

The Resistance crossing the generations of a subalternized people

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ABSTRACT: This research falls within the field of literary studies of contemporary Anglophone narratives. The object of analysis is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's work *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), focusing on the short story "The Obstinate Historian," a narrative that addresses the impacts of British colonialism on the Igbo people across different generations. The research methodology is based on bibliographic research and comparative literature, with an emphasis on the critical analysis of this Anglophone narrative. The study aims to analyze how the themes of resistance and decoloniality permeate the narrative, especially through the experiences of female characters and the epistemological transformations arising from the relationship between colonizer and colonized. The theoretical framework draws on the conceptions of resistance proposed by Alfredo Bosi (2002), Augusto Sarmiento-Pantoja (2022) e Antonia Edivânia Lima da Silva Canja(2025) as well as postcolonial and decolonial studies developed by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (1989), Edgardo Lander (2005), and Joaze Bernardino-Costa (2016).

Keywords: Resistance. Anglophone literature. Decoloniality. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

RESUMO: Este trabalho insere-se no campo dos estudos literários de narrativas anglófonas contemporâneas. A pesquisa tem como objeto de análise a obra *No seu pescoço* (2009), de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, com enfoque no conto “A historiadora obstinada”, narrativa que aborda os impactos do colonialismo britânico sobre o povo igbo ao longo de diferentes gerações. A metodologia de investigação baseia-se em pesquisa bibliográfica e de literatura comparada, com enfoque na análise crítica dessa narrativa anglófona. O trabalho tem como objetivo analisar de que maneira as temáticas da resistência e da decolonialidade atravessam a narrativa, especialmente por meio das experiências das personagens femininas e das transformações epistemológicas decorrentes da relação entre colonizador e colonizado. O referencial teórico fundamenta-se nas concepções de resistência propostas por Alfredo Bosi

(1996) e Augusto Sarmiento-Pantoja (2022), bem como nos estudos pós-coloniais e decoloniais desenvolvidos por Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths e Helen Tiffin (1989), Edgardo Lander (2005) e Joaze Bernardino-Costa (2016).

Palavras-chave: Resistência, Literatura anglófona, Decolonialidade, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

INTRODUCTION

This work results from the research developed during my participation as a scholarship holder in the research group CRENAC (configurações de resistência em narrativas anglófonas), linked to the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the Federal University of Pará, under the supervision of Professor Dr. Ana Lilia Carvalho Rocha. The discussions held in the group involved various contemporary themes, including resistance and decoloniality, which led to the choice of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's work as the object of this investigation.

In contexts marked by colonization, literature acquires an even more significant role by constituting itself as a space for contesting the power structures established by colonialism, enabling an important space for the expression and understanding of human experiences through literary works according to Bonnici(1998). Through literature, it is possible to reflect upon the world and its historical, social, and cultural processes that have marked human history. Thus, literature is not merely a tool for historical narratives but a possibility to contest established history itself, questioning entrenched power structures, configuring itself as a privileged space for critical reflection on reality and on the multiple forms of human existence according to Castro(2007).

Among the contemporary authors who directly engage with these issues, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie stands out. Internationally recognized for her literary production, the writer addresses themes such as colonialism, identity, memory, migration, gender, and resistance, contributing significantly to contemporary literary, postcolonial, and decolonial studies. In her well-known lecture "The Danger of a Single Story," available on the YouTube platform, she exemplifies and demonstrates how single narratives produce stereotyped views of peoples and cultures, especially concerning the African continent. In her literary production, she transcends the aesthetic field and also assumes a political and epistemological character, by

proposing other ways of understanding history and African experiences from the perspective of those who have historically had their voices silenced.

Starting from the question of how resistance and decoloniality permeate the short story "The Headstrong Historian"—both through the actions of its female characters and through Adichie's own narrative construction—this research aims to investigate the manifestation of these two concepts in the text, with particular attention to women's experiences and their strategies of defiance. To this end, the study specifically seeks to analyze the impacts of British colonialism on the portrayed family, trace the epistemological shifts undergone by the characters across generations, and discuss how Adichie's story operates as a counter-narrative capable of challenging the historical and epistemological discourses produced by colonialism.

