

Heterogeneity and self-referentiality in *Things Fall Apart*'s proverbs¹

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Abstract

This article aims to provide a revisiting of the novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by the Nigerian essayist and writer Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) as regards the established notion in postcolonial studies which claims that African literature solely writes back to the western paradigm. The central thesis of this paper is that Achebe's seminal first novel exhibits self-referential moments as do metafictional texts of the 1990s (Mwangi, 2009) to particularly focus on local nuances as well as colonial criticism. This self-reflexive technique foregrounds aspects of content and form that are especially evident in the use of proverbs. In this sense, we attempt to assess the significance of the internal heteroglossia staged in proverbs which venture unexplored thresholds between the "self" and the "other" and enact a new aesthetics characterized by the umbrella of minor literatures (Deleuze and Guattari [1975] 1986; Bensmaïa, 2017). Proverbs as locus of such hybridization (Bhabha, 1994) and heterogeneity grant a space for the "other" in the Anglophone narrative and also allow the deconstruction of the notion of "other" for African purposes. In a complementary fashion, our concern will be to explore how this heterogeneity is reproduced in the three Spanish translations done by Jorge Sarrió (1966), Fernando Santos (1986) and José Manuel Álvarez Flórez (1997), all of them published in Spain. Accordingly, we approach the analysis of interlingual heterogeneity (Spotorno, 2010) founded on an operation of deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, [1975] 1986) by comparing how the Spanish translators have rendered these configurations of heterogeneity and hybridity present in the original proverbs into the translated texts and, at the same time, by accounting for the strategies used for their recreation (Bandia, 2006; Tymoczko, 1999; Murphy, 2010).

Key words: heterogeneity, self-referentiality, proverbs, deterritorialization, translation

1 Chinua Achebe. His influence in African literature, translation studies and other fields

Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) is considered the founding father of modern African literature. His writings about Africa have proved influential in various fields ranging from historiographical (Koney Odamtten, 2009; Mirmotahari, 2011) and ethnographical (Osei-Nyame, 1999; Abiola Irele, 2000; Lovesey, 2006; Snyder, 2008) perspectives to cultural and pedagogical angles (Dannenberg, 2009; Ouzgane and Okome, 2009). In this paper, we are also interested in highlighting the significance of the novel to translation studies. By exploring the discursive-cultural spaces that are revealed in the use of proverbs in the original version of *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and in its translation into Spanish, we, therefore, hope to make an important contribution to the field of literary translation.

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In the first part, we are going to provide an introductory account of Achebe's position in relation to African literature and his influence in different areas. Then, following Mwangi (2009), we would like to examine current African literary criticism, especially the turn away from the "writing back" paradigm of postcolonial studies (Ashcroft *et al.*, [1989] 2002; Bhabha, 1994) so as to determine if the novel might be considered within the "writing back to itself" paradigm. In the second part of this study, and in order to assess the significance of the internal heteroglossia staged in proverbs which is grounded on the concept of deterritorialization, we will try to revisit the concept of "minor literatures" as defined by Deleuze and Guattari ([1975] 1986) and reconsider Deleuze's thought (Bensmaïa, 2017) bringing it face to face with postcolonial theory and raising itself as a new aesthetics characterized by a language of its own, traversing a novel terrain standing out against a powerful long-silenced voice. Finally, on the field of translation, we will seek to compare how the Spanish translators have rendered these configurations of heterogeneity and hybridity present in the original proverbs into the translated texts and account for the strategies used for their recreation (Bandia, 2006; Tymoczko, 1999; Murphy, 2010).

*Things Fall Apart*² was published in 1958—two years before the Nigerian Independence in 1960—in the context of what was known as the Nigerian literary Renaissance, a movement that started in the 1950s and which proclaimed the value of African culture and the representation of cultural conflicts ingrained in colonialism (Whittaker and Msiska, 2007). *TFA* belongs to the Nigerian literary Renaissance which emerged from the interaction of the oral tradition—a distinctive mode of communication for ethnic groups and a specific embodiment of African values and beliefs—the European literary heritage and the Nigerian social milieu.

Whittaker and Msiska (2007) maintain that *TFA* has proved to be an immensely influential work for African writers, "becoming the progenitor of a whole movement in fiction, drama and poetry that focuses on the revaluation of traditional African cultures and the representation of culture conflicts that had their genesis in the colonial era" (p. XI). In effect, it is considered as one of the iconic works of postcolonial fiction³. As Achebe puts it, his aim is to find "a new voice coming out of Africa, speaking of African experience in a worldwide language." (Achebe, 1965). Notwithstanding that the English language will be able to carry the weight of the African experience; Achebe believes that it will have to be a new English, "still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings" (Achebe, 1965). Hence, Achebe as a postcolonial writer uses a world language (English) marked by its (Igbo) orality and hybridity in order to speak about the peculiar African experience and achieve an international readership. In the Paris review *The Art of Fiction*, Achebe reveals the danger of not having one's own stories and expresses:

² Subsequent reference to *Things Fall Apart* will be abbreviated *TFA*.

³ Thus, the characteristic of this postcolonial text contributes greatly to our analysis in the field of postcolonial literature and the problems posed for translation studies.

That was the way I was introduced to the danger of not having your own stories. There is that great proverb —that until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter. That did not come to me until much later. Once I realized that, I had to be a writer. I had to be that historian. It's not one man's job. It's not one person's job. But it is something we have to do, so that the story of the hunt will also reflect the agony, the travail—the bravery, even, of the lions.

In *TFA*, Achebe writes his own story, writes back his own African past becoming the historian he believes he had to be but within the realm of an extraordinary postcolonial work of fiction. In *TFA*, Achebe makes his own hunt turning the "lions" into true protagonists.

The novel was first published in London by Heinemann under the *Heinemann African Writers Series*. Although *TFA* is not the first Anglophone novel by a black African to be published —that honour goes to Solomon Plaatje's *Mbudi* (1930), as Boehmer (2009) states— none has been so influential on African literature. The book tells the story of British colonization from an African perspective of cultural reference. *TFA*⁴ presents a different perception of Africa from that of the views of white colonialist writers such as Joseph Conrad or Joyce Cary⁵ on the "impenetrable darkness"⁶ of the continent (Whittaker and Msiska, 2007), views that were "racists", in Achebe's own words (Achebe, 1975). *TFA* recounts the life of the village hero Okonkwo and describes the arrival of white missionaries in Nigeria and its impact on traditional Igbo society during the late 1800s. In "Colonialist Criticism" (1974), Achebe comments that when his first novel was published a very unusual review of it was written by a British woman, Honor Tracy. She headlined it "Three cheers for mere Anarchy" and the body of the review read as follows:

These bright Negro barristers... who talk so glibly about African culture, how would they like to return to wearing raffia skirts? How would novelist Achebe like to go back to the mindless times of his grandfather instead of holding the modern job he has in broadcasting in Lagos? (Achebe, 1974)

Taken as a paradigmatic example of colonialist criticism, Achebe describes the three parts of this review as consisting in: Africa's inglorious past (raffia skirts) to which Europe brings the blessing of civilization (Achebe's modern job in Lagos) and for which Africa returns ingratitude (skeptical novels like *Things Fall Apart*). Here, Achebe seems to remark that the colonialist critic —not always as crude— is unable to accept the validity of any kind of understanding that is not their own and, in that sense, colonialist criticism has aimed to entirely dismiss African novels.

The literary impact of *TFA* can be detected in numerous disciplines. The trajectory of influence may find historiographical and ethnographical frames,

⁴ *TFA* has sold more than ten million copies and has been translated into 50 languages (Whittaker and Msiska, 2007).

⁵ As Rodríguez Murphy (2010) describes, *TFA* answers back colonialist narrations such as *Heart of Darkness* (1902) by Conrad and *Mister Johnson* (1937) by Cary, counteracting the prejudices that exist in colonial literature on the "dark" continent (García Ramírez, 1999).

⁶ These words make reference to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902).

pedagogical or political motivations and even an ideological stance. Framed by the Nigerian literary Renaissance and drawing on Gikandi's ideas (1991), *TFA* inaugurated an interpretative space for the critique of the colonial and postcolonial situation in Africa and initiated a new esthetics for African literature. This interpretative space happens to delineate the historical discourse represented by the events which take place in the novel. In this regard, Osei-Nyame (1999) additionally points out that *TFA* involves a writing of history in that the story re-enacts phases of the precolonial and colonial traditional order of African past by featuring the beginnings of some significant moments of ideological crises in the communities of Umuofia and Mbanta⁷. In addition, Gikandi (1991) holds the view that Achebe's postcolonial aesthetic has evolved in a narrative framework which has been shaped by the discourse on national identity and narrative strategies that "propose an alternative world beyond the realities imprisoned in colonial and pre-colonial relations of power" (Gikandi, 1991, p.31). In this matter, Achebe's narrative helped deconstruct Western *episteme* and the idea of a unitary vision created by the ideologies of colonialism. Achebe uses the colonial language to "evolve narrative procedures", reinvent African identities and transform realities (Gikandi, 1991, p.32). Even though Gikandi (2001) first lamented the institutionalization of *TFA* as supplement for African culture, he recognized it for its Pan-African historical moment and the valorization of culture as thinking the African world in an affirmative spectrum and not in its opposition to the rhetoric of "darkness" or as a sign of lack with respect to the European perception. Similarly, Msiska (2009) notes that *TFA* proffers a space of dialogic exchange between African and other cultures as well as within Africa itself. In fact, for Msiska (2009), *TFA* serves as both an intensely Pan-Africanist as much as a transcultural text. These studies then suggest the relevance of *TFA* as a resource of cultural knowledge between Africa and other cultures and within Africa itself. As Ade'le'ke` (2008) argues, the book made it possible for Africans to explain themselves to one another as much as it made Africa be explained worldwide.

