousers while some soldiers clapped.
> (Adichie, 2009a, p. 365)

The metaphors used by the soldiers to encourage rape are either war ones ("discharge and retire") or culinary ones ("I just like to eat before others", "the food is still fresh"). The sensuality of food metaphor previously used to praise a woman becomes its counterpart, the language of loathing and dehumanisation. The war metaphor shows what this truly is about: not sex, but power. Boesten (2014) has analysed cases of war rape when the victim did not belong to the enemy group and how this reinforced gendered hierarchies: "[T]his strategy of divide and rule not only weakened communities but also explicitly reinforced gendered hierarchies within them" (pp. 25-26). Even a character as Ugwu, sensitive and peaceful, succumbs to mandates of male domination through peer-pressure.

The rape scene, and its implications, has attracted much criticism to Adichie, a self-proclaimed feminist, especially since, by the end of the book, we will learn that Ugwu is the person who is narrating the Book-Within-the-Book. In Cooper's view, Adichie involuntarily plays to what Apter has called "commercialised identities" (as seen on p. 11):

> [Adichie] is outraged by the distorted representations of Africa and is sucked into the discourse which produces them. She is passionate about gender and the violation of women, and she is determined that men, who are also subjected to the aftermath of slavery and the existence of racism in the world, are not excluded from subjectivity. (...) In the fanfare of the metamorphosis of the devil penis into the liberating pen, the violation of the woman in the bar, in all its stark reality, disappears from view. (Cooper, 2008, p. 150)

Ugwu, the character who could not read or write at the beginning of the novel, whose English was initially very limited, is not only given a voice, but is also the one who writes, the one who can move from underrated African orature to Western-celebrated literature – in English. However, though Ugwu may be a subaltern speaking, this does not instantly guarantee truth: he will most likely never reveal the act where he acted as an oppressor at its highest point of violence, the moment when he subjected a woman through male violence. However, in our view, the fact the narrator of the new Biafra is a seriously flawed one does not challenge the anti-single-story objective. Quite the contrary, its contradictory nature makes it even richer and less monolithic. While a post-colonial character is given voice, gender inequality remains. That woman he has raped is never heard of again. The focaliser of the rape scene is Ugwu, but he will probably not include this episode in "The Book". And even if he had the honesty to narrate it, would it do justice to the victim? A post-colonial setting (a civil war fueled by colonial powers) helps reinforce gender violence (soldiers submitting female civilians through sexual attacks). The possibility of a plurality of voices being heard will not deactivate this. As Segato (2016) claims, global societies do not mean gender equality (as previously discussed on p. 23).

As in *Purple Hibiscus*, the triumph in this novel is that characters can find a voice of their

one's own. In the previous novel, it was through the first-person narration; in this one, it is by taking "ownership" of the story to tell by writing it. Ugwu has never thought Biafra's story was Richard's to tell. Richard has always wanted to be part of this "imagined community" (Anderson, 2006), but will not succeed in such an enterprise, since the members of such community refuse to acknowledge him as one, and he will come to terms with the fact that Igbo history is not his own. In this sense, the novel is quite essentialist. While showing the triumph of those post-colonial subjects in expressing their voices, it denies the possibility of a non-native to consider Biafran history his own too, despite Richard's attempts at acculturation, and fails to give a voice to the women submitted through poverty and rape: the only female focalisers are highly educated, affluent women.

3.3. The Problem of Authenticity in "Jumping Monkey Hill"

In "Jumping Monkey Hill", a short story included in the collection *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009b), the narrator, Ujunwa, attends a writing workshop for African writers directed by British scholar Edward and his wife Isobel. The story is set in a place called "Jumping Monkey Hill" in South Africa, which is described as "the kind of place where [Ujunwa] imagined affluent foreign tourists would dart around taking pictures of lizards and then return home still mostly unaware that there were more black people than red-capped lizards in South Africa" (Adichie, 2009b, p. 95). This idea, the stereotypical representation of Africa, is prevalent in the whole text as something pervasive that writers need to resist while, at the same time, they look for their mentor's support.

Precisely, through Edward's character, Adichie criticises European discourse to Africans about their own reality: "Ujunwa did not like the idea of eating an ostrich, did not even know that people ate ostriches, and when she said so, Edward laughed good-naturedly and said that of course

ostrich was an African staple" (Adichie, 2009b, p. 101).

This theme appears again in a conversation where the different writers acknowledge they have been told by Europeans how they should feel about literature which depicts Africa, which authors were "on their side": "The Senegalese said she nearly vomited when a professor at the Sorbonne told her that Conrad was really on her side, as if she could not decide for herself who was on her side" (Adichie, 2009b, p. 102).

Moreover, the writers in the workshop make fun of all the national stereotypes even Africans sometimes reproduce. "You Kenyans are too submissive! You Nigerians are too aggressive! You Tanzanians have no fashion sense! You Senegalese are too brainwashed by the French!" (Adichie, 2009b: 102).

Every writer has to read a story to the rest, and the group will provide feedback. However, most of the works are dismissed by Edward as being "not relevant" or "not authentic", because he does not think they represent what matters to Africans now, or he even questions whether such a thing could actually take place. Of course, due to the imbalance of power, it is hard for writers to argue with him, since this could mean that their stories would not be published. In this story, the relation between "authenticity" and the idea of a homogeneous identity, as criticised by Hall (1996, as seen on p. 15), is evident.

For instance, when the Zimbabwean writer shows her story to the group, Edward comments "The writing was certainly ambitious, but the story itself begged the question 'So what?' There was something terribly passé about it when one considered all the other things happening in Zimbabwe under the horrible Mugabe" (Adichie, 2009b, p. 107). Although several writers do not agree with this, they do not say anything and remain silent. Edward believes that the Zimbabwean writer does not represent or show a valid image of what he considers Zimbabwe's single identity (Hall, 1996), which is, as Adichie postulates, a "single story" (Adichie, 2009c).

Later on, when the Senegalese reads two pages of a story about a gay couple, Edward claims that homosexual stories of this sort do not reflect Africa adequately, which provokes Ujunwa's anger:

> "Which Africa?" Ujunwa blurted out (…) [Edward] said that he wasn't speaking as an Oxford-trained Africanist, but as one who was keen on the real Africa and not the imposing of Western ideas on African venues (…) "This may indeed be the year 2000, but how African is it for a person to tell her family that she is homosexual?" Edward asked. (Adichie, 2009b, p. 108)

The fact that the person who decides what writing is relevant in an African writers' workshop is a white Englishman is of course revealing of how imperialism still works in cultural terms, even from supposedly more progressive points of view (Cfr. Apter, 2006, p. 3). In fact, Adichie herself is quite ironic by having the narrator feel that the piece on the killings in the Congo written by the Tanzanian (which Edward has commended on for being urgent and relevant) actually read "like a piece from The Economist with cartoon characters painted in" (Adichie, 2009b, p. 109).