The choice of female characters is justified because they articulate the main movements of resistance present in the narrative. While Nwamgba preserves cultural and religious practices in the face of colonial impositions, Grace resigns the colonizer's instruments to reconstruct the history of her people. Thus, both allow us to understand resistance as permanence, memory, and epistemological reconstruction.

The relevance of this research resides in its contribution to contemporary literary studies, especially to discussions concerning Anglophone African literatures, postcolonial studies, decoloniality, and configurations of resistance in literature. By analyzing Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's work from these perspectives, the research seeks to demonstrate how literary narrative can constitute a legitimate space for the production of historical knowledge, the recovery of collective memory, and the valorization of knowledge marginalized by colonial structures. Furthermore, the study expands discussions on the representation of female resistance in contemporary African literature, highlighting the importance of fiction as an instrument of critical reflection on the relations between power, identity, and memory.

To support this investigation, the research engages with the conceptions of resistance proposed by Alfredo Bosi (1996) and Augusto Sarmiento-Pantoja (2022), as well as with postcolonial studies developed by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (2002). The decolonial perspective is mainly sustained by the reflections of Edgardo Lander (2005) and Joaze Bernardino-Costa (2016), in addition to the contributions of Antonia Edivânia Lima da Silva Canja (2025), allowing an understanding of how Adichie's narrative problematizes the

permanence of coloniality and proposes forms of resistance through memory, writing, and the reconstruction of history.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research is grounded theory in two main theoretical axes: resistance studies and the decolonial perspective. The articulation between these approaches enables an understanding of how this Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's literature represents the impacts of British colonialism on the Igbo people.

The first concept that guides this academic investigation is that of resistance. Alfredo Bosi(1996), in *Narrativa e Resistência* , states that resistance has an ethical origin before assuming an aesthetic dimension. According to the author, it arises when certain subjects or groups oppose values imposed by structures of domination. In the literary field, this resistance manifests both as theme of the narrative – represented by the actions and choices of characters – and as narrative form, when the very construction of the text questions hegemonic discourses and offers new possibilities for interpreting reality. indicating that its manifestation in the literary field is related to the narrative's capacity to express social and historical tensions that permeate human experience. Bosi(1996) further affirms that resistance can manifest in the literary field in different ways. This perspective allows us to understand that literary narrative can both represent historical conflicts and structure forms of contestation through its own aesthetic construction.

Building on these assumptions, Sarmiento-Pantoja(2022) expands the studies on resistance, especially concerning female resistance, proposing a contemporary reading of the concept of resistance, particularly when applied to the analysis of narratives that recover historically marginalized experiences. Dialoguing with Bosi's(1996) proposal, Sarmiento-Pantoja(2022) suggests that literary resistance can also be understood as a way of making visible existences erased by official history:

"For this reason, it is necessary that the voices subtracted from their owners be heard, which causes this speaking, this witnessing, to become the direct effect of their places of enunciation, of the direct reference to narrate their existence, their

life. With this, we see that resistance as existence." (SARMENTO-PANTOJA, 2022, p. 151)¹"tradução nossa"

In this sense, the author highlights that certain contemporary narratives reveal a movement of recovery of silenced subjectivities, allowing us to think of "resistance as existence," especially when literature is dedicated to representing feminine experiences that have been historically rendered invisible. Consequently, the articulation between the contributions of Bosi and Sarmento-Pantoja(2022) enables us to understand literature as a space for female resistance and for the reconstruction of memory. While Bosi(1996) establishes the conceptual bases for the analysis of resistance in the narrative field, Sarmento-Pantoja(2022) broadens this perspective by emphasizing the role of literature in making visible marginalized trajectories, especially with regard to female experiences.

"African women's literature is a vital field of resistance and redefinition of identities. Historically, African women have been marginalized both in colonial and patriarchal narratives, their voices frequently silenced or distorted. However, through their writing, these women have challenged these oppressions and are reconfiguring their identities." (CANJA, 2025, p. 6)² "tradução nossa"

In this sense, Canja's contribution expands the scope of the reflections proposed by Bosi(1996) and Sarmento-Pantoja(2022) by situating African women's literature as a privileged space of resistance that operates simultaneously on the planes of memory, identity, and the production of knowledge. Canja demonstrates that literature is a fruitful field for resistance, especially when produced by African women who, by rescuing silenced histories and reconfiguring identities, operate a decolonial gesture of narrative reappropriation.