With respect to the significance of *TFA* in connection to African historiography, Koney Odamtten (2009) maintains that Achebe's first work added to the evolution of an African-centered historiography that sought to correct the historical falsehoods of Africa's past. Many authors have denounced the construction of African history by the account that some European writers have provided of Africa or by the official historiography of the colonial period. In this sense, many scholars

⁷ Umuofia is a fictional Igbo village where the events of the novel take place before the arrival of the white missionaries. Mbanta is the place where Okonkwo is sent in exile for seven years after being condemned by the murder of a member of a community. Though everything was not completely in order before the coming of the white man, the cults, traditions, beliefs and social rules of the villages of Umuofia and Mbanta run quite smoothly. As Lorens (2005) points out, the idea of community is indeed one of the basic values of the Umuofia and Mbanta society: "We are better than animals because we have kinsmen" (*TFA*, Chapter 19, p. 165) Still in another instance of the novel, a character expresses: "We have come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so." (*TFA*, Chapter 19, p. 167). The values which characterized Igbo society will be shattered with the arrival of colonization.

understand that Achebe reclaims African history from within. Resorting to storytelling, folklore, myths and the imagery of narrative procedures, Achebe offers an African perspective of African history that writes back to the colonial center but, most importantly, it serves to write back to itself as Mwangi (2009) will later propose in his novel contribution to the analysis of *TFA*. Along the same lines, Mirmotahari (2011) describes the historical properties of *TFA* identifying the historical engagement of the novel in its (inter)disciplinary modes of knowledge (storytelling, colonial narrative, anthropology, historicism, among others) and ascertaining that self-reflexivity and awareness of narrativity are innately a part of the discipline of history. In this point, he argues that literature and historical discourse find confluence in the realm of narrative: "Though there are non-narrative forms of relating history (like annals and chronicles), narrative, the ordering of information and ideas to produce meaning, is especially relevant because it is here that power relations are activated." (Mirmotahari, 2011, p. 375). He further acknowledges that although the content of a historical study and a novel may differ insofar as the former is concerned with realities and the latter with the imaginary, they converge because they are first and foremost narratives. Mirmotahari (2011) thus recognizes the value of *TFA* as a source of history in an imaginary realm. And the history created within the novel produces symbolic meaning that challenges the authorized interpretation of history by the Western *episteme*. According to Ade'le'ke` (2008), *TFA* "privileges the historical voice" which is both responsive and productive as it seeks to rise above the clamour of the official (colonial) historical discourses that it contests. Indeed, *TFA* has to assert its own historicity, to look at itself through its own eyes and through the eyes of power. It does so by demystifying the fabrication of Africa as inferior to Europe and articulating an alternative history, a revised history through the incorporation of its own fictional and narrative techniques, which are the source of its historiographical value. (Mirmotahari, 2011, p. 376). To put it simply, *TFA* distinguishes itself not only by its historical narrative consciousness but also by its aesthetic form.

As we will see later, the Western *episteme* was legitimized among other sources of knowledge by the colonial texts that Achebe will respond to in his own narratives. Specifically, Achebe's *TFA* involves a multilayer of meanings which reject the univocality of colonial discourse. With remarkable effectiveness, this multidirectional nature of Achebe's narrative paves the way for the deconstruction of the very notion of *otherness*. This is accomplished by the hybridization that defines *TFA* in terms of content and form. On the question of content, heterogeneity is manifested by the self-referentiality that the text effects of an entire epistemology not only in the re-visioning from the European literary and historiographical constructions but also from the narrating or writing back to itself paradigm that involves a rescuing of African past for African purposes. On the question of form, *TFA* stages an internal heteroglossia that grants a space for the creative use of language and a deterritorialization factor which propels a collective enunciation value that blurs the borders of "self" and "otherness". A more detailed account of this aspect will be given in the following sections.

In reference to the ethnographical reading of the novel, Osei-Nyame (1999) relates the cultural significance found in the novel drawing on Bakhtin's notion of "heteroglossia" and dialogism. In his essay, the author explores the re-writing of culture in *TFA*. He maintains that including stories that speak for themselves is central to Achebe's novelistic agenda. For him, Achebe appeals to oral Igbo traditions to narrate stories that are part of the Igbo worldview. According to Osei-Nyame (1999), representing an African worldview through narratives that speak for themselves meant that Achebe would draw upon Igbo oral traditions so as to narrate the stories of his communities with the intention of challenging and displacing the narratives of colonialist writers like Cary and Conrad. For Achebe, this meant the appropriation of ethnographic modes of representation to prove that the African communities were neither "primitive" nor "without history" (Osei-Nyame, 1999). Osei-Nyame (1999) affirms that this type of appropriation —characteristic of Achebe's narrative— form part of the Igbo "ethno-text". In other words, the vast corpus of African traditional oral material such as fables, folktales, proverbs, myths or any other form of indigenous wisdom provide new modes of interpretation and embrace novel discursive formations in Foucault's terms. Achebe (1973) recognizes that "*Things Fall Apart* was an act of atonement with [his] past, the ritual return and homage of a prodigal son" against the "appalling"⁸ novels he read in his youth. In the same line of reasoning, Abiola Irele (2000) and García Ramírez (1999) maintain that *TFA* challenged the simplified representation of the West whereby Africa was conceptualized as a formless area of life, as "an area of darkness" devoid of human significance. In fact, Abiola Irele (2000) underlines that this close imbrication of language and themes in *TFA* defines a new mode of African imaginative expression. In a complementary study, Lovesey (2006) mediates upon the relation of history and fiction in Achebe. Due to the inclusion of stories that speak of themselves, Lovesey (2006) argues that *TFA* represents a strategy of resistance to the eternal historical and ethnographical truths written and documented by the accounts of colonialist ethnographers and anthropologists though the author is careful to claim that the novel is also based on a construct of a "Umuofian" culture. The Umuofian past is not romanticized as a golden period. It is narrated with its internal contradictions, and conflicting and overlapping overtones. As a matter of fact, Lovesey (2006) points out that in this dynamic of the reading entrenched in the plot the readers begin to accumulate insider knowledge which lead them to a seemingly benign respect for the Igbo culture. Moreover, readers are lead to re-signify and re-inscribe cultural difference from an ethnographic deconstruction which responds to the colonized experience. In this context, the author describes that Igbo proverbs offer mediated access to cultural heritage, presented through careful explanation, repetition, and directed interpretation. He concludes that "*Things Fall Apart* foregrounds the provisional nature of all narratives of the past, the ways they are lost, changed, re-written, and reinvented" (Lovesey, 2006, p. 116). As for Snyder (2008), he rounds off that

⁸ Achebe is here referring to Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson*.

knowledge of African culture can be attained from the ethnographic readings of *TFA* in a way that is represented by the proximate voice of the insider. However, Snyder (2008) is mindful to suggest that this insider knowledge present throughout the novel is dramatically condensed into a brief anecdote of an outsider's view, that of the District Commissioner, which thrusts the intimate, proximate view of Igbo life into alien scrutiny:

The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could write almost a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. (*TFA*, p. 183)

Okonkwo's tragic death is reduced to a mere simplified anecdote which ironically characterizes the external distant knowledge of the colonial subject. It is also important to remember that *TFA* ends with this colonial voice representing the District Commissioner who considers writing a book on the civilized experiences of the African primitive tribes. Yet, Okonkwo's story and death is not worth the detailed documentation of the anthropologist or the ethnographer.

As regards the cultural and pedagogical reading attached to the novel, Ouzgane and Okome (2009) have asserted that *TFA* has undergone a continuous process of canonization as soon as the novel was published in 1958 and has still remained the quintessential African and postcolonial novel ever since. They claim that the success of *TFA* is tied largely to the cultural capital bestowed upon it by the postcolonial reading public. As they point out, essentially, what defines *TFA* as the quintessential African or postcolonial text is the interplay of encounters and engagements in and outside the text. On her part, Dannenberg (2009) describes *TFA* as a truly original postcolonial discourse in that Achebe not only transforms the perspectives in postcolonial narrative (i.e. reversing the binaries and telling the story from the perspective of the explored rather than the explorer) but she claims that it is Achebe's ability to endow the narrative with a post-binary and truly postcolonial complexity. She argues that this is achieved through the inclusion of many layers of voice in the text. The complexity of Igbo culture is not linear but dynamic and the meeting of cultures that is part of the plot is not fluid but becomes entangled and intricate.