As the story progresses, Ujungwa feels more and more uncomfortable about Edward and the way things are done. Moreover, Edward makes sexually inappropriate comments to her:

> Ujunwa saw that all the seats under the umbrellas were occupied.
> "I don't mind sitting in the sun," she said, already getting up. "Would you like me to stand up for you, Edward?"
> "I'd rather like you to lie down for me," he said. The moment was humid, thick; a bird cawed from far away. Edward was grinning. Only the Ugandan and the Tanzanian had heard him. Then the Ugandan laughed. And Ujunwa laughed, because it was funny and witty, she told herself, when you really thought about it. (Adichie, 2009b, p. 106)

As Segato (2016, p. 113) claims, modernity reinforces gender domination, while masquerading it as equality:

> Si la aldea siempre estuvo organizada por el estatus, dividida en espacios bien caracterizados y con reglas propias, con prestigios diferenciales y un orden

> jerárquico, habitados por criaturas destinadas a ellos que pueden ser, de forma muy genérica, reconocidas desde la perspectiva moderna como hombres y mujeres por sus papeles (...) el discurso de la colonial / modernidad, a pesar de mostrarse como igualitario, esconde en su interior (…) un hiato jerárquico abisal, debido a lo que podríamos aquí llamar, tentativamente, totalización progresiva por la esfera pública o *totalitarismo de la esfera pública.* Sería posible inclusive sugerir que es la esfera pública lo que hoy continúa y profundiza el proceso colonizador.[2].

At first, Ujunwa minimises what has happened, but later she expresses her dislike for this kind of behaviour to her peers, who agree with her. However, it is dangerous to defy Edward, since he represents the chance to move away from stagnation, crisis, and mediocrity. Therefore, none of them is willing, or able, to confront Edward:

> She put down her half-finished glass of wine and said, "Edward is always looking at my body." The Kenyan and the white South African and Zimbabwean stared at her. Ujunwa repeated, "Edward is always looking at my body." The Kenyan said it was clear from the first day that the man would be climbing on top of that flat stick of a wife and wishing it were Ujunwa; the Zimbabwean said Edward's eyes were always leering when he looked at Ujunwa; the white South African said Edward would never look at a white woman like that because what he felt for Ujunwa was a fancy without respect.
> "You all noticed?" Ujunwa asked them. "You all noticed?" She felt strangely betrayed. (Adichie, 2009b, 107)

Sexual harassment is portrayed twice in the story. As in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, in "Jumping Monkey Hill" we have a framed narration. Within the story we read the piece that Ujunwa is writing during her stay, in which she tells the story of Chioma, a woman who starts working for a bank and leaves her job after being sexually harassed by a client and realises this is part of what she is expected to tolerate in order to please clients. As we find out later, the story is actually a

2 "Even if the village has always been organised according to status, divided in well-distinguished spaces and with rules of its own, with differential prestige and a hierarchical order, inhabited by creatures destined to what can be, in a very generical way, considered, from a modern perspective, as men and women because of their roles (…), the discourse of colonial /modernity, despite showing itself egalitarian, hides in its core (...) a great hierarchical gap, due to what we could here call, tentatively, a progressive totalisation of the public sphere or *totalitarism* of the public sphere. It would be even possible to suggest that it is the public sphere that continues and reinforces the colonising process nowadays". (Our translation)

fictionalization of a real event in Ujunwa's life.

The sad irony is that it is Edward, who sexually harasses Ujunwa and a Senegalese writer as well, who dismisses her story by saying “It's never quite like that in real life, is it? Women are never victims in that sort of crude way and certainly not in Nigeria. (…) This is agenda writing, it isn't a real story of real people” (Adichie, 2009b: 113-114). Edward wields power to dictate what is relevant about a country foreign to him to actual inhabitants of this country. Moreover, he lectures female writers, from his male position, on what kind of abuse women suffer, while making inappropriate sexual comments to women whose careers he has the power to change. Here, Adichie focuses on the two problems her TEDTalks (*The Danger of a Single Story* and *We Should All Be Feminists*) address --gender issues and the homogeneity of narratives-- at once.

Despite Edward's criticism, Ujunwa manages to tell her story. She also manages to defend it and speak her voice, though this will probably mean that she will not win the contest. Telling her own story, raising her voice, means that there will be no material victory for her. Yet, there is another gain for her, though it might just be a moral one.

4. Language, Identity and the Post-Colonial Writer

As Ashcroft et al. (2001, p, 179) have stated, it was the interaction of English writing with the older traditions of orature or literature in post-colonial societies, and the emergence of a writing which has as a major aim the assertion of social and cultural difference, which have radically questioned assumptions about the characteristics of the genres we usually employ as structuring and categorizing definitives (novel, lyric, epic, play, etc.).

Anyokwu (2011, p. 1) supports this view:

> [L]iteracy as a major element of modernity came with colonialism in Africa, and, as such, those equipped with the ability to read and write in the language of the colonial masters, became the avatars of African belles-lettres. And, since language is the

> vector of culture, in Anglophone Africa, English became not only the official language but the medium of instruction in schools.

The two sides of literacy in English in Africa are highlighted by Kachru (1986): English has been the subjugator of many African peoples, but it can be felt as a better tool to write back than the local languages: “Whatever the limitations of English, it has been perceived as the language of power and opportunity, free of the limitations that the ambitious attribute to the native languages” (p. 9).

Chinua Achebe, one of the fathers of Nigerian literature, wonders, as a writer and an intellectual, what position to take when writing from a former colony. Should the writer do it in the language of the Empire, so that it can reach back to it and also to readers from all around the globe? Should he or she do it in their mother tongue in order to resist? Achebe's choice is in favour of appropriation: “Is it right that a man should abandon his mother tongue for someone else's? It looks like a dreadful betrayal and produces a guilty feeling. But for me there is no other choice. I have been given the language and I intend to use it” (Achebe, 1965, p. 62). This way, he claims, he can use it in his own way, twist it and *write back*.

Adichie chooses to follow Achebe's path. She writes her novels in English but incorporates Igbo words and phrases, often without translation. Strehle (2008, p. 123) echoes Achebe's question: Since Adichie's choice of language, like that of any African writer, takes place in a former colony: does an African's use of a European language reinforce colonial structures or power, or can it call them into question?

As we will discuss later in the analysis of language in *Purple Hibiscus* (see p. 45) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (see p. 49), the language choices made by the writer, as well as the characters' own thoughts on language, reflect on polyphony against univocity, as well as on who is able to tell their own story (and whose story will be heard). We consider Adichie's works polyphonic, in the sense in

which Bakhtin (1984, p. 15) uses this term to describe Dostoievsky's novels when he states that their main characteristic is the plurality of voices and independent consciousness and an authentic polyphony of autonomous voices.

As we have stated before, when choosing English to write (in standard or vernacular variety), one of the problems faced by post-colonial writers has been how to deal with the multiple languages and identities represented. Some of the strategies that can be used are *contextualising* and *cushioning*, and these are the strategies Adichie relies most on. Klinger (2015) considers them strategies that serve to render the selectively reproduced words and phrases intelligible for readers who are unfamiliar with the language. We will see examples of this in the works analysed here.

By cushioning Zabus refers to the method of “tagging a European-language explanation onto an African word”, whereas contextualisation allows the reader to infer the meaning by “providing areas of immediate context so as to make the African Word intelligible without resorting to translation” (2007, pp. 7–8, cited in Klinger 2015, p. 31). Klinger does not consider these strategies “methods of hybridization”:

> [C]ushioning and contextualization are not two methods of hybridization. Instead, they are glossing strategies that can accompany strategies of hybridization such as selective reproduction or relexification. Cushioning and contextualization render strategies of hybridization accessible to the monolingual reader but do not themselves constitute strategies of hybridization. (Klinger, 2015, p. 32)

Whether we consider these strategies as forms of hybridization themselves or not, it is indisputable that they make hybridisation accessible to monolingual readers, and this is important in our context. Most people who can read English are not familiar with vernacular African languages, yet, these strategies enable us to read and discuss literature which would otherwise be only barely comprehensible. As we shall see in examples from the three texts, Adichie resorts to cushioning most of the time,[v] often accompanied by contextualization in the case of words of frequent use

whose meaning can easily be inferred from the context of interaction.