These discussions become relevant when applied to Adichie's to this "the thing around your neck" literature. As a Nigerian writer, a Black woman, and a citizen of a country profoundly marked by British colonization, Adichie constructs narratives that problematize the effects of coloniality on African memory, identity, and culture. Her literary production recovers experiences frequently absent from official historiography and presents characters who challenge single versions of history, reaffirming literature as a space for the production of knowledge and resistance.

¹ Por isso é necessário que as vozes subtraídas de seus donos sejam ouvidas, o que faz com que esse falar, esse testemunhar, se torne o efeito direto de seus lugares de fala, da referência direta a narrar a sua existência, sua vida. Com isso, vemos que a resistência como existência. (Sarmento-Pantoja, 2022, p. 151)

² A literatura africana por mulheres é um campo vital de resistência e redefinição de identidades. Historicamente, as mulheres africanas foram marginalizadas tanto nas narrativas coloniais quanto patriarcais, sendo suas vozes frequentemente silenciadas ou distorcidas. No entanto, através de suas escritas, essas mulheres têm desafiado essas opressões e reconfigurando suas identidades. (CANJA, 2025, p. 6)

In addition to resistance studies, this research dialogues with postcolonial studies, especially with the contributions of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, developed in their work *The Empire Writes Back*. The authors argue that literatures produced in former colonies constitute critical responses to the discourses constructed by European colonialism. In this sense, literature ceases to occupy a peripheral position and assumes an active role in the reconstruction of cultural identities and in the contestation of narratives produced by the colonizer.

In this context, decoloniality emerges as a theoretical perspective that seeks to understand and problematize the permanence of power structures, knowledge, and culture imposed during the colonial period, even after the so-called end of colonialism. As Lander corroborates in his work on the coloniality of knowledge:

"The coloniality of knowledge reveals to us, still, that beyond the legacy of deep social inequality and injustice of colonialism and imperialism, already noted by dependency theory and others, there is an epistemological legacy of Eurocentrism that prevents us from understanding the world from the world in which we live and from the epistemes that are proper to it." (LANDER, 2005, p. 3)³ "tradução nossa"

These discussions seek to understand that colonial domination was not restricted to the territorial sphere, but also took root and consolidated itself in history, as well as in the knowledge and identities that were constructed and legitimized during this period. Therefore, decoloniality proposes a critical revision of these structures, valuing historically marginalized knowledge and narratives and contemplating the manifestation of new and alternative perspectives to established narratives. According to the author, knowledge produced by the West was historically presented as universal, while the knowledge of colonized peoples came to be considered inferior or devoid of scientific legitimacy.

This approach proves especially relevant for this work, since it allows us to understand literature as a space for contesting these structures. When analyzing Adichie's work, her positioning is not limited to a biographical dimension, but constitutes a fundamental element for understanding her literary production, since the author's social and cultural experience directly influences the narrative perspectives present in her works. It is in this context that the

³ A colonialidade do saber nos revela, ainda, que, para além do legado de desigualdade e injustiça sociais profundos do colonialismo e do imperialismo, já assinalados pela teoria da dependência e outras, há um legado epistemológico do eurocentrismo que nos impede de compreender o mundo a partir do próprio mundo em que vivemos e das epistemes que lhes são próprias. (Lander, 2005, Pg. 3)

work of Fernanda Aquino Sylvestre, entitled "Narrativas de resistência: o não lugar, o enfrentamento das diferenças, a não visão única de mundo em contos de Chimamanda Adichie" [Narratives of Resistance: The Non-Place, Confronting Differences, and the Non-Unique Worldview in Short Stories by Chimamanda Adichie], offers relevant observations on Adichie's work. Sylvestre argues that the female characters in the narratives construct their identities amidst non-places and in-between spaces, demonstrating that resistance manifests both in overcoming the difficulties imposed by the social context experienced or by ethnic-religious conflict, and in breaking with "single stories" that reduce the African experience to stereotypes. The author emphasizes, by drawing on theorists such as Spivak, Rushdie, and Said, how Adichie's literature operates as a counter-narrative to the official version of history and to a primitive view of the African continent.