All these views in reference to *TFA* take us back to our governing thesis that claims that a self-reflexive technique in language foregrounds aspects of content and form that are especially evident in the use of proverbs. Speaking of stories that are genuinely African, writing Igbo's own history based on local nuances and re-signifying the ethnographical readings of the colonial western paradigm, and even creating a novel aesthetic, *TFA* is specially a multi-layered text full of complexity and depth.

2 The prevalence of self-referentiality in *TFA*

In this context, Mwangi (2009) examines the current African literary criticism, especially the turn away from the "writing back" paradigm of postcolonial studies—as early formulated in the studies of Ashcroft *et al.* ([1989] 2002) and Bhabha (1994)—so as to determine if Anglophone African texts, such as *TFA*, might be considered within the "writing back to itself" paradigm. Mwangi (2009) challenges the anthropological perspective of Africa as the "other" of the West. He argues that African literature is not solely constructed in its opposition to the "other"—as not-self— or as a surrogate entity that exists only in relation to Western literature, as stated by Ashcroft *et al.* ([1989] 2002). On the contrary, he assures that:

Postcolonial studies tend to see African literature in opposition to Western aesthetics, even when that opposition is not explored in any detail because the difference is taken as a given; the similarities and cross-cultural entanglements are celebrated with an intensity of enthusiasm that indicates them as an oddity. The underlying assumption that African literatures are the "Other" of European literature but at the same time intersect with it in hybrid formations has a similar implication for the study of African cultural arts: subordinating indigenous literatures to Western value systems. (Mwangi, 2009, p. 250)

For Mwangi (2009), African literature is not primarily "an art of *ressentiment*" at Europe as the cause of African frustrations. Rather, it is "an art of positive self-affirmation" that is also not blind to internal causes of malaise within African societies. As reviewed by Koh (2010), contrary to the predominant argument within postcolonial theory, which holds that African literature "writes back" to an imagined colonial center, since the mid-1980s, African novels are primarily interested in dialoguing with other African texts rather than with an external audience. Hence, we might say that Mwangi's views extend postcolonial theory in that the author critiques the usage of the expression "writing back" to signify a state of retaliating against or negating Western discourses. He claims that the question of form which has been overlooked in the study of postcolonial literatures is crucial when analyzing Anglophone African literature. In a special way, Mwangi (2009) focuses his argument on the study of metafiction as a self-referential technical device which defines Anglophone African texts and stages a new politics that refuses to romanticize Africa. For him, metafiction in African literature implies drawing attention to the novel's literariness and self-perception. In other words, writing back to itself involves a voice of its own, an agency in its literary aesthetics which subverts the images of western canonical representations. Metafictional novels involve layers of meanings which draw not only on content but form. The prevalence of metafiction techniques as an aesthetic practice heightens the use of self-referentiality in that the novels become intertextual in order to constitute their own messages and to address local issues which entail a self-perception and interpretative process of revisioning.

According to Mwangi (2009), though Achebe's *TFA* portrays in a realist mode the weaknesses and strengths of precolonial Africa, it also exhibits self-referential

moments as do metafictional texts of the 1990s to particularly focus on local nuances as well as colonial criticism. Although *TFA* belongs to the first generation of modern African literature, the novel is not interested merely in "writing back" but in articulating problems involved in the local milieu. Mwangi (2009) recognizes metafictional moments in *TFA* rather than considering it completely within the metafictional genre. The influence of orature and local forms of expressions pave the way to the production of metafictional moments in Achebe's *TFA*. Achebe deploys this particular literary technique in such a way that distinguishes the writer's peculiar use of language and the aesthetic effects he wants to generate. In terms of content, Achebe exposes and appeals to Africanness for English purposes and, in terms of form or language, he exploits Englishness for African purposes. On the question of form, *TFA* defamiliarizes the English language, among other things, to lead the reader to reconsider their established *episteme*. Othering the English language helps Achebe deconstruct the very notion of "other" to which the "writing back" paradigm of postcolonial African literature has long been identified. On the question of content, *TFA* becomes markedly self-reflexive in that it addresses emerging realities which define the diversity of identities in Africa. As suggested by Mwangi (2009), the use of English in ways that deviate from Standard English, the internal heteroglossia, the self-critique consciousness are part of the literary forms that help the narrative undermine notions of a stable unitary self. In effect, the author argues that the dominant paradigm of "writing back" to the West is undermined by the novel's preoccupation and prioritization of themes other than the relations between colonizer and colonized.

Umuofia essentially narrates itself. Different characters in the novel take different stances. Nwoye, Okonkwo's first son, is diametrically opposed to his father and to the values of the traditional Igbo society. He resists from within the social rules and negative aspects of Umuofia culture his father eagerly defends. He openly rebels against the traditional ideals of masculine behavior in the community (Whittaker and Msiska, 2007) and bears the burden of being treated as effeminate by Okonkwo. He reacts against the death of Ikemefuna⁹ in the hands of his own father or he repulses towards the discarding of twins. Nwoye is also attracted to Christianity¹⁰, the new religion his own father wants to attack, "not because of its teachings which he does not fully understand, but because he has found in it a kind of relief to his sadness at the inability of the Igbo society to accept a person like him" (Whittaker and Msiska, 2007):

It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow. The hymn about brothers who sat in the darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted

⁹ As soon as his father walked in, that night, Nwoye knew that Ikemefuna had been killed, and something seemed to give way inside him, like the snapping of a tightened bow. (*TFA*, Ch. 7, p. 43)

¹⁰ "To abandon the gods of one's father and go about with a lot of effeminate men clucking like old hens was the very depth of abomination. Suppose when he died all his male children decided to follow Nwoye's steps and abandon their ancestors? Okonkwo felt a cold shudder run through him at the terrible prospect, like the prospect of annihilation." (*TFA*, Ch. 17, p. 110)

his young soul – the question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed. He felt a relief within as the hymn poured into his parched soul. (*TFA*, Ch. 16, p. 106)

The inner turmoil Nwoye suffers, the moral opposition that exists between Okonkwo and his son, his conversion to Christianity disrupts a whole system of values in the Igbo worldview which is presented through the view of contradicting characters. In fact, through characters such as Obierika (Okonkwo’s best friend)¹¹, Unoka (Okonkwo’s father), and Nwoye, Achebe shows that some members of the community are questioning some Igbo practices and beliefs from within. Another aspect to be considered in the multilayer of meanings created in the narrative is the inclusion of folk stories, songs, interludes, proverbs, orature which—as Mwangi (2009) indicates—have their share in the depiction of “things falling apart” before colonialism and in displaying the beauty of indigenous oral literature in pre-colonial Africa. However, they also have a “mechanism of bringing things together without necessarily achieving an originary harmony” (Mwangi, 2009, p.31). Mwangi’s argument is that African literatures mark local identities through orality and the use of folklore gives the novels a rich, internal heteroglossia that signifies the desire and need to look at phenomena from different perspectives. Indeed, through self-reflexive inward-looking techniques, Achebe decolonizes colonial narratives and discourses to claim a voice of its own for their people.

3 Internal heteroglossia in *TFA*’s proverbs: a *minor* voice being heard

In this second part, our aim is to explore the significance of the internal heteroglossia displayed in proverbs which is grounded on the concept of deterritorialization. As we have discussed in the previous section, this internal heteroglossia adds up to the multiplicity of meanings uncovered in *TFA*. In this context and taking the thought-provoking study of Bensmaïa (2017), the author tries to reassess the concept of “minor literatures” as defined by Deleuze and Guattari ([1975] 1986) and reconsider Deleuze’s thought bringing it face to face with postcolonial theory. Along the lines that define Bensmaïa’s (2017) analysis of the intrinsic value of what is played in texts that integrate the criteria of minor literatures proposed by Deleuze and Guattari—namely, the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to the political immediacy, and the fact that everything in them takes on a collective value—, she is interested in considering minor literatures no longer as just another genre category, rather she claims that it must be seen as a concept that makes it possible “to orient thought in a complete different position”. She maintains that the existence of minor literatures is supported by the condition that “peoples, races, and entire cultures were in the past reduced to silence”. At this point, Bensmaïa’s (2017) analysis can be said to

¹¹ “Obierika was a man who thought about things. When the will of the goddess had been done, he sat down in his *obi* and mourned his friend’s [Okonkwo] calamity. Why should a man suffer so grievously for an offence he had committed inadvertently? But although he thought for a long time he found no answer. He was merely led into greater complexities.” (*TFA*, p. 109)

coincide with Mwangi (2009) in that both authors highlight the literariness of these kinds of texts as a determining factor in the search of a voice of their own. Bensmaïa (2017) presupposes that minor literatures —as much in the same way as postcolonial texts— appear as the practical manifestation of that *very voice* (the voice of the Africans or Igbos, for example) who can begin to speak not only of the violence of the colonization but also of their own differences. That very voice Bensmaïa (2017) identifies in minor literature texts is accomplished by the particular use of language, the medium through which writers shatter the prolonged silence of the "other" of the West. For Bensmaïa (2017), postcolonial writers' understanding of this complex interplay explains the affinities between postcolonialism and minor literature as defined by Deleuze and Guattari.