Moreover, we have to make a final comment on language in this sense. All in all, these definitions are problematic: as Kachru (1986, p. 294) states, to consider English a “non native” language in Nigeria is something that can be questioned nowadays. For most of its middle and upper classes, English is, at least in the South, a language spoken since birth, even when they speak to members of their own family. But there is an element of social class associated with the use of English or languages such as Yoruba or Igbo.

Therefore, language is not important here just because of the strategies the author uses to make hybridization accessible. Language is a theme in itself, and a tool of power and resistance as well: it reflects social tensions and those conflicts and overlapping in identity discussed by Hall (1996, as seen on p. 15). The characters not only reflect about language, their fate can be marked deeply by the way they speak, the accent they have, how this projects a certain image of them and positions them within a friend/enemy antagonism.

4.1. *Purple Hibiscus*: What's in a Name?

In this novel, Adichie resort mostly to contextualizing to convey hybridity in culture and communication. For instance, when Aunty Ifeoma asks her brother to let his children stay at her house: “Eugene, *biko*, let the children come and spend one week with us. They do not resume school until late January” (Adichie, 2003, p. 97). It is clear for readers here that *biko* means something like “please”, that it is a word used for requesting.

Or in this dialogue between Kambili and her father:

> “Good evening, Papa, *nno*.”
> “Did school go well?” (Adichie, 2003, p. 40)

The meaning of the italicised word is not as evident, but readers can clearly infer that this is a form

of greeting.

However, there are phrases where the meaning is not as evident. For instance: "'*Nna anyi*,' Aunty Ifeoma said. 'It was not the missionaries. Did I not go to the missionary school, too?'" (Adichie, 2003: 83). In these cases, the meaning is not so clear, yet, it is not necessary to know the meaning of the words in italics in order to follow the conversation. Looking the expression up at a glossary of Igbo words for this novel (Anamelechi, 2009), we find that the meaning is "our father".

There are some instances of cushioning, especially when a religious Igbo song is chanted and the lyrics are translated, or when there is something peculiar that the narrator wants to highlight in the use of certain words, for example: "'Thank you *nna m*,' she called out to Jaja, who was cleaning her car parked in front of the flat. I had never heard her call Jaja '*nna m,*' 'my father'— it was what she sometimes called her sons" (Adichie, 2003, p. 155). This way, Adichie not only shows how close Aunty Ifeoma is getting to her niece and nephew but she also manages to show the non-Igbo reader how words referring to family relationships are used in Igbo to express something else, even if they contradict their literal meaning.

In our previous analysis of *Purple Hibiscus*, we focused on Kambili's struggle to be heard, to express her feelings, to reveal her secrets. Yet, it is not just Kambili who is searching for her own voice. Actually, the strongest changes take place in Beatrice and Jaja's mind. The Palm Sunday episode of disobedience which opens the novel is the product of Jaja's change after his staying with his relatives and seeing how hypocritical it is for a man to fight everything un-Christian and yet to punish his own family and beat his wife in the most merciless way.

When his father asks him why he has not attended communion, Jaja's answer is short and irreverent: "The wafer gives me bad breath." And later he adds: "And the priest keeps touching my mouth and it nauseates me" (Adichie, 2003, p. 6). Eugene, the father, tells him that he will die if he stops receiving the body of the Lord, and Jaja responds "Then I will die". Later on, we will learn

how provocative it is for Jaja to respond something like this.

That same night, when the family is eating and everyone is supposed to be complimenting the soft drinks Eugene's factory makes, Jaja says nothing.

> "Have you nothing to say, gbo, Jaja?" Papa asked again.
> "*Mba*, there are no words in my mouth," Jaja replied. (Adichie, 2003: 13)

Not saying what he is expected to say is as defiant as saying irreverent things. There is also great rebellion in terms of language and culture on the part of Kamara, Kambili's cousin. The young girl has an excellent relation with Father Amadi, who she teases and makes difficult religious questions to. However, at one moment Kamara has to take her religious confirmation. Though she is ready to do it, there is one point which she will not concede: she does not want to take a Western religious name in the ceremony. Father Amadi explains that this is nothing but a formality, that she will never have to use this name. However, though Kamara has no choice in other aspects of her life, such as having to move away to the U.S.A. with her family, she chooses not to take her religious confirmation, since her name proposal is not accepted, and is the only girl in her group who does not receive this sacrament. Therefore, it is her voice which is heard when she refuses to do this. This is not easy for her; she is a religious girl, yet, her Igbo identity is deeply important to her and she knows that if an Igbo name cannot be considered Christian, regardless of Amadi's best intentions, there is no equality between European cultures and African ones in the Catholic Church.

One of the main conflicts in the novel seems to be related with the adaptation of Christianity and the way it is interpreted and used either to fight for freedom or to reinforce colonialism. Religion, as well as language, is another tool which can be used to *strike back*.

Kambili's father, Eugene, is a member of what Rushdie (1991) calls "translated men", who are usually extremely zealous and narrow-minded in their cultural perceptions. Language is a status symbol for him. Kambili emphasises how her father mimics the British accent when he is

surrounded by religious officials:

> Papa changed his accent when he spoke, sounding British just as he did when he spoke to Father Benedict. He was gracious, in the eager-to-please way that he always assumed with the religious, especially with the white religious. (Adichie, 2003, p. 46)

Eugene also refuses to speak Igbo when his sister talks to him in this language. “He spoke English, while Aunty Ifeome spoke Igbo” (Adichie, 2003, p. 77). Eugene attempts to erase something that is in his own upbringing: his Igbo origins, therefore denying his own father. His own identity is built on this denial. As Hall (1993) says, cultural identity is “what we have become” (p. 223-224). In this case, his identity is an identity of partial self-denial. Eugene rejects his own hybridity, which Ifeoma and her children celebrate. Part of what makes Kambili able to express herself is finally embracing this hybridity.

In terms of Bhabha (1994):

> Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other “denied” knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority - its rules of recognition. (p. 114)

When Kambili and Jaja visit their Aunty's house, they are shocked to hear their cousins singing in Igbo in the middle of the rosary.

> After we said the last Hail Mary, my head napped back when I heard the raised, melodious voice. Amaka was singing!
> “*Ka m bunie afa gi enu...*”
> Aunty Ifeoma and Obiora joined her, their voices melding. My eyes met Jaja's. His eyes were watery, full of suggestions. *No*! I told him, with a tight blink. It was not right. You did not break into song in the middle of the rosary. (Adichie, 2003, p. 125)

Religious practice, and therefore virtue, have been strictly linked to the English language (and even Latin, which Eugene's favourite priest, Father Benedict, made the sole language for reciting the Credo and kyrie) (Adichie, 2003, p. 4). Meanwhile, Papa Nnukwu, Kambili's grandfather, who is the only person in the family who does not speak English, is usually left out of

conversations. Even when they talk to him in Igbo, it is hard for them to avoid using English words. Still, he pays attention to what is being said, trying not to be left out:

> "Who is sending you?" Papa-Nnukwu asked, in his sudden way that made me realize he had been following every word spoken in Igbo.
> "Father Amadi belongs to a group of priests, *ndi* missionary, and they go to different countries to convert people," Amaka said. She hardly peppered her speech with English words when she spoke to Papa-Nnukwu, as the rest of us inadvertently did. (Adichie, 2003, p. 172)

Kambili realises here that her cousin is aware of something the rest have not noticed, and is careful to adapt her speech so that she includes Papa-Nnukwu and makes it easy for him to understand and so avoid excluding him from family communication.