METODOLOGY

This work is characterized as a bibliographic research of a comparative nature, within the field of literary studies and comparative literature based on Proetti's work. It is based on the assumption that the analysis of a literary work is not limited to the description of formal elements, but involves the understanding of the historical, social, and discursive relations that permeate all narratives. Therefore, this research adopts a critical approach that articulates decolonial studies and concepts of resistance.

The research corpus consists of the short story "The Headstrong Historian" part of the work *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The choice of this specific short story among the twelve that compose the work is justified by its alignment and relevance to the themes under investigation, since the narrative problematizes the impacts of British colonialism on African culture and the attempted subjugation of Igbo culture. Through the narrative of the female characters, the transformations resulting from the colonizer's arrival, stay, and permanence in the region are evidenced. Thus, the short story presents itself as fruitful material for discussion and research.

From a theoretical-methodological standpoint, this work is grounded in postcolonial studies, which investigate the effects of colonialism on identities, representations, and cultural discourses based in the studies proposed by ASHCROFT, Bill; GRIFFITHS, Gareth; TIFFIN, Helen.(2002) . Building on colonial theory, the research also engages with the decolonial perspective. Thus, this research employed searches on Google Scholar using keywords such as

"Chimamanda" "resistance," "decoloniality," and "The Thing Around Your Neck" correlating these themes. From these searches and readings, critical references related to these themes were identified, and literary notes were produced. Many of the authors were provided by the advisor, whereas those found using these tools relate more to research into the work itself.

After this stage, a new reading of the short story was conducted, from a renewed perspective and in its entirety, in which significant passages, recurring themes, character construction, and elements related to resistance, education, and religion were registered. Therefore, the analysis is interpretive in character, understanding Adichie's literature as a discourse capable of producing social and political meanings. Accordingly, the research sought to propose a critical analysis that would highlight the relationships between narrative, decoloniality, and resistance.

RESULTS

The analysis of the short story *The Headstrong Historian*(2009) through the lens of postcolonial studies, decolonial theory, and resistance theory reveals that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie(2009) narrative not only denounces and exposes the impacts of British colonialism on the Igbo people, but also stages, through its female characters, different strategies of resistance that span generations. While Anikwenwa/Michael's trajectory exemplifies the process of colonial assimilation and the internalization of the colonizer's discourse — an expression of what Lander (2005) terms the colonality of knowledge — the figures of Nwamgba and Grace embody movements of resistance that operate both through the preservation of cultural practices and through the critical reappropriation of academic tools inherited from colonialism. It is within this intergenerational movement that decoloniality manifests itself, subverting the exclusionary logic of official historiography and reclaiming the legitimacy of African and female narratives in the construction of knowledge.

The trajectory of Nwamgba, the story's first generation, illustrates the tensions arising from the arrival of the white man. Faced with the need to reclaim the properties seized by her relatives, Nwamgba decides that her son, Anikwenwa, must learn the foreign language. As a result, the boy begins attending the Catholic church in order to acquire the foreigner's tongue.

“As he poured some water on the boy’s head, he said, “Michael, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” He gave the boy a singlet and a pair of shorts, because the people of the living God did not walk around naked.” (ADICHIE, 2009, p. 223)

The narrative then follows the subsequent developments of Anikwenwa — now Michael — and the effects of colonial assimilation through his conversion to Christianity and adherence to European values, as his original beliefs are submerged. This trajectory illustrates precisely what postcolonial criticism identifies as the internalization of colonial discourse, a process through which the colonized subject comes to reproduce views that delegitimize his own culture.

When it was time for his ima mmuo ceremony, he said he would not participate, because it was a heathen custom for boys to be initiated into the world of spirits, a custom that Father Shanahan had said would have to stop. Nwamgba roughly yanked his ear and told him that a foreign albino could not determine when their customs would change, so until the clan itself decided that the initiation would stop, he would participate or else he would tell her whether he was her son or the white man’s son. (ADICHIE, 2009, p. 225)

Thus, by converting to Christianity and adopting European values, Anikwenwa breaks with traditional cultural practices and begins to reproduce colonial discourses that delegitimize his ancestral knowledge. This transformation becomes even more evident in his attitude toward his own mother:

He stopped eating her food, because, he said, it was sacrificed to idols. He told her to tie her wrapper around her chest instead of her waist, because her nakedness was sinful. She looked at him, amused by his earnestness, but worried nonetheless, and asked why he had only just began to notice her nakedness. (ADICHIE, 2009, p. 225)