In *TFA*, Achebe makes use of language in ways that disrupt silence and make his people express their own differences and idiosyncrasies. This specific use of language is characterized by its deterritorialization, political and collective value. Indeed, deterritorialization is creatively disclosed in the proverbs that appear in the novel. To begin with, the locus of such deterritorialization revealed in proverbs raises itself as a new aesthetics represented by a language of its own, traversing a novel terrain and standing out against a powerful long-silenced voice. The deterritorialized language of *TFA's* proverbs erases the supposed unity of the major language (English). Making a minor utilization which creates its own machinery and voice, the minor language (Igbo) deprives English of its own familiarity and helps deconstruct the very notion of the "other". If "the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities" as Deleuze proclaims, we intend to demonstrate that proverbs in *TFA* venture unexplored thresholds between the "self" —the major language, English— and the "other" —the minor language, Igbo— and enact a new aesthetics characterized by the umbrella of minor literatures (Deleuze and Guattari [1975] 1986; Bensmaïa, 2017). Proverbs grant a space for the "other" in the Anglophone narrative and help deconstruct the notion of the "other" for African purposes. Achebe is othering English for African purposes in order to expose the African world and reflect on the contradictions of Igbo communities from within, just as much as he is "writing back" by allowing the "other" to enter English so as to unveil the African world and idiosyncrasy by virtue of writing its own story and creating its own literature, a literature portrayed with a small "I", i.e. a minor literature. At this point, as shown by Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka's literature —as much as Achebe's— is not defined as a "literature (with a capital L)", but a literature that becomes experimental. As expressed by Bensmaïa (2017), for Kafka "literature is no longer related to the desire to tell extraordinary and edifying stories; nor is it a question of inventing a new style or improving upon what the 'masters' did" but literature no longer begins with man in general but rather with a particular man or woman. Bensmaïa (2017) notes that what Kafka proposes is a reversal of perspective to orient thought in a completely different position. The same happens with Achebe. If we consider the heteroglossia staged within Achebe's narrative, we can state that this particular way of using the English language is subsumed under the umbrella of minor literatures. Deleuze and Guattari

([1975] 1986) describe the language of minor literatures¹² as consisting of a construct in which a major language (English, in the case of *TFA*) is affected by a strong deterritorialization factor and is subjected by a series of displacements carried out by a minor language (Igbo, in our case) in order to express new meanings in a new context. In other words, the minor Igbo language used creatively conquers the territory of the major English language to find the new voice which defines the African idiosyncrasy. Consequently, *TFA* as a minor literature text uses language in a creative way challenging the long-standing views on Africa held by colonialist writers as well as expressing new linguistic and cultural meanings. This means that it is not only content what matters in minor literatures but it rather begins by "expressing itself" (Deleuze and Guattari, p. 28), i.e. in the way distinctive discursive practices are exposed in the postcolonial text. *TFA* thus reveals interesting ideological, linguistic and literary issues in the same way as it poses translating questions not only within the original text but also in the Spanish translations done by Jorge Sarrió (1966), Fernando Santos (1986) and José Manuel Álvarez Flórez (1997), respectively.

Due to the relevance to our study, we will briefly revise Zarandona's (2010) contribution in order to examine the presence of Achebe in the Spanish literary system from 1966 with the first translation of *TFA*. In connection with the reception of *TFA*, Zarandona (2010) points out that Achebe has never been a popular phenomenon in Spain; however, he has always appealed to a minor selected public who used to read African literature. In this context, *TFA* has been translated three times in Spain with several re-editions and re-printings. As regards the editorial characteristics, Zarandona (2010) explains that the three Spanish editions are not critical, academic or erudite publications. As Rodríguez Murphy (2014) comments, *TFA* has been translated in Spain at three different moments in time with different titles. The first version of 1966 done by Jorge Sarrió (*Un Mundo se aleja*¹³) and directed by the publishing house El Círculo de Lectores implied a limited distribution and reception, only meant for fellow members. In 1986, the publication of the second version (*Todo se derrumba*¹⁴) by Fernando Santos corresponds to the renowned commercial publishing house Alfaguara with a pocket edition accessible to the general public. In 1997, the third translation, *Todo se desmorona*¹⁵, by a third translator, José Manuel Álvarez Flórez, came out. This time the translation was carried out by a third publishing house, Ediciones del Bronce, as part of an exotic, minor edition for "different" texts. The study of Zarandona (2010) allows us to observe that *UMSA* is the only true translation whereas *TSDer* and *TSDes* are re-translations done from the first version with variations at the micro-structural level of analysis. In connection to the foreignness inherent to Achebe's work, it is

¹² It has to be noted that the authors use the terms "major" and "minor" language not with respect to the hierarchy of the languages themselves but with reference to the fact that these are languages that a majority or a minority speak within a certain geographical context.

¹³ Subsequent reference to this book will be abbreviated as *UMSA*.

¹⁴ Subsequent reference to this book will be abbreviated as *TSDer*.

¹⁵ Subsequent reference to this book will be abbreviated as *TSDes*.

noteworthy that the first two translations (*UMSA* and *TSDer*) do not include translator's notes or glosses. In the 2010 re-edition, although the third translation (*TSDes*) does not include notes, it does contain a glossary as in the English version on the understanding that it would reduce the cultural difference caused by the foreignness of the text. Further, *TSDes* includes a prologue written by Marta Sofía López Rodríguez (2010b) who affirms that Achebe sets in motion "the institution of the African literature" as he revises the Western *episteme* as regards the deconstruction of stereotypes built by the Europeans in reference to Africa and the Africans as "the lowest point on human condition, strictly between the human and the animal" (op. cit.: 9). López Rodríguez highlights that *TFA* has contributed to the reevaluation of the past which until the twentieth century has always been narrated by the victorious British colonizers.

4 *TFA's* proverbs as locus of heterogeneity and self-referentiality: an aesthetic threshold between the *self* and the *other*

In this following part, we attempt to examine the implications of the peculiar choice of language derived by its deterritorialization as well as the postcolonial writing practice¹⁶ Achebe exhibits in *TFA*, in particular, as regards the use of proverbs. In short, our concern will be to delve into the creation of the discursive and cultural spaces which are present in the original and translated texts in relation to the occurrence of proverbs as evidence of the presence of the heterogeneity in discourse. In turn, our interest is to enquire into the challenges this hybridity and heterogeneity posed for translation and thus the significance of *TFA's* proverbs for translation studies.

TFA is defined by its hybridity and creative use of language (Ashcroft *et al.*, [1989] 2002; Tymoczko, 1999). These features of language use are materialized in the application of many postcolonial writing strategies which account for the deterritorialization operation described by Deleuze and Guattari in their research. Specifically, Ashcroft *et al.* ([1989] 2002) refer to these operations as *textual strategies*, which can be of two types: those of abrogation and appropriation. In this respect, *TFA* employs appropriation strategies since the English language is used creatively in so far as new meanings are attached to the enunciative and discourse level. This is effectively achieved by means of the introduction of unfamiliar forms (Igbo words, proverbs, native myths and imagery, fables, legends or folklore stories), i.e. cultural elements, which define Igbo idiosyncrasy. This minor

¹⁶ It should be noted that a key feature in postcolonial writing is the creative way in which language is used. If we adhere to the terms coined by Ashcroft *et al.* ([1989] 2002), this creativity in language occurs when the English language is used innovatively as part of an *appropriation* strategy typical of post-colonial texts to fulfill specific purposes and convey *other* meanings. Or else, postcolonial writers use *abrogation* textual strategies which consist of rejecting the categories of the Standard English language and the idea that there is only one meaning "inscribed" in the words. This implies decolonizing the English language and writing with another *english*, one representing the minority languages. For a detailed account of the difference between these two textual strategies, see Ashcroft, B. *et al.* (eds.) ([1989] 2002) *The Empires Writes Back*. London and New York: Routledge. 2^o edition.

operation of the Igbo language within the context of the major Standard English language ultimately ensures and signifies *difference*. In *TFA*, Achebe writes mainly in Standard English but employs the vernacular Igbo language to indicate *otherness* and suggest *self-referentiality*. According to Tymoczko (1999), these unfamiliar elements that create variations in the standard language embrace a plurality of meanings and therefore highlight the hybridity¹⁷ of the text. By "translating" or transposing these elements and thus defamiliarizing the language, the Igbo culture and language become visible¹⁸. Similarly, Tymoczko (1999) has also insisted on hybridity as a central marker of postcolonial practices in that postcolonial texts have the ability to evoke two languages simultaneously rationalizing on the feature of heterogeneity and going beyond the binary oppositions of *self/other*, *colonizer/colonized* and pointing to the meeting of cultures. It is no longer the acclaim that there is one voice to the detriment of the other but now discourse is portrayed as *doubled-voiced*, in terms of Bakhtin¹⁹, evoking two idiosyncrasies (in *TFA*, this is represented by the dominant European culture/language and the colonized minor Igbo culture/language) which dispute their cultural and linguistic identity in the field of expression in discourse.

