

Rodríguez Murphy, Elena (2015). *Traducción y literatura africana: multilingüismo y transculturación en la narrativa nigeriana de expresión inglesa*. Granada: Editorial Comares. ISBN 9788490452189. EUR 18.¹

This book – a magical moment of freedom, according to Pilar Godayol's words in the prologue – constitutes a new, alternative and in-between approach to African literature, and more specifically to Nigerian literature. Rodríguez Murphy advocates for dewesternizing and broadening the concepts of *translation* and *translatability* through the analysis of the translations into Spanish of three Nigerian writers, Chinua Achebe, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Sefi Atta. This monograph, established within the framework of antiessentialism, post-structuralism, postpositivism and postcolonialism, consists of six well-balanced chapters.

In the first chapter, Rodríguez Murphy reflects on some works written in European languages by the so-called "first generation of African writers." She concludes that this literature highlights the virtues of African communities from the inside. In addition, she pays particular attention to Chinua Achebe – the father of modern African literature –, who appropriates the colonial language Africanizing its rhythm, register and vocabulary in order to mend the past represented by the Empire and its colonizers. Moreover, the pioneering generation of postcolonial Anglophone African writers recreates an identity based on a traditional culture fragmented by the colonial power. In this regard, translation plays a fundamental role as one of the main means through which writers from former colonies represent and recreate their own realities and identities. Furthermore, according to Rodríguez Murphy, African literatures written in European languages are to a certain extent translations because these authors explore a creative process of translation that reveals the intricacy and multiplicity of their native cultures.

Neocolonialism and globalization are at the core of the second chapter, in which Rodríguez Murphy addresses the latest changes in concepts like *nation*, *territory*, *time* and *space*, and the questioning of classic dichotomies, such as Center vs. Periphery, Colonizer vs. Colonized, Modern vs. Traditional, etc. Furthermore, the author considers that translation is currently a crucial activity, since it is actively participating in intercultural exchanges occurring continuously between the center and the periphery. In this sense, translation, as a process characterized by hybridization and transculturation, permits the representation of the complexity of African cultures at a global level. However, the author warns the reader that globalization should not be understood as a global culture, but rather as a complex network of local cultures, developed within power asymmetries. Nevertheless, Rodríguez Murphy claims that the contemporary phenomenon of globalization is essential to African cultures, due to the fact that it has led not only to new forms of domination but also to new forms of resistance. This is the case in African literature: it shows a resistance capacity against the ruling discourses of the time. According to the author, despite the fact that they bear in mind historical events, the new generations of African writers or, as Taiye Selasi puts it, "Afropolitans" (2005) approach different topics and concerns in comparison to the prior

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generations, for instance some taboos, such as illnesses, sexuality, etc. Besides, they also convey the characteristic hybridization of postcolonial spaces through an inherited language that has undergone a process of transculturation, and which the new generations now consider their own language.

After a comprehensive analysis of the concept of *transculturation*, in the third chapter Rodríguez Murphy explores the works of two female Nigerian writers, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Sefi Atta. Adichie and Atta address some similar topics, but they use English to convey different experiences and cultural backgrounds. According to the author, in addition to Nigerian English and Nigerian Pidgin, Adichie uses many words and expressions from Igbo, while Atta resorts to other Nigerian languages such as Yoruba and Hausa. Multilingualism in African literature in general, and in Adichie and Atta's works in particular, is a form of resistance that shows the reader that there are other spaces and frontiers to be explored. This chapter is especially relevant because most research in the field of Nigerian literature focuses on texts written by male authors from the first and second generations. Therefore, Rodríguez Murphy's approach is genuinely new in the field of Translation Studies: she pays particular attention to the female perspective of the third generation because she considers that their expression and aims are different – a hypothesis tested and proven true throughout her monograph.