The excerpt reveals a significant change in Anikwenwa following his exposure to missionary education and the Christian religion. By rejecting the food prepared by his mother on the grounds that it constituted "a sacrifice to false idols," and by criticizing the way Nwamgba dressed, the character begins to interpret his own people's customs through new religious and cultural frameworks. A progressive detachment from Igbo traditions is thus observed, alongside the incorporation of values previously foreign to his reality. These transformations are further underscored by the contrast between the ease with which Nwamgba understands her own customs and the rigid stance adopted by Anikwenwa, revealing profound shifts in his understanding of culture, religion, and the identity of his people throughout the narrative.

It is within this context that Grace, Nwamgba's granddaughter, takes on a central role in the discussion. According to Sampaio(2021), the narrative of "The Headstrong Historian"

can be read as a rewriting of the colonial past, insofar as it questions official historiography and proposes new ways of understanding African history through fiction. This reading converges with the analysis developed in this study, which understands Grace as an epistemic subject capable of challenging the boundaries of institutionalized history.

It was Grace who, as she received faculty prizes, as she spoke to solemn-faced people at conferences about the Ijaw and Ibibio and Igbo and Efik peoples of Southern Nigeria, as she wrote reports for international organizations about commonsense things for which she nevertheless received generous pay, would imagine her grandmother looking on and chuckling with great amusement. (ADICHIE, 2009, p. 232)

By becoming a historian, Grace appropriates the academic tools inherited from colonialism in order to subvert their exclusionary logic. As Sampaio(2021) points out, the writing of history in the story ceases to be an instrument exclusive to the colonizer and instead becomes a space of contestation and resignification of her own past. In this way, the character transforms historiography into a historical act of recovery, retrieving and giving voice to the silenced memories of her past.

Furthermore, the relationship between Nwamgba and Grace demonstrates that resistance in the story is constructed intergenerationally: Nwamgba never abandons her culture, religion, and customs, and this legacy is later carried forward by Grace. The orality practiced by the grandmother finds continuity in the form of the granddaughter's academic writing.

It was Grace who would read about these savages, titillated by their curious and meaningless customs, not connecting them to herself until her teacher, Sister Maureen, told her she could not refer to the call-and-response her grandmother had taught her as poetry because primitive tribes did not have poetry . (ADICHIE, 2009, p. 230)

This perspective also dialogues with studies addressing the relationship between colonized and colonizer, emphasizing that female resistance emerges within spaces marginalized by colonial power. While Nwamgba's son represents assimilation, Grace symbolizes the return of ancestral knowledge, history, and memory — not through nostalgia, but through the conscious reconstruction of the past. Resistance, then, is not configured as a rejection of Western knowledge, but as a strategic reappropriation of its present-day instruments.

In light of the above, and grounded in the theoretical framework as well as in the analysis of the short story, it is possible to affirm that Adichie(2009), in "The Headstrong Historian" offers a forceful critique of the coloniality of knowledge while simultaneously highlighting female protagonism in the reconstruction of history. The narrative demonstrates that resistance is not limited to direct confrontation but manifests itself through the preservation of memory, education, and writing, constituting an ongoing practice of resistance against colonial structures.

DISCUSSION

This section discusses the analysis of the short story in relation to the themes of this research. First, it is necessary to reaffirm the author's speaking position, given that her writing is grounded in experiences shaped by colonialism, a dimension clearly present in "The Headstrong Historian." The story engages strongly with literature as a space for reworking the confrontation between colonizer and colonized experiences; it is therefore important to clarify that, even as a fictional narrative, it dialogues with real events that took place in Nigeria. This characteristic does not distance the story from the historical and social reality that runs through it — on the contrary, its literary construction engages directly with concrete experiences, particularly regarding the impacts left by the colonizer, all the more so given that the work is published in the English language, while also serving as a space for problematizing and questioning human experience.

Sandra de Pádua Castro, in her work *O imaginário na construção da realidade e do texto ficcional* (2007), argues that fiction's speaking position should not be understood in absolute opposition to reality, since both maintain relations of interdependence and mutual construction. In this sense, Adichie(2009) narrative, although fictional, constitutes an important instrument for critical reflection on real historical processes.