4.2. *Half of a Yellow Sun*: Language and Life

The value of language as an element of power struggle in society, as stated by Kachru above (p. 43), is illustrated in *Half of a Yellow Sun.* When Ugwu first starts working at Odenigbo's house, several instances of self-deprecation are shown through an omniscient narrator who focalises on Ugwu. The moment he meets his Master's lover Olanna he is very concerned about his own use of English: "'I serve now, sah' Ugwu said, in English, and then wished he had said *I am serving now*, because it sounded better, because it would impress her more" (2009a, p. 23).

Here we can see in action what New (2006) states on the use of "actual language" as a derivate and a conveyor of social tensions:

> Literature which uses the actual language –the sounds and syntax—of the people becomes, then, an arena in which the people's political and psychological tensions can find expression. The linguistic contrarieties that are part of such 'actual language' both derive from and convey the tensions in the society. (p. 305)

The way Adichie chooses to convey an impression of the use of actual language is by resorting to contextualisation as much as cushioning. For instance, when Ugwu meets Olanna, for the first time:

> Ugwu walked out to the living room. She smelt of coconuts. He greeted her, his "Good afternoon" a mumble, his eyes on the floor.
> "*Kedu*?" she asked.
> "I'm well, mah." (Adichie,2009a, p. 22-23)

There is no need for Adichie to explain the meaning of *kedu:* its recurrent appearance within similar dialogues will not only make it clear to the readers but it is most likely that they will end up learning the word. In other cases, when the author wants to make sure that the word is understood correctly, it is cushioned: "Her name was Olanna. But Master said it only once; he mostly called her *nkem*, my own" (Adichie, 2009a, p. 24).

Moreover, when Olanna meets Miss Adebayo, an intellectual who is very close to Odenigbo, the scholar despises Olanna's perfect British accent: "'And what a proper English accent,' Miss Adebayo murmured, with a pitying smile, before turning back to the radiogram" (2009a, p. 49). Although Olanna's English accent would usually be a valuable asset in Nigerian society, in this circle of left-wing intellectuals it stands for Imperialism and might be a symbol of cultural subalternity.

Another way in which language shows its importance is through the way it can literally save a character's life or end it. There is a scene at the airport where Richard has just been talking to Nnaemeka, a customs officer. Richard explains to him that he is engaged to Kainene, an Igbo woman:

> "Her name is Kainene." Richard spoke slowly, making sure to drag out the second syllable fully.
> "You speak Igbo, sir?" There was a slender respect in the man's eyes now.
> "*Nwanne di na mb*," Richard said, enigmatically, hoping that he had not mixed things up and that the proverb meant that one's brother could come from a different land.
> 'Eh! You speak I na-asu Igbo!' The young man took Richard's hand in his moist one and shook it warmly and started to talk about himself. His name was Nnaemeka.
> (Adichie, 2009a, p. 151)

Through his use of Igbo language and also of a proverb, an important part of oral culture,

Richard gains acceptance from this customs officer, who then starts telling him about his family, his intentions to study medicine, his economic troubles. Later, a group of Hausa soldiers enter the airport, attempting to kill Igbo people:

> The first soldier waved his gun around. "*Ina nyamiri*! Where are the Igbo people? Who is Igbo here? Where are the infidels?"
> A woman screamed.
> "You are Igbo," the second soldier said to Nnaemeka.
> "No, I come from Katsina! Katsina!"
> The soldier walked over to him. "Say Allahu Akbar!"
> The lounge was silent. Richard felt cold sweat weighing on his eyelashes.
> "Say Allahu Akbar!" The soldier repeated.
> Nnaemeka knelt down. Richard saw fear etched so deeply onto his face that it collapsed his cheeks and transfigured him into a mask that looked nothing like him. He would not say Allahu Akbar because his accent would give him away. (Adichie, 2009a, pp. 152-153)

The officer is then killed coldhearteadly because of his failure to prove he is not Igbo. Later in the same chapter, Olanna experiences a very tense situation with a man who is travelling on a plane next to her, across the aisle. The man attempts to start an anti-Igbo conversation with her:

> "Why should an Igbo man be the vice chancellor in Lagos?" he asked and, when Olanna said nothing, only half smiling to show she was listening, he added, "The problem with Igbo people is that they want to control everything in this country. Everything. Why can't they stay in their East? They own all the shops; they control the civil service, even the police. If you are arrested for any crime, as long as you can say *keda* they will let you go."
> "We say *kedu*, not *keda*," Olanna said quietly. "It means How are you?" (Adichie, 2009a, p. 227)

We can see here how language functions as a boundary marker in the text, immediately ascribing identity aspects to speakers. This ascribed identity is deeply related to violence and ethnic conflict. Ethnic violence is a constitutional part of conflict in *Half of a Yellow Sun* but this violence has its origin in (or has been propelled by) Imperialism. This is stated in the book-within-the-book:

> The Second World War changed the world order: Empire was crumbling, and a vocal Nigerian elite, mostly from the South, had emerged.
> The North was wary; it feared domination from the more educated South and had

> always wanted a country separate from the infidel South anyway. But the British had to preserve Nigeria as it was, their prized creation, their large market, their thorn in France's eye. To propitiate the North, they fixed the pre-Independence elections in favor of the North and wrote a new constitution that gave the North control of the central government.
> The South, too eager for independence, accepted this constitution. With the British gone, there would be good things for everyone: "white" salaries long denied Nigerians, promotions, top jobs. Nothing was done about the clamor of the minority groups, and the regions were already competing so fiercely that some wanted separate foreign embassies.
> At Independence in 1960, Nigeria was a collection of fragments held in a fragile clasp. (Adichie, 2009a, p. 155)

It is impossible to talk about post-colonial narratives without thinking of (post-)colonial domination. Violence affects the country, its citizens, their relationships. Violence shows itself also in power situations, and this is related to language and identity as well.

4.3. Language in "Jumping Monkey Hill"

In this story, we find something unusual compared to the other two texts analysed: there are almost no instances of cushioning or contextualization. Because of the setting of this story, in a workshop where several authors from different African nationalities gather, language is used to oppose and mock those in power (Edward and his wife) or to portray characters' emotions or features. The only two words which appear untranslated, within the framed narrative, are *babalawo* (Adichie, 2009b: 105), which is a Yoruba spiritual title that denotes a Priest of Ifá who can also do magic and heal with herbal medicine; and alhaji (not in italics, since the term, of Hausa origin, is —according to the Oxford Dictionary— of common use in West Africa, and refers to a Muslim man who has completed a religious journey to Mecca, and it is often used as a title).

Rodríguez Murphy (2010), in her analysis of different translations of *Things Fall Apart* by Achebe (1958), compares some ways in which the term medicine-man has been translated (shaman,

witch man) in several editions of the novel. Any word chosen obscures part of Achebe's meaning, its symbolic implications. That is probably the reason why Adichie chooses to leave *babalawo*, a word which relates to a whole cosmovision, untranslated and uncushioned.

Adichie's choice in this story not to include Igbo words is probably related to the way a mosaic of African identities is portrayed in the text, without one having more weight than others, despite being obviously focalised from Ujunwga's point of view.

Language is one of the devices the narrator of this story uses in order to defy her oppressor, in this case, the European intellectual who has power to censor or declare which discourse about Africa is “right” and which is wrong. When the main character, Ujungwa, meets him, the narrator provides the reader with an internal focalisation of her impression of his accent: “He lengthened his words. His accent was what the British called ‘posh,’ the kind some rich Nigerians tried to mimic and ended up sounding unintentionally funny” (Adichie, 2009b: 96). Later, his way of talking is made fun of by the narrator, again through free indirect discourse, which reveals Ujungwa's focalisation: “Edward urged everybody to eat the ostrich. It was simply *mah*- ve-lous” (Adichie, 2009b, p. 101).