After exploring the female perspective of the third generation, Rodríguez Murphy starts the fourth chapter with a brief overview of the evolution of Translation Studies. She highlights the importance of some aspects, such as the subjectivity of language or the concept of *translation as rewriting*. Moreover, she underlines the significance of reflecting on the political and cultural contexts that accompany the text, since she considers translation “a political act” (Álvarez & Vidal, 1996). Furthermore, she claims that translation should stimulate and promote dialogue and negotiation between cultures. According to the author, the multiplicity of postcolonial contexts challenges the traditional idea of translation: she argues that translation should go one step further from the mere correspondence between languages and cultures, and find a third space that rejects binary divisions and dichotomies. According to Rodríguez Murphy, it is obvious that translators should approach Achebe, Adichie and Atta's narratives from a cultural point of view, since these works convey social and personal experiences between cultures by means of hybrid languages. Accordingly, Rodríguez Murphy advocates for adopting a critical approach, following a consistent documentation process, being predisposed to dialogue and negotiation, and recognizing the particular aspects of the Other. Finally, the author analyzes the concept of *translocation*, developed by Bandia (2015), as a means to overcome the opposition Colonizer vs. Colonized and highlight the heterolingualism characteristic of contemporary African literature.

In the fifth chapter, Rodríguez Murphy analyzes the translations into Spanish of Achebe's novels from a diachronic perspective. The percentage of African writers translated into Spanish remains low. Therefore, it is especially relevant that there are four Spanish versions of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. These rewritings into Spanish paint very different pictures. To prove this, Rodríguez Murphy carries out a comparative analysis between the original and the Spanish versions, and notes that there is a discernible trend towards omitting particular aspects of Achebe's specific use of the English language, removing repetitions, adapting Igbo names and terms to Spanish grammar, and deleting certain cultural elements. Furthermore, she also pays attention to the paratexts accompanying the Spanish rewritings, since these elements create the first impression that may vary depending on the images selected. As a conclusion, Rodríguez Murphy claims that the translator of African literature is faced with the dilemma of establishing the cultural balance between the characteristic domestication implied by

translation, the foreignization typical of subversion and the acceptability of the translation by the target culture. Therefore, Rodríguez Murphy addresses the concept of *thick translation* and wonders whether the translator should require the same effort from the target public as the source text does or, quite the contrary, act as a mediator and facilitate the understanding of the target text. Consequently, the author observes that it may be necessary to accept untranslatability and incomprehension as inherent parts of the Other.

In the sixth chapter, Rodríguez Murphy explores the translations into Spanish of Adichie and Atta's narrative writing. According to the author, diverse gatekeepers control which African novels may be considered to be "global African literature". In this regard, Rodríguez Murphy claims that African works in the Spanish literary market are determined by the capitals of culture. She notes that they need to be legitimized first by Anglo-American centers in order to reach the Spanish market. Thus, Rodríguez Murphy asserts that Spain feeds on "globalized Nigerian literature", canonized by the United States and the United Kingdom. Afterwards, the author analyzes several excerpts from Adichie and Atta and focuses on the use and translation of heterolingualism. In this sense, she underlines the usage of Nigerian Pidgin and some translation strategies used to render it, such as converting Nigerian Pidgin into Equatoguinean Spanish. As a conclusion, Rodríguez Murphy affirms that the heterolingualism characteristic of Adichie and Atta has not always been successfully translated into Spanish, although she admits that it is especially difficult to translate. Moreover, according to the author, respectful translations should be as much the responsibility of editors as it is of translators.

Rodríguez Murphy finishes her comprehensive research observing that not only are literary works from African writers crucial, but also those relating to other aspects of the continent. Hence, she suggests exploring other transculturated and hybrid elements, for example, afrobeat and highlife music, the film industry of Nollywood or the World/New Englishes phenomenon. In this sense, she claims that new cultural and linguistic forms will develop in the African territory due to the growing influence of economic powers, such as the United States, India or China. Rodríguez Murphy notes that her monograph is just a minimum contribution and claims that there is a huge gap between Translation Studies and the professional practice of translation. The author points out that translation should be a responsible and daring activity. Nevertheless, the publishing industry and cultural institutions clip the wings of experimentalism and encourage normativity in order to maintain the required levels of fluency and accessibility. Furthermore, the author highlights the importance of the process of documentation in order to provide coherence in the target version and its paratexts. Finally, Rodríguez Murphy reminds us that translation is an activity that always remains unfinished, so it continues to be necessary to reflect on new translative strategies and possibilities.

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Bárbara Cerrato Rodríguez
University of Salamanca
cerrato@usal.es