In line with what we have just explained, we seek to determine how proverbs in *TFA* function on an enunciative and discursive level of analysis to signify *difference* and *otherness* in the original and translated texts. For this reason, we will follow a methodological qualitative examination of the proverbs as they appear in the original text and its Spanish translations²⁰. To begin with, we will define and characterize *TFA's* proverbs in order to establish the challenges associated with their configuration of meaning and their translation into Spanish.

According to Gándara (2004; 2013), proverbs act as a powerful argumentative tool in discourse since they are attached to doxological basis which pave the way to support, exemplify or summarize a point of view in the argumentative process. Gándara (2013) observes that: "Among the forms of collective enunciation, *paremiae* often play an argumentative role, synthesize ideological stances and aim at building consensus." (p. 188). She also claims that they can operate as forms of ideological and cultural cohesion. In *TFA*, Achebe subverts the dominant discourse not only by narrating the disruptive arrival of the white British colonizers in Nigeria and the consequent loss of the Igbo values and culture which occurs in the last part of the novel but also by depicting and enhancing Igbo civilization and traditions

¹⁷ Tymoczko takes the concept of hybridity from Bhabha (1994). For Bhabha (1994), hybridity emerges from re-inscribing the past and relocating it in a hybrid new third space of enunciation where the representation of cultural *difference* is positioned in-between the colonizer and colonized.

¹⁸ Tymoczko (1999) argues that postcolonial writing might be imaged as a form of interlingual translation and claims that it unfolds as a kind of foreignizing strategy, indicative of new cultural and linguistic parameters and accounting for the visibility of the *other*.

¹⁹ Following Bhabha (1994), it is this third space (or space-in-between) which constitutes and ensures the conditions of enunciation. He concludes that if we are able to recognize this hybrid space-in-between, we will be able to recognize the space where meanings and the symbols of culture are appropriated, translated and read anew. He adopts a new paradigm, that of culture as translation.

²⁰ For a full categorization and detailed account of the *TFA's* proverbs, cf. Lombardo (2015).

through the use of the vernacular language mainly in the first and second part of the novel. However, this narration is not pictured as a paradise: African communities are portrayed with their glorious past as well as with their contradictions and shameful wretchedness.

In essence, the influence of Igbo orality is manifested in the introduction of numerous Igbo words, expressions and proverbs which Achebe uses to delineate the inside of the Igbo epistemology as an inner observer. From here, as supported by Snyder (2008) and Abiola Irele (2000) among others, the narration in *TFA* is not based in the least on the detailed chronicle of an external ethnographical representation of reality, as an illustration of a genre deep-rooted in the white European colonizers' accounts but on the intrinsic orality of the colonized. The *other* is thus revalued and signified from within. It is the vernacular minor language used creatively which signifies *otherness* in a context easily identifiable and accessible for the international readership. And, as Whittaker and Msiska (2007) conclude in their study, proverbs as part of the Igbo cultural heritage ingrained in the Umuofia community contribute to reinforce the oral discourse of the colonized and introduce aspects of Igbo cosmology; however, more importantly, proverbs perform a crucial epistemological function as repositories of communal wisdom and knowledge, as mnemonic devices for effective communication, and as educational tools.

Furthering the study of proverbs, Spoturno (2009, 2010) ponders on the interlingual heterogeneity of these expressions which are founded on an operation of deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, [1975] 1986). In her approach, she defines proverbs as double-voiced instances in which the morphological-syntactical component corresponds to the major language and the semantic component relates to the minor culture (English and Igbo, respectively, in the case of *TFA*). She highlights the fact that new cultural-linguistic meanings are created in this discursive space where two languages merge. The Igbo idiosyncrasy is first unraveled in the literal translation of the original Igbo proverb and its translation into English in the source text²¹, and, in the Spanish versions of the translated texts afterwards. In general terms, Spoturno (2010) claims that the literal translation of these expressions reveals a new alterity which helps build the bridge between two civilizations linguistically and culturally different. However, she suggests that these intercultural bridges impose certain reading conditions since the receptor either of the source or target text should be able to distinguish the two different cultural-linguistic systems in order to access the ultimate meaning of these double-voiced expressions. In other words, the reader should be able to identify these proverbs as inherently hybrid, double-voiced expressions to fill the gap in the construction of meaning. On the one side, the reader should be able to recognize the semantic content which embodies the African culture or Igbo epistemology; and, on the other, they should perceive that the proverbs bear the morpho-syntactic form of the

²¹ In this case, we can say that Achebe as Author-narrator (as a discursive figure, in terms of Eco) acts as translator in the source language.

Standard English language in order to appreciate *different* meanings which are created in-between and which eventually evoke heterogeneity.

Having discussed the importance and relevance of proverbs in *TFA*, we will now address the question of translation for these double-voiced expressions. Given the postcolonial hybrid nature of *TFA*, the translation of these double-voiced expressions necessarily requires different strategies from those used in the traditional western models of translation, as expressed by Bandia (2006) and Murphy (2010). In his study of postcolonial literature produced in African contexts, Bandia (2006) argues that the very own characteristics of these texts make African literature create innovative practices and, on account of this, he chooses to refer to this hybrid writing style as "translation as a metaphor". By analogy to Bahbha's notion of third space, Bandia (2006) coins the expression "third code". In other words, he regards translation as a metaphor of transportation and relocation, a "carrying across physical, cultural or linguistic boundaries from a minority language and culture into a hegemonic one" (Bandia, 2006, p. 4). Hence, not only does *a creative translation* need to transfer the cultural-linguistic meanings encoded in these proverbs but it has to recreate the cadence and rhythm of the "in-between" language or "third code" (Bandia, 2006) with which they are written and, at the same time, allude to heterogeneity in discourse. In a similar vein and within the field of translation studies, Berman (1985) has early maintained that postcolonial writing involves "the work on the signifier", considered vital to the creation of a "third space", a space of one's own, a space to inscribe one's identity and find one's own voice within a global literary structure. Berman was deeply influenced by Schleiermacher, who claimed the unity of thought and expression, and by Benjamin, who drew attention to the formalism of language and believed that the essence of language lies in the signifiers and the *letters*. For Berman (1985), the *work on the letter* means being attached to the literal words of the original. It is through this work on the signifiers that the signifying process is restored and experienced in translation. Berman sees the configuration of the image of a translator as operating at an aesthetic-linguistic level and as manipulating *the letter* to achieve formal equivalence and assure a *good* translation. Berman advocates the *trials of foreign* in the translated text so as to experience the text with the same flavor as the original, with its own "deformations". Henceforth, for Berman, the ethics of translation resides in avoiding the destruction of the underlying networks of multiple significations a text fosters, its local rhythms or annihilating its vernacular networks or exoticization.

In a complementary fashion, Murphy (2010) clarifies that the strategies employed should draw attention to the *difference* in the translated text without stressing *the different*. The translation of proverbs in *TFA* should reflect the *creative translation* of English-Igbo of the original, transforming it into Spanish-Igbo in the translated texts.

The question now is how the Spanish translators have rendered these configurations of heterogeneity and hybridity present in the proverbs in the translated texts: i.e. whether they have decided to make the Igbo language and

culture visible or whether they have domesticated the text and made it accessible to the Spanish reader by choosing an easily comprehensible functional equivalent. In this sense, we will explore and account for the strategies used in the Spanish versions for the recreation of *otherness* by scrutinizing the semantic and morpho-syntactic components.

5 Rendering of *TFA's* proverbs into Spanish

What follows is an examination of some proverbs from *TFA* —as representative of all the proverbs that appear in the first and second part of the novel and which deal with the splendor of the Igbo culture and its values²²— and an analysis of the semantic and morpho-syntactic levels.

The selected proverb appears in the first part of the novel. It belongs to a category framed under the importance of the elders in the Umuofia community as sources of communal wisdom and knowledge, capable of passing on the values and beliefs of their culture to younger generations.

Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them. (*TFA*, p.7)

- Nuestros mayores dicen que el sol brillará antes para los que están de pie que para los que están de rodillas a los pies de aquéllos. (*UMSA*, p. 14)
- Nuestros ancianos dicen que el sol calentará a quienes están de pie antes que a quienes se arrodillan ante ellos. (*TSDer*, p. 4)
- Dicen nuestros mayores que el sol ha de alumbrar primero a los que están de pie que a los que se arrodillan bajo ellos. (*TSDes*, p.15)

First of all, it must be noted that the original English version of the proverb we are examining is a literal translation from Igbo. The Igbo version reads: *Ndi Okeye nashi, na anwu ga-ebu uzo chasa ndi kwu oto tupu o chasa ndi sekpu ala n'okpuru ha*. Thus, the first hint at Igbo culture and African experience is traced back in the literal translation of Igbo into the worldwide English language. Regarding his ideological position in connection with his writing style, Achebe (1965) declares that he is in favor of adopting and adapting the English language in a creative fashion in order to express his people's idiosyncrasy and carry out the peculiar African experience:

The price a world language must be prepared to pay is submission to many different kinds of use. The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language so much that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience. (Achebe, 1965)

²² The last part of *TFA* covers the decay of the Igbo culture and its values due to the arrival of the white European civilization which imposes its own law and order as well as its own system of cultural values and language. In this third part, the number of proverbs is considerably reduced and those that appear make reference to the topic of Christianity and evangelization.