Still Edward is not the only character whose speech is carefully described. The way other characters speak is depicted, especially their accents, in order to convey the multiplicity of African identities as opposed to Edward's (and therefore, mainstream European) view of Africa as an indistinct whole.

For instance, when the Senegalese writer tells her story, the narrator depicts the way her words sound: “The Senegalese read two pages of a funeral scene, stopping often to sip some water, her accent thickening as she became more emotional, each *t* sounding like a *z*” (Adichie, 2009b, p. 107).

The multiplicity of accents and language varieties in the workshop is opposed to Eurocentric

generalizations about what Africa is. The careful description Adichie decides on is, therefore, a way of fighting against the "danger of a single story" (as seen on p. 18), by showing not just many stories in the same workshop, but also many voices, in a metaphorical as well as a literal sense.

5. Conclusions on the Texts

Adichie's characters are post-colonial, hybrid [vi]. They experience a personal way of being torn between past and present, tradition and break. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili needs to find her own voice, her own way of being religious, of incorporating her grandfather's world view without renouncing her Christian education. In *Half of a Yellow Sun* it is Richard who is suddenly drawn into a post-colonial conflict, yet, the entire set of characters is personally torn by the Nigerian civil war. Olanna and Odenigbo see their personal life devastated. Odenigbo's revolutionary views are no longer shared from the comfort of his bourgeois living room. Olanna and Kainene have to learn to live in poverty.

In all her novels and stories, the characters suffer the consequences of being hybrid subjects, torn between local and global identities, traversed by the history of their own country, their way of building an identity which allows them to be freer and to fight for what they want, whether it is survival, a better place or the independence of their country. This construction of an identity is always painful and represents the encounter with others who may try to fight against, clash with or undermine the characters' voice, autonomy or even freedom or life.

All of Adichie's characters are in the process of constructing an identity. This may be in the way of a *Bildungsroman* as in *Purple Hibiscus*, or through the decisions of the literally torn characters of a broken Nigeria in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Identities are not fixed, they are not something to be "found" after internal searching or self-encounter: they are something constructed

and flexible, moving and flowing.

The theme of characters finding a voice of their own is also present. It is the ability to speak for themselves which enables individuals to express who they are, what is more, to construct who they are while they are expressing themselves. There is a direct link between speaking for themselves and the shaping of an identity which is not “narrated” by others. In both novels and the story analysed here, the triumph is the text itself: it is managing to tell a story, be it via a framed narration, by writing in the first person, or by refusing to repeat the discourse characters are supposed to reproduce.

Just as Kambili finds her own faith and can distance herself from her father's discourse, other characters, sometimes tragically, discover who they are. Kainene's findings about herself will lead her to her own disappearance. Richard comes to terms with the fact that he will never be an Igbo, no matter how much he supports the Biafran cause. Uwgu finds who he is, though he will probably not tell everything about himself to anybody in “The Book”. He is the one who suffers the greatest transformation, becoming an educated man and the one who shows he has acquired a voice of his own. But this is not without personal suffering. Even worse, this includes hurting someone in order to do what he is “supposed to do”, according to gender roles, and this causes harm which cannot be undone. Ugwu knows that what he has done is wrong, he has acquired a set of values which condemn his own behaviour. Though he will write Biafra's story, it is most likely that he will not reveal his own truth. He has found his own voice, yet, this does not mean that he will be a reliable narrator. In the enumeration of war atrocities in “The Book”, his own atrocities —and probably other violent acts committed by his own people—will probably be left out.

Violence is something transversal to all characters. It might be the civil war, it might be a dictatorship, but it may even be the violence inflicted by an anti-dictator-hero-of-the-community father upon his own daughter. Violence is not exclusive of the oppressors; it may be inflicted among

the oppressed themselves. This violence is reflected in the handling of language as a theme throughout Adichie's texts. The strength of Adichie's narrative lies both on the social issues it addresses and the way she deals with them, including the depiction of language and its social implications: code-switching, cushioning, contextualising.

As we have seen so far, the three texts analysed here share common features. They all focus on who has the right to speak and tell their story; the characters are hybrids, torn between different alliances, their identities fragmented, their language changing because of context (Kambili's father disdain for the Igbo language, Ugwu attempting to copy his master's English). The characters, in their thoughts and actions, do something that the author does though the structure of her writing: they dispute the power to speak, they still answer Spivak's (1988) question: “Can the subaltern speak?”. Adichie has developed complex subaltern characters who are given a voice.

6. Why Read Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie at a Translation Studies Course

6.1. Some Reflections After Teaching as an *Adscripta*

As an *adscripta* in a *Literature II* (contemporary literature in English) course, I had the chance to prepare a class on Adichie's short story “Jumping Monkey Hill.” The experience proved most fruitful.

Students reflected on technical decisions they would have to make if they were working as translators of the story, such as how they would translate the “*mah*-veh-lous” that Edward pronounces (as seen on p. 53) or the ways other characters speak, for example, the francophone character, a Senegalese woman. Rather than answers, the discussion produced more questions. The francophone character was not difficult, since it would be easy to show the way a French speaker

speaks Spanish[3]. However, the students wondered if the way Edward spoke could be equated to the accent of the Argentinean upper-classes, if *mah*-ve-lous could be translated “maravi-*dzo*-so” with emphasis on [dz] (though it would be hard for readers to understand the phoneme) [4]. If this was done, how would that show that the character is a representative of a country which used to be part of an Empire? Using a Castilian Spanish equivalent seemed absurd. Any transposition would fail to represent the African context Adichie is describing. Should the character include words in English? Would it be better to insert a footnote? How much should a translator comment on or explain?

However, it was not the linguistic or stylistic questions that proved the most interesting, but the ideological debates which the story fostered. Discussing what makes an “authentic” African story led students to reflect on stereotypes, but also on their lack of knowledge and their need to become more familiar with literature in English written in different contexts. This story proved to be extraordinarily rich because the characters themselves criticise African writers and Europeans writing about Africa and this motivated a debate on literature and representation, the choices translators can make, and how much research would be necessary in order to make informed decisions on style, influences, and language. As Campos (2016) states: “Hay que estar informado permanentemente, como un médico de cabecera, del estado de salud (o enfermedad) de ese organismo, en nuestro caso, sobre todo, la cultura de partida.” [5] Moreover, the story made students think of African literature and authors unknown to them. Adichie is already a well-known writer and she has been translated into Spanish, but becoming more familiar with post-colonial literature could mean empowering the translator as “scout”. In a personal communication with Lucila Cordone (2016), teacher of Literary Translation at the Translation Studies course, she highlighted the

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3 In the Spanish translation by Aurora Echevarría (Adichie, 2010, p. 92) the phrase “each *t* sounding likea *z*” is kept unchanged : "cada *t* resonando como una *z*" .
4 In the Spanish translation by Aurora Echevaría (Adichie, 2010, p. 82): “Era sencillamente 'de-li-cio-sa'”.
5 “We have to be permanently updated, like a clinical doctor, on the health (or illness) of that organism, in our case, mostly, the source culture”. (Our translation)

importance of translators taking the role of “scouts”. As we have mentioned on p. 6, this term refers to translators who do their own research on untranslated texts and take their findings to publishing houses, instead of depending entirely on publishers' choices.