If we refer to the textual semantic level of this double-voiced expression, the reference of the proverb in the source language is grounded on the intricate situation undergone by Unoka, Okonkwo's father and main character of the novel, who is an irresponsible debtor. One of his creditors, Okoye—who is one of the most important men of the clan, a titled man and a great talker—visits his friend, Unoka, to recover his debt. He asks Unoka to pay back the money owed to him. After some talk, Unoka points to a wall where there is an illustration of all his debts and says ironically:

Each group there represents a debt to someone, and each stroke is one hundred cowries. . . I owe that man a thousand cowries. But he has not come to wake me up in the morning for it. I shall pay you, but not today. Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under it. I shall pay my big debts first. (*TFA*, p. 7)

As Osei-Nyame (1999) describes, the meaning conveyed by this proverb on the textual level is that of survival by "deferring the debts" Unoka owes. Nevertheless, if we expand the immediate context of application, the meaning can hint at the idea of greatness bestowed to those who work and have a lot before those who have a little and do not work as hard. Remarkably, in Igbo idiosyncrasy, a man prospered or failed by his own land. Here the proverb also alludes to the African world in a way that constitutes self-referential moment in Mwnagi's terms and is thus adhering to the paradigm of writing to itself. Still on a greater level of analysis in the context of the novel, the semantic meaning can allow for the dichotomy of domination vs. oppression between the colonizer and the colonized. In this respect, the contrast can be established between those who rule vs. those who are dominated either culturally or linguistically. In this case, and according to the Western world, the proverb signals an act of reversal of perspective against domination: those who struggle and face domination will win, those who kneel under the dominance will eventually be defeated.

Another important aspect to consider in the rendering of meaning is that this proverb appears in the middle of a conversation, emphasizing the significance of orality for the Igbo community and culture²³. This means that the use of a proverb in this discourse surpasses the semantic meaning. In effect, the content of the

²³ One of the most significant proverbs which mention the relevance of conversation and the prevalence of proverbs to Igbo people reads: "Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten." (*TFA*, p.6) The Spanish versions are: "El pueblo igbo tiene en gran estima el arte de la conversación y los enunciados paremiológicos son como el aceite de palma con que se condimentan las palabras." (*UMSA*, p.13), "Entre los ibos se tiene en mucha consideración el arte de la conversación, y los enunciados paremiológicos son el aceite de palma con el que se aderezan las palabras." (*TSDer*, p. 4) and "Los ibos valoran muchísimo el arte de la conversación y los enunciados paremiológicos son el aceite de palma con el que se comen las palabras." (*TSDes*, p.14)

proverb could have been transmitted and coded under other forms of expression; yet, neither the source nor target reader would have accessed the relevance of orality for Igbo epistemology that the proverb seeks to communicate if it had not been articulated in this way. Following this line of reasoning, we may state that the proverb also serves to illustrate a self-referential moment in the novel: the literariness of the expression adopts a new form, creates a new voice which writes back to the Igbo language and cultures in ways that are unique. Achebe writes back to the major Standard language and responds to its partialities in just the same way as he writes back to his own Igbo language and traverses a new aesthetics in terms of form and content.

In this manner, the semantic content is granted by the vernacular Igbo language which revolves around, as discussed earlier, the nature of domination. However, the way of expression conforms to the Standard English language in that the syntactic, lexical and morphological and phonemic levels of analysis draw a parallel with the basic structure and rules of the dominant English language. Following Spoturno’s research, we can then suggest that heterogeneity in this and most of the proverbs of *TFA* is represented by the vernacular language (Igbo) which conquers the territory of expression of the dominant language (English) through an operation of deterritorialization, as examined by Deleuze and Guattari ([1975] 1986). The heterogeneity as well as the intrusion of the minor cosmology of the *other* culture and values is achieved thanks to the appropriation of the major dominant language, surmounting long-standing meanings which serve to re-inscribe the African experience. Spoturno (2010) holds the view that this new space of enunciation — the third space, in Bhabha’s terms— creates new experiences which place the minor position in relation to the dominant culture in a hybrid and heterogeneous space whereby both sides engage in a defiant negotiation of cultural meanings. Indeed, this new negotiation of meanings is clearly observed within the structure of the proverbs in *TFA*: they replicate the cultural and linguistic heritage of the world of the *other* in discourse.

As regards the lexical level of analysis, the three translators have maintained the evidential quotation verb (*say*) which, on the one hand, marks the expression as a proverb —as part of the cultural heritage of a community (Gándara, 2004; 2013)— and, on the other hand, points to their polyphonic nature: the value and relevance of the words are endorsed by the elders’ wisdom which helps give argumentative force in discourse. With respect to the verb tense, there is no significant change since the present simple is used with certain variants in all versions. In *UMSA* and *TSDes*, the translators have chosen the term *mayores* for *elders* and, in *TSDer*, *ancianos* is selected. In Spanish, there is a subtle difference in meaning between these two terms: *mayores* and *ancianos*. According to the *Real Academia Española (DRAE)*, *mayores* is an elderly person and *ancianos* is also an elderly person but here the term is loaded with a deferential connotation. Under the definition of *Diccionario de Uso Español María Moliner (DMM)*, *anciano* is only applied to people and *mayor* is synonym of *viejo* and *anciano* but its context of application can be expanded far beyond to that of people.

In the three translations, the repetition of *will shine* is avoided. On the phonemic level, this decision of eliminating the repetitive property of the original proverb is to the detriment of orality. Consequently, the rhythmic and repetitive effect granted by *shine* in the second clause of the English version is erased from the translations and so part of the Igbo language and culture characterized and defined by its orality is lost in the Spanish versions. In view of the translators' choices for *shine*, in *TSDer*, the imaginary evoked by *calentará* is more tangible than the option of *brillará* in *UMSA* and the formal periphrasis *ha de alumbrar* in *TSDes*. However, if we analyze the metaphorical meanings enclosed in *shine*, they are retrieved in every election of the three Spanish translations. In reference to the lexical pair *stand/ kneel* which function as antonyms in the original proverb and help strengthen the idea of domination, the translators coincide in the rendering of *stand* as *estar de pie* but differ in the transferring of *kneel*, which is translated as *estar de rodillas* in *UMSA* y *arrodillarse/ se arrodillan* in *TSDer* y *TSDes*. The option *estar de rodillas* embraces a static action and *arrodillarse* involves movement. In other words and considering the topic of domination discussed before, *estar de rodillas* refers to a previous situation, to a state of subordination of those who kneel in connection to those who are standing which is prior to the moment the sun shines. On the contrary, *arrodillarse* reveals an action which is accomplished at the moment of enunciation, i.e., the subordination occurs in that precise instant in front of those who stand.

Although the translators maintain the metaphor of the original proverb, the major discrepancy seems to emerge on the syntactic level with the structure *will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them*. The syntactic order varies considerably in the three translations. In *UMSA* and *TSDes*, the temporal value of *antes/ primero* is kept after *brillará/ ha de alumbrar*. On the other hand, in *TSDer*, the translator decides to change the syntactic order of *antes* placing it after *están de pie*, thus, shifting the focus of information. In brief, in *UMSA*, Sarrió sticks closely to the syntactic structure while Santos and Álvarez Flórez offer a more uncontrolled rendering of syntax in their versions.

If we examine another proverb from the novel, we can observe that the semantic and contextual meaning implied here is somewhat different from the previous category we have analyzed. In this case, the proverb belongs to the category of animal behavior and serves to recreate in detail the Igbo environment and atmosphere. Proverbs belonging to this category use the subject of animals to emphasize the importance of community life and equality among individuals (Rodríguez Murphy, 2010). They also illustrate the colonized world in that Igbo people usually make use of anecdotes involving animals in order to naturalize rituals and beliefs within the community. While the colonizer conceived the Igbo worldview as rudimentary, the Igbo thought that stories about animals were logical explanations for natural events. Proverbs under this category are representative of the pre-colonial period without the influence of the colonizer. As Mwangi (2009) states, stylistically, *TFA* employed folkloric techniques such as proverbs displaying the beauty of indigenous oral literature and the role of the arts and artists in precolonial Africa.

The proverb reads as follows:

Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break. (TFA, p.17)

- Que el milano esté en su percha, y también el airón. Si uno niega al otro, que su ala se rompa. (UMSA, p.25)
- Que el milano vuele y que la garceta vuele también. Si uno dice que no al otro, que se le rompan las alas. (TSDer, p.12)
- Que el milano real tenga dónde posarse y que también lo tenga el águila. Si uno dice no al otro, que se le quiebre el ala. (TSDes, p.26)

In this example, on the metaphorical and semantical level, the reference of the proverb is associated with the existence of a natural order sustained in a delicate balance. This harmony alludes to the tolerance and compromise that life in the community imposes on its individuals in spite of the differences and contradictions that may exist. Literarily, the proverb makes reference to the rise and fall of the birds: the kite²⁴ and the eagle²⁵ ("the king of birds"). It seems that Achebe's intention in using these two words (*kite* and *eagle*) is to embrace all animals associated with the air and heights not easily accessible to people and, at the same time, illustrate the typical emblems of the Igbo worldview, specially, the African fauna²⁶. Agbasiere (2000) affirms that the *eagle* is sought after for its feathers which are regarded as prestigious and is extensively featured in Igbo folk songs. On a metonymic reading, in the first place, the rendering is also connected with the rise and fall of Okonkwo during his life in the tribe and, in the second place, it relates to the rise and fall of Umuofia during the pre- and postcolonial periods. As for the birds, they also function as antonyms due to the symbolic meanings they represent in the Igbo

²⁴ According to the definition provided by *Encyclopedia Britannica Online (EBO)*, the *kite* is any of numerous birds of prey belonging to one of three subfamilies (*Milvinae*, *Elaninae*, *Perninae*) of the family *Accipitridae*. Typically, a kite is lightly built, with a small head, partly bare face, short beak, and long narrow wings and tail.

²⁵ The *EBO* defines the *eagle* as any of many large, heavy-beaked, big-footed birds of prey belonging to the family *Accipitridae*. An eagle may resemble a [vulture](#) in build and flight characteristics but has a fully feathered (often crested) head and strong feet equipped with great curved talons. Eagles subsist mainly on live prey. Like owls, many decapitate their kills. Because of their strength, eagles have been a symbol of war and imperial power since Babylonian times.

²⁶ In another part of the novel, we find another proverb referring to a personified bird which reinforces the importance of animals for the Igbo community and folklore. The English version reads: "Eneke the bird said that since men have learnt to shoot without missing, he has learnt to fly without perching." (TFA, p.20). The three Spanish translations are rendered as follows: "Eneke, el pájaro, dice que, desde que los hombres aprendieron a disparar sin error el tiro, él aprendió a volar sin posarse en las ramas." (UMSA, p. 28); "Eneke, el pájaro, dice que desde que los hombres han aprendido a disparar sin error él ha aprendido a volar sin planear." (TSDer, p.14-15) and "Dice el pájaro eneke que como los hombres han aprendido a disparar sin error nunca el tiro, él ha aprendido a volar sin posarse." (TSDes, p.28) Other proverbs related to Igbo fauna found in the novel are concerned with dogs, chicks, cows, toads and lizards.

environment. For the Igbo people, the *kite* signifies masculinity, power and strategic vision while the *eagle* embodies femininity, elegance and frailty.

From a very early age, Okonkwo has worked to escape the despicable and disgraceful life led by Unoka, his father, and of which Okonkwo is terribly ashamed. Because of his failure, Unoka is not respected by anyone in Umuofia. Although Okonkwo does not have the start in life which many young men usually have—he inherits neither a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife—he has achieved great success. Okonkwo is considered the greatest warrior and is respected by the whole clan. As a child, he worked for one of the wealthiest men in the community, Nwakibie, to whom he pays a visit and asks for planting yams to start his own barn. Nwakibie recites this proverb while performing the traditional rite to show his appreciation for Okonkwo's visit and also to show that men need to be accommodating to one another (Alimi, 2012):

He took a pot of palm-wine and a cock to Nwakibie. Two elderly neighbours were sent for, and Nwakibie's two grown-up sons were also present in his obi. He presented a kola nut and an alligator pepper, which were passed round for all to see and then returned to him. He broke the nut saying: We shall all live. We pray for life, children, a good harvest and happiness. You will have what is good for you and I will have what is good for me. Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break. (*TFA*, p.17)

The proverb appears in the context of a conversation—as in the previous example—between Okonkwo and Nwakibie during the traditional rite. Nwakibie as *locuteur*-narrator is identified with the content of the proverb and the *locuteur* and interlocutor are then enclosed in a shared cultural-linguistic space. When uttering these words, both speakers know what they are referring to. On the syntactic level, we have two compound sentences: the first being a coordinating structure, and the second, a subordinate structure. As syntactic rhetorical device, Achebe uses parallelism to recreate the characteristic rhythm associated with African orature. On the phonemic level, the consonance performed in the repetition of *let* and *perch* and the assonance in *let-says*, *his-wing* and *one-other* favor the rhyme together with the metric structure observed in the proverb. These mnemonic devices act as powerful and efficient argumentative tools (Gándara, 2004). Further, the formulaic structure, parallelism, alliteration and rhyme reinforce the nature of a proverb as defined by its fixedness, brevity, grammatical autonomy and close discourses (Anscombe, 2000).

It is noteworthy that the English proverb is a literal translation from Igbo. The original version reads: *Egbe bere Ugo bere, nke siri ibe ya ebela nku kwaa ya*. However, there is a more modern version: *Egbe bere Ugo bere, nke siri ibe ya ebela gosi ya ebe o ga ebe* (Odoeme, 2011). The Spanish translation for the first version would be rendered as follows: "Que el águila esté en su percha y que milano también lo esté, cualquiera que niegue al otro el derecho de posarse, debe romperse las alas"; and the modern version would be translated as: "Que el águila esté en su percha y que milano también lo esté, cualquiera que niegue al otro el derecho de posarse, debe mostrar al otro dónde posarse". In any case, Achebe

provides a creative translation from Igbo into English in what Bandia (2006) defines as *third code* (a language in-between) or what Tymoczko (1999) proposes as an *interlingual creation*. Tymoczko (1999) goes on to argue that this *interlingual creation*—which defines the postcolonial text, among other things—is manifested as a translation in that the postcolonial writer, in the same way as the literary translator, transposes linguistic elements from one language to another and both are concerned with the transmission of cultural elements from one culture to another. This transposition of cultural-linguistic elements between languages and cultures creates a hybridity which alerts readers to the reality of *difference*, and calls into question the supremacy of the Standard language and culture. In turn, these elements can be highlighted as defamiliarized or might be domesticated either by the Author or the Translator²⁷ as discursive images. Tymoczko (1999) concludes that postcolonial writing—as much as literary translation—might be thought of as a form of translation since it is affected by a process of relocation.

Proverbs stand for defamiliarized elements in Achebe's narrative that the Author and the Spanish Translators utilize as foreignizing techniques to denaturalize the Standard language and to create a new aesthetics in Deleuzian terms. Proverbs in the source and the target text are forms of translations *per se*, indicative of alterity. However, proverbs are also part of the cultural heritage of the Igbo community; they are thus recognized as something known for them. In our example, the proverb is used in welcome rites among the Igbos and is identified as such. The same proverb appears in some novels by Nigerian authors²⁸ as well as in Achebe's short story "Dead Men's Path". In the short story the proverb reads: "What I always say is: let the hawk perch and let the eagle perch", and is recognized as a truncated variant of the complete proverb. This proves to be a *paremia* which binds the speakers together in their comprehension and retrieval of implied meanings. Achebe's short story describes the encounter of two cultures—the traditional and ancient Igbo civilization and the modern and intolerant Western civilization—in a struggle to impose their own cultural norms. Under these circumstances, the modern world of the colonizer is in conflict with the ancestral world of the colonized and

²⁷ On the question of Author and Translator as discursive images, cf.: Amossy (2009), Hermans (1996), Schiavi (1996), Suchet (2013), Spoturno (2017). As Spoturno (2017) points out, the figure of the Author should be understood as imaginary, having a discursive-textual existence, not equivalent to that of the empirical subject or writer. The Translator should also be thought of as a discursive-textual figure not to be confused with the empirical subject.

²⁸ We can mention Nkem Nwankwo's *Danda* (1964), where there is a paradigmatic substitution of the proverb: "The world is bad nowadays [...]. Let the world be good. Let this Oji cleanse the world. Let it make us friends. May each man have what is due to him. The hawk shall perch and the eagle shall perch. Whichever bird says to the other don't perch let its wings break." (p. 13). In *The Rejected Stone* (2010) by Uchenna Nwosu, there are two variants of the same proverb: "Both the kite and the eagle have a right of perch on the Iroko tree; may the one that wards off the other lose its wings." (p. 94) and "As our elders say, the treetop belongs to both the eagle and the kite. May the one that denies the other a perch lose its wings." (p. 84).

the need arises so as to live in a congenial harmony and respect and thus avoid the falling apart of a natural order and balance.

On the syntactic level, there is a strong literal correspondence among the three Spanish translations. In connection with the translation of *too*, there is a change of focus in the syntactic order in *UMSA* and *TSDes* compared to the original. In *UMSA*, *también* appears at the beginning of the second clause in the first sentence. The same option is chosen by Álvarez Flórez but in a different clause structure. On the contrary, in *TSDer* the syntactic order coincides with the original English version. The structure *let his wing break* is rendered differently by the translators. The options available in the Spanish translations are: *que su ala se rompa* in *UMSA*, *que se le rompan las alas* in *TSDer* and *que se le quiebre el ala* in *TSDes*. In the first case, the nominal phrase *su ala* is given much weight while in the other two variants the verb (*break*) carries the thematic load in the clause. Likewise, on the morphological level, *TSDer* and *TSDes* add the object pronoun *le* which refers back to a singular noun in both cases. In a complementary fashion, in *TSDer* the verb *romper* and the noun *alas* agree in the plural form in opposition to the singular form of the original and the other two Spanish versions. Finally, there is no disparity in the pair which function as antonyms *one-the other* since the translators render it as *uno-el otro* in all the three versions.