In a panel at the Book Fair in Buenos Aires, Beláustegui (Beláustegui et al., 2015) discusses the importance of the role of translators as “scouts”:

> Por mi experiencia yo veo que hay muchos traductores que quieren comenzar a trabajar la traducción literaria y muchas veces no encuentran las mejores herramientas para acercarse al editor. Y asimismo, traductores con más experiencia no encuentran la cantidad de proyectos con los que podrían trabajar. Y nos parece que el rol del traductor como mediador y de acercar proyectos a las editoriales cada vez se vuelve más necesario. Aparte me parece que tiene un doble beneficio este rol (...) de desarrollo personal para el traductor. Si bien en general es la de una posibilidad de trabajo, también es la de trabajar en obras de su propio interés. No siempre cuando uno recibe propuestas ocurre eso. Y me parece que lo que podría aportar esto es que [como] muchas veces los editores, o bien (...) no conocen la lengua de origen, o (...) no conocen tanto sobre las letras contemporáneas, los traductores informados se podrían volver los principales embajadores de esas culturas de origen y generar nuevos proyectos.[6]

In the same panel, Sánchez, a Brazilian translator, describes how she started working proposing to translate Argentinian writers who were unknown in Brazil, therefore becoming a cultural ambassador as well as a translator. Sánchez emphasises the importance of being a “scout translator”, especially in the case of medium-sized and small publishing companies, since they are the ones who can introduce new authors and not be guided directly by the market and the “central countries'” canon.

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6 “In my experience, I've seen many translators who want to start working on literary translations and often don't find the best tools to approach publishers. Also, translators with more experience don't find the amount of projects they could work on. And we think that the role of the translator as a mediator and of bringing projects to publishers becomes more and more necessary. Moreover, I think this role has a double benefit (...) for the personal development of the translator. Aside from being a work possibility in a broad sense, it is also the possibility to work on texts of his or her own interest. This doesn't always happen when you receive job offers. And I think that what this could bring to the picture is that, [as] many times publishers (...) don't speak the source language or (...) don't know so much about contemporary literatures, informed translators could become the main ambassadors of those source cultures and generate new projects”. (Our translation)

Thus, it is our contention that the inclusion of Adichie's work within the syllabus of one or more of the subjects taught in a Translation Studies Course is not only beneficial for translators in that it challenges their decisions in terms of style and lexical choice, but in that it provides an insight into new areas of World Englishes literature, which the students may, in the future, use as a springboard to venture further into the work of other writer, who may not have been translated into Spanish yet. Future translators need to be empowered to make informed choices.

World Englishes literature is particularly relevant within the syllabus of the literature subjects. Even if these may not be the texts that translation students will work on in the future, they can trigger curiosity and willingness to learn about other cultures. They are texts which pose interesting questions about the translation market as well as on the translator's skills and decisions.

6.2. Adichie's Works and the Current Curriculum

When I was part of this course as an *adscripta*, the name of the course was *Literatura Inglesa II* (*English Literature II*) but it was in fact a course in “Contemporary Literature in English”. Since then, a new curriculum has been implemented. The new subjects *Panorama of Anglophone Literatures* and *Literary Movements of the 20th and 21st Centuries* comprise most of the contents that used to be taught in *English Literature II* and some new ones have been added.

The specific aims and minimum contents of *English Literature II* as detailed by Dr. Ferradas in her 2014 syllabus read:

> **Objetivos específicos**
> Lograr que los alumnos:
> -se familiaricen con el contexto socio-político e histórico en el que fueron escritas las obras literarias a ser analizadas (desde los comienzos del Romanticismo hasta el presente), focalizándose en la tensión entre tradición y ruptura y sus implicancias para la tarea del traductor

> -accedan a y consulten bibliografía relevante para cada unidad y desarrollen una actitud crítica ante ella
> -desarrollen una mayor conciencia de cómo funciona el lenguaje en el discurso literario
> -relacionen comparativamente textos pertenecientes a autores, períodos, culturas e ideologías diversas
> **Contenidos Mínimos**
> -Movimientos representativos de la literatura inglesa de los siglos XVIII y XIX
> -El concepto de literatura en lengua inglesa en el siglo XX: las literaturas postcoloniales
> -Postmodernidad y literatura: el impacto de los medios digitales.[7] (Ferradas, 2014)

Though the time span to be covered was long, focusing on literature from the 18th Century to the present times meant that the student was meant to establish connections between past and present, tradition and rebellion. This approach led to the study of post-colonial literature, as it is a literature that was born in dialogue with (and as a struggle against) canonical European narratives.

Clearly, the works of Adichie are ideal for the purpose of thinking about this dialogue: How is Adichie's work inscribed in the tradition of Anglophone literature? What points does she make about representation and authenticity? What are the questions about canonical literature (e.g. Conrad in “Jumping Monkey Hill”) that the author poses? What are post-colonial literatures? Is this a useful concept? Can Adichie's work be considered post-colonial?

As regards the two new subjects, the new curriculum states that:

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7 “**Specific Goals**
To make students:
-become familiar with the socio-political and historical context in which the literary works to be translated were produced (from the beginnings of Romanticism to present times), focusing on the tension between tradition and break and its implications to the role of translators.
-access and consult relevant bibliography for each unit, and develop a critical approach to it.
-develop a greater awareness of how language works in literary discourse.
-establish comparative relations between texts belonging to different authors, periods, cultures and ideologies.

Minimum Contents
-Representative movements of English Literature from the 18th and 19th Century
-The concept of English literature in the 20th Century: post-colonial literatures
-Postmodernity and literature: The impact of digital media”. (Our translation)

> Tanto *Panorama de la Literatura de los Pueblos de Habla Inglesa* como *Movimientos Literarios del Siglo XX* están concebidas como contribuciones a la versación del alumno en temas vinculados con la traducción literaria, pero también como un espacio donde el futuro traductor tomará contacto vivencial con las culturas extranjeras en relación con las cuales desarrollará su labor de mediador cultural, así como con las representaciones, valores y configuraciones que animan a los miembros de esos colectivos[8]. (*Programa del Traductorado en Inglés*, 2014: 16)

In the case of *Panorama of Anglophone Literatures*, the subject focuses on analysing representative works of the main literary movements from the Middle Ages until the present time, reading the selected works from different critical approaches and locating these texts within their cultural and historical settings. However, the minimum contents go from the Middle Ages to Elizabethan theatre, and include the origins of the novel in the Anglo-Saxon world.

As we can see, in this subject a reading of Adichie is not an obvious choice, but it can help introduce different critical approaches in order to read the selected literary works. A post-colonial text can be an extremely engaging way for students to become familiar with post-colonial approaches which will later provide them with a framework to perform post-colonial readings of canonical texts, such as Shakespeare's classics.

As regards the second subject that "emerged" from the seed of *English Literature II, Literary Movements of the 20th and 21st Centuries*, its specific goals and minimum contents are the following:

> **Objetivos específicos**
> -Analizar textos paradigmáticos producidos en el siglo XX y situarlos en su entorno

8" Both *Panorama of Anglophone Literatures* and *Literary Movements of the 20th* [and 21st] *Century* are devised as contributions to the student's learning of topics related to literary translation, but also as a space where the future translator will be in contact with the foreign cultures with which he (sic) will develop his task of cultural mediator, as well as with the representations, values and configurations that support these cultures". (Our translation)

> cultural e histórico
> -Establecer relaciones entre los movimientos literarios de los países de habla inglesa y las literaturas europeas contemporáneas.
> -Analizar la influencia de los movimientos literarios en los textos contemporáneos canónicos y no canónicos.
> -Abordar los textos literarios seleccionados desde distintas posturas críticas.
>
> **Contenidos mínimos**
> Tradición y ruptura en el discurso literario modernista. Nuevas tendencias en la literatura: cambios en los procesos de la escritura y la lectura. Literaturas de vanguardia: experimentación en la narración. El fluir de la conciencia. El Teatro del Absurdo. Comparación con el teatro tradicional. El Posmodernismo. La fragmentación, la polifonía, la transtextualidad. La novela experimental y la anti-novela. Posestructuralismo y deconstrucción.
>
> Diálogo entre cosmovisiones de los pueblos de habla inglesa y de otras lenguas. La interrelación entre expresiones artísticas: literatura, cine, artes plásticas y música[9]. (*Programa del Traductorado en Inglés*, 2014: 46)

Although this subject does not specifically include post-colonial literature within its contents, which is probably due to the fact that there is a seminar on this topic for students of Literary Translation (*Seminar in Post-colonial and Minorities Literatures*), a post-colonial approach can help to “establish relationships between literary movements of English-speaking countries and contemporary European literatures”, as stated in the curriculum. Since students of technical translation do not have to attend the *Seminar on Post-Colonial and Minorities Literatures*, these two subjects are the ones that can ensure they become familiar with post-colonial approaches and debates, which will be necessary for them, since great part of their future job will imply working on

9 “**Specific Goals:**
-To analyse paradigmatic texts written in the 20th Century, and contextualise them culturally and historically.
-To establish relationships between literary movements of English-speaking countries and contemporary European literatures.
-To analyse the influence of these literary movements upon canonical and non-canonical contemporary texts.
-To read the selected literary texts from different critical approaches.
Minimum Contents:
-Tradition and break in Modernist literary discourse. New literature trends: changes in the writing and reading processes. Modernist Literature: experiments on narration. Stream of consciousness. The Theatre of the Absurd. Comparison with traditional theatre. Postmodernism. Fragmentation, polyphony, transtextuality. The experimental novel and the anti-novel. Poststructuralism and deconstruction.
Dialogue between cosmovisions of English-speaking peoples and speakers of other languages. Interrelationship between artistic expressions: literature, cinema, visual arts, music”. (Our translation)

materials not produced in an English-speaking country or not written in a standard English. As Lucila Cordone reported in private communication (2016), there is a strong link between the Literature subjects taught at the *IES en Lenguas Vivas "Juan R. Fernández"* and those related to more "technical" aspects of translation (style, language, grammar, etc.).

In the case of *Literary Movements of the 20th and 21st Centuries* in particular, this is a subject which presents further opportunities for translation students to do research in contemporary literature. In this sense, we can think of a "World Englishes literature" approach. According to Dawson Varughese (2012, p. 229), the definition of World Englishes literature encompasses

> the importance of the English(es) of the place in question, alongside the other elements of the nature of the content of World Englishes literature and the fact that the World Englishes literature writer is choosing to write in the English of the place over other languages that (s)he might write in.

As Dawson Varughese claims, the future of World Englishes literature lies primarily in the hands of those using, developing and innovating in it. For students of Literary Translation in particular, the inclusion of post-colonial writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in the curriculum is greatly beneficial, as they are bound to encounter literature from the former colonies in their jobs, or even encourage publishers to have such works translated. In this sense, locating Adichie within "World Englishes literature" enables us to read her works from various perspectives. They can be read using a post-colonial approach, as well as a feminist one, against canonical texts (such as *Heart of Darkness*, *Jane Eyre* or *Wuthering Heights*).

Post-colonial writers such as Adichie are available to us as "World Literature" because they have already been acclaimed in the Anglo-American market, as Spanish translator Rodríguez Murphy (2014, p. 243) points out:

> [S]on diversos los factores que han influido en el hecho de que autores como Chinua Achebe o Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie hayan conseguido formar parte de […] "la República mundial de las Letras". Debido, entre otras cosas, a que Adichie, al igual que Achebe, ha recibido la consagración por parte del mercado anglonorteamericano

> a través de diversos premios y menciones especiales, ahora forma parte de la "literatura mundial africana".[10]

However, reading Adichie and other post-colonial writers enables students to acquire critical approaches to read texts that are not part of the canon, and helps them become aware of the fact that there is a large amount of texts that have not been introduced by American or UK publishers yet and which, as a result, do not reach our market. This literature poses a dialogue between centre and periphery. The way a peripheral writer becomes part of the "World of Letters" still depends upon validation from the centres of power. Therefore, within "World English literatures" there is definitely an imperial imbalance in power. Patricia Willson, interviewed by Lazaro (2011) supports this idea regarding publishing houses and their translation policies:

> Actualmente hay una especie de división del trabajo entre las editoriales españolas y las argentinas: allá se traduce la última ficción, los libros cuyos derechos de traducción representan sumas ingentes y que la industria editorial española puede absorber, y en América se traducen obras de dominio público y los hallazgos de los editores, sobre todo en materia de ensayo. Desde luego que la edición independiente y artesanal juega un papel importantísimo, pues es un lugar de resistencia frente a los trusts editores, que no necesariamente están dispuestos a editar aquello que no asegure determinado rédito comercial.[11]

This means that, in the case of World Englishes literature, not only is there a preliminary selection by U.S. and U.K. publishing houses, but there is also a second selection on the part of Spanish-publishing houses (which usually belong to the same trusts as the former) regarding which texts will be translated. In this sense, the work of autonomous translators becomes most valuable. They are the ones who can make unknown writers be heard, and are also the ones who can make

10 "[T]here are several factors that have been influential on the fact that authors like Chinua Achebe or Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have become part of [...] "the World Republic of Letters". Since, among other things, Adichie, as Achebe, has been consecrated by part of the Anglo-American market through awards and special mentions, she is now part of the "African World literature." (Our translation)

11 "There is, at present, a kind of division of labour between Spanish and Argentinian publishing houses: there, they translate the latest fiction, books whose copyright represents vast sums of money, and which Spanish publishing business can afford. In Latin America, we translate works of public domain, and publishers' findings, especially essays. Of course, independent publishing plays an important role, because it is a place of resistance to publishing trusts, which are not always willing to publish that which will not ensure a certain commercial benefit." (Our translation)

these writers part of our own reading tradition. As Romano Sued claims (2014):

> Lo auténtico propio deviene entonces de un proceso, y lo traducido no es sino un momento en el largo diálogo que las obras establecen con las lenguas del mundo. Un diálogo que gracias al aduanero y al *interpres* –el que habla en el medio–, tiene como resultado que las obras del mundo germinen en otros suelos. Si consentimos en que la universalidad es un ensamble de textos y lenguas, ya no se trata de rastrear los orígenes en estado puro, limpio de todo lo que viene de afuera, sino de atender a los modos de apropiación[12]. (p. 94)

6.3. Conclusion

The Anglophone texts included in the Translation Studies Course at the *IES en Lenguas Vivas "Juan Ramón Fernández"* have usually been published and distributed by publishers from the USA or the UK and translated into several languages. However, they can function as the tip of an iceberg, stimulating our students' curiosity for non-canonical authors form peripheral production sites and their place in the "World-System" (Wallerstein, 2011).