The most important divergences are found on the lexical level. The translation of *kite/eagle* is rendered differently in the three Spanish translations. In *UMSA*, the translator chooses the pair *milano/airón*; in *TSDer*, the variant *milano/garceta* is preferred and in *TSDes* the translator opts for *milano real/águila*. According to the analysis of *kite* and *eagle*, both birds belong to the family *Accipitridae*. The word *milano* is the common name applied to diverse species of the *Accipitridae* family, and the most common bird associated with this name is the *milano real*, *Milvus milvus*. Hence, the three options in the translations seem to cover the characteristics of the term *kite* in English. The discrepancies arise with the term *eagle*. In *UMSA*, the word *airón* (*heron* in English) is a male noun in Spanish which designates some big-footed birds. *Garceta* is also a big-footed bird of the *Ardeidae* family, and one of the most common species in the wetlands in the world. The functional equivalent of *garceta* in English is *egret*, which Achebe has not opted to use in the original text. The use of *garceta* does not underline the same symbolic values as *eagle* when describing the Igbo environment, as supported by Rodríguez Murphy (2010). In effect, the variants selected by *eagle* in *UMSA* and *TSDer* do not seem to be the most appropriate ones. The term *águila*, on the other hand, presents itself as the most suitable alternative since it encompasses the same family of the *eagle*, which *airón* and *garceta* do not. On the symbolic level and as suggested by the *DRAE*, *águila* symbolizes perspicacity, elegance and fast flight as the term *eagle* in English.

The variants available for *perch* are: *estar en su percha* in *UMSA*, *volar* in *TSDer* and *tener dónde posarse* in *TSDes*. Sarrió's translation is rendered in a verbal phrase. Following the definition of *DRAE*, it means being in "el varal donde se ponen las aves de cetrería". Santos chooses the word *volar* which has opposing meanings as those implied by *perch*. Álvarez Flórez decides on *posarse* as

equivalent for *perch*, that is, "detenerse en cierto sitio después de volar". *UNMA* and *TSDes* preserve the meanings of accorded to *perch* ("to alight, settle, or rest on a perch") by the Merriam-Webster. However, in *UMSA* the repetition of the verb is avoided. In *TSDes*, there is elision of the verb *perch* with the expression *que también lo tenga el águila*. Consequently, in both cases, the repetitive effect and consonance present in the original proverb is lost. Only in *TSDer* the repetition is kept with the same meanings conveyed by *perch* in English.

Another expression that is translated differently is *says no*. In *UMSA*, Sarrió prefers *niega* while in *TSDer* and *TSDes*, the translators concur with the election of *dice que no*. According to the definition provided by *Diccionario María Moliner*, "negar" implies "negar a alguien su relación, amistad o parentesco con cierta persona" and is synonymous of "renegar". Therefore, it has a stronger connotation that "decir que no" which denotes simply saying no to a request. Finally, the translation of the verb *break* admits two variants in the three Spanish versions: *romper* in *UMSA* and *TSDer*, and *quebrar* in *TSDes*. Sarrió and Santos use *romper*, a more superordinate term than the one used by Álvarez Flórez, which could be a hypernym of *quebrar*. On the phonemic level, the translated proverbs erase the parallelism, alliteration and repetition present in the original version in English and, consequently, part of the rhythm and rhyme is lost in the Spanish versions. This implies that the Spanish reader is devoid of the flavor of the Igbo language since some of the discursive and rhetorical devices disappear in the translation.

As in the previous analysis, we can construe that the translation of the Igbo-English proverb into Spanish involves a literal rendering from English in the same way as the Author has done from Igbo to English in the original version. Indeed, the Translator(s) as discursive figures perform the same procedure as the Author of the original. Specifically, the three Spanish renderings of this particular proverb all retain, their differences notwithstanding, that sense of hybridization and *otherness* expressed by the proverb in English through literariness. Thus, using Berman's terminology, the "work on the signifier" for these double-voiced expressions is accomplished linguistically on the literal translation of Igbo-English and Igbo-Spanish. We can assume that the Spanish translators have chosen to maintain the semantic component of the original version by a "work on the *lettre*", by opting for a foreignizing strategy substantiated by a literal translation. In none of the three versions of *TFA* —*UMSA* by Sarrió (1966), *TSDer* by Santos (1986) and *TSDes* by Álvarez Flórez (1997)—, have the translators decided on a functional equivalent which the Spanish reader would have recognized as familiar in the language. Rather, the Spanish translators —without overlooking the variations that exist among the versions—have kept the unfamiliar flavor of the "original" by translating the proverbs literally. In this manner, as Tymoczko (1999) states, these unfamiliar elements in the standard language —here, Spanish— encompass *other* meanings which account for the hybridity and heterogeneity of the text and also, by transposing these elements, the Igbo culture and language become visible in the translated texts as well as they are in the source English text. In the same line of reasoning and as Berman (1985) puts it, the foreignness of the "original" text is

highlighted in the three Spanish translations and the Spanish reader experiences the same *otherness* that has been suggested for the source English reader. Thus, by preserving the semantic meanings and directing a "work on the *lettre*", the Spanish translations guarantee the value of *difference* which, in turn, implies an operation of deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, [1975] 1986). As we can see, this strategy of translation is in consonance with the concepts expressed by Bandia (2006) and Murphy (2010) and the requirements needed for the translation of a postcolonial text, that is, the need of a *creative translation* which allows for the visibility of the two languages and culture without exalting the *difference*.

6 Conclusions

In this paper, we have offered a revisiting of Achebe's *TFA* with the novel contribution of Mwangi's study in which the author proposes to reconsider the long-established "writing back" paradigm put forward by postcolonial studies when analyzing postcolonial literature. More specifically, we have addressed the consideration of *TFA* not just within the "writing back" to the Western modes but to the "writing to itself" paradigm due to the self-referential moments exposed in the novel which serve to account for local nuances. These self-referential moments associated with aspects of content also manifest themselves on the textual level by creating a new aesthetics that goes far beyond the accepted idea of the novel being an expression of answering back to the colonialist discourse. On the level of form, this aesthetics displays its own literary nature and raises its own distinctive voice.

Furthermore, following Bensmaïa's (2017) contribution, we have pondered on the connection that the author establishes between postcolonial studies and Deleuze and Guattari's operation of deterritorialization in minor literatures. On the question of form, Bensmaïa's views allow us examine the internal heteroglossia evident in the use of proverbs. We have seen that this heterogeneity and hybridity in proverbs do not just prove to be venturing unexplored thresholds between the "self" and the "other" by a deterritorialized use of language but represent a reversal of perspective aimed to create its own literariness and thus orient thought in a different direction.

In the field of translation, we have discussed how the Spanish translators have rendered the proverbs into the target language. This study has aimed to contribute to this growing area of research by exploring how proverbs as translations *per se* can burden the load of alterity in a hybrid postcolonial text such as *TFA*, both in its original English version and in its Spanish translations. We have, furthermore, examined the role of the Spanish translators as intercultural mediators who make visible the linguistic-cultural differences exposed in the original text through a literal "work on the signifiers" in their translations. In this regard, the translations reproduced the same discourse created by the source text and confront the Spanish reader with the same challenges the English reader has undergone when identifying and interpreting these double-expressions as proverbs. Certainly, the three Spanish translators have opted for a literal rendering of the original proverb, with a strong formal equivalence on the syntactic and lexical level with varying degrees. The semantic content of the proverb in the source text was retrieved in the translations

since no functional equivalent was selected. Moreover, in using this strategy, the value of the heterogeneity was reproduced in the context of the translated proverb. The hybridity exposed in the Spanish versions was in agreement with the requirements for a *creative translation* for postcolonial texts, as expressed by Tymoczko (1999), Bandia (2006) and Rodríguez Murphy (2010). The Spanish translators as intercultural mediators have decided on the choice of Spanish-Igbo by a "work on the signifiers" (Berman, 1985) and have recreated the "third code"—proposed by Bandia (2006) for this type of literature—and drawn attention to the *difference* (Rodríguez Murphy, 2010) and the unfamiliar (Tymoczko, 1999). Additionally, through an operation of deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, [1975] 1986), this new linguistic and cultural "space-in-between" lets the presence of the *other* be visible and, at the same time, grants the inscription of one's own voice in the context of a dominant language. Following this discussion, we could appreciate that the function of the proverb in the original English text was recovered in the translated Spanish versions in a way that new linguistic and cultural bridges (Spoturno, 2010) were built between two languages to delineate the sphere of a hidden *other* "minor" world. As noted by Bensmaïa (2017), a new aesthetics characterized by the umbrella of minor literatures which blurs the horizons of *self* and *other* was revealed to articulate a new voice, a voice that writes back to the given Western paradigm as well as writing to itself to focus on local nuances (Mwangi, 2009). The internal heteroglossia staged in *TFA's* proverbs signals aspects of form (deterritorialized language) and content (self-referentiality) which re-inscribe a whole *episteme* and literary aesthetics.

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