For all these reasons, I believe that future translators can benefit from the reading and analysis of not just Adichie's work, but of different works of what we call "World Englishes Literature". First of all, because of all the historic, stylistic and theoretical knowledge their analysis implies. The student will become familiar with both European literary traditions as well as with literatures born in the processes of colonisation and decolonisation. Questions of identity, nation and ethnicity arise within the texts and in their study. The future translator will have to locate them, research about them, analyse them and make choices: what lexical and stylistic choices should be made when translating, what should be explained, what should be left untranslated. These choices are based not just on language and translation skills, but also on knowledge of post-colonial

12 "What constitutes our own authenticity derives from a process and what is translated is not but a moment in the long dialogue works establish with the world languages. A dialogue that thanks to the customs officer and the *interpres* -the one who speaks in between-- has resulted in world texts germinating in other soils. If we agree that universality is an ensemble of texts and languages, it is no longer a question of tracing pure origins, free of everything that comes from outside, but of paying attention to the methods of appropriation". (Our translation)

literatures, their own culture, history, traditions and development.

7. General Conclusion. Global Literature and Translation

In her works, Adichie challenges Eurocentric perceptions of Nigerian history and identity, which invites a post-colonial reading. However, further lines of analysis of her works which fall beyond the scope of this study would include a focus on the voices of Nigerian ethnic minorities (Ogoni, Efik) and whether the Igbos' views on Nigerian history have become, partly due to Adichie's success, the mainstream “single story” now.

Besides, authors like Adichie, who have become world famous after their success in the centres of power, are regarded with suspicion by those who stand against “world literature” and the way it can render all literatures similar, erasing anything that could be seen as an obstacle to international comprehension (Parks, 2010; Lind, 2015). In their view, if a global model of “world literatures” is established,

> [g]enuinely difficult or challenging books will go untranslated and unread. More dangerous still, they will go unwritten, as writers around the world begin to shape their work according to the demands of the global marketplace. In this way, literature approaches the total “substitutability” of a monoculture. (Kirsch, 2016, p. 14)

Apter (2013, p. 3) states that some things are in fact untranslatable, and she poses untranslatability as “a deflationary gesture toward the expansionism and gargantuan scale of literary endeavors.” On the other hand, as previously mentioned on p. 11, Apter is also wary of the celebration of nationally and ethnically branded “differences” that have been niche-marketed as commercialised “identities” (p. 2). This is part of the problem with critics such Dawson Varughese claiming that Adichie may not remain truly Nigerian, since she spends more and more time in the United States (as discussed

on p. 14). Moreover, the concept that these identity differences are so unique that they cannot be translated is problematic for the literature system:

> [I]f translation failure is acceded to too readily, it becomes an all-purpose expedient for staying narrowly within one's own monolingual universe. A parochialism results, sanctioned by false pieties about not wanting to "mistranslate" the other. This parochialism is the flip side of a globalism that theorizes place and translates everything without ever traveling anywhere. (Apter, 2006, p. 91)

As Kirsch (2016, p. 12) claims, the question of whether world literature can exist "is another way of asking whether a meaningfully global consciousness can exist". Moreover, "the global novel is not a unitary genre. It is impossible to say that all global novels have certain formal qualities in common" (p. 25).

One thing is for sure: globalisation is here to stay. A translator functioning as "scout" may be the one who helps deprovincialise World Englishes Literature while deciding to keep certain elements untranslated so that their effect is not diluted. The only way for translators to conjugate "deterriorialised languages with the genius of language in one tongue" (Apter, 2013, p. 27) is to be able to make informed choices. Adichie, as a world literature writer, might be too "universal" for some of world literature detractors. However, a critical reading of her works from a post-colonial approach followed by deeper research into other authors who are not part of the canon may at the same time benefit translators and strengthen the literary system which they nourish.

8. Endnotes. Comments on Other Works by the Author

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[i] The last short story in the collection *The Thing around Your Neck*, “The Headstrong Historian”, is one clear example of the process of appropriation and “writing back” to the former colonial power. In a clear intertextual dialogue with Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Adichie returns to the idea of the colonised who uses the language of the coloniser in order to rewrite history.

[ii] Most of Adichie's short stories, collected in *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009), are fruitful for analysis of diasporic literature. “Imitation”, the second story in the book, is the first in the collection in which Adichie deals with a theme that will be frequent in her narrative: that of Nigerians living in diaspora, particularly in America.

The first thing to mention here is that Nkem, the main character, is not someone who has moved to America because of political or economic problems. The wife of a very wealthy Nigerian “Big Man” with close connections with the political government, hers is the destiny of many of her kind. Living in the USA is a matter of status for her circle.

This story can be closely linked to two other in the same book. “On Monday of Last Week” and “The Arrangers of Marriage”. In “On Monday of Last Week”, Adichie shows again the kind of prejudice diasporic Nigerians usually face. The narrator shows how the main character’s employer is surprised by her education, and also depicts the different approaches to race she and a progressive American have (Adichie, 2009b, p. 76-77).

[iii] In *Americanah* (2014), Adichie deals with the expression of the protagonist's voice from a different perspective, since the narration itself becomes more intimate: It is the protagonist herself whose voice appears in the form of fragments from a blog. The voice of this character is displaced: we find a displaced African, a diasporic character who narrates her encounter with America and, therefore, the construction of her own identity as built in contact with this Other.

[iv] Violence is also a theme in the short stories compiled in *The Thing around Your Neck*. In the story “At the American Embassy”, violence is the cause of the main character’s need to exile. She struggles with the contradictory feelings she has towards her husband, who, in trying to resist violence, was taken by the military. The choices are those of a subaltern, whether to resist or to surrender. There is actually little choice, but the protagonist cannot but blame her husband for not choosing to surrender.

Also, in “Imitation”, we can see another form of violence, a more quiet and subtle one. Nkem, the wife, is in constant fear of being abandoned by her husband. The ghost of poverty haunts her. By speaking her mind or even refusing to look the way he wants her to, she knows she may face tough consequences.

In “A Private Experience”, violence and otherness are interestingly conjoined. The story confronts the prejudice of its own narrator, an educated Igbo woman who finds herself hiding from a riot together with a Hausa woman.

In *Americanah*, violence is present in different contexts. The social situation forces both Ifemelu and Obinze to try to find a new life abroad. But violence will also find Ifemelu in the U.S.A. under new forms. She will no longer need to escape from dictatorship, but her lack of a job and her immigrant status will put her at risk. As for Obinze, he will suffer because of his situation as an illegal immigrant, and will eventually have to return to Nigeria.

[v] There are plenty of examples of “cushioning” in the collection *The Thing around Your Neck*. For example, in “Cell One,” the first story in the book, the narrator tells how her brother’s detainment for being a member of a cult, the Nigerian equivalent of a teen gang, during the dictatorship in the 90s, affected her and her family: “My mother was jumpy on the drive. She was used to saying ‘*Nekwa ya*! Watch out’ to my father” (Adichie, 2009: 17).

The importance of language for the characters in this book, especially those who are part of the Nigerian diaspora, is verbalised by themselves. For instance, in “The Arrangers of Marriage”, the brand new husband chastises the newcomer for using terms in Igbo and even for not using her English name: “You don't understand how it works in this country. If you want to get anywhere you have to be as mainstream as possible. If not, you will be left by the roadside. You have to use your English name here” (Adichie, 2009b, p. 172).

[vi] Identity politics in Nigeria can at times be deadly, as it is emphasized in the story “A Private Experience” about two women taking shelter together in a deserted shop when an ethnic riot breaks out in Kano.

In *Americanah*, there is plenty of blogging about Ifemelu “discovering” her own blackness in America, but also many anecdotes which revolve around these confusing constructions of identity in the face of others. For example, hair becomes a political issue (2014, p. 263) when Ifemelu finds a website about black women not fighting against their natural hair, nurturing it, using products to keep it glowing.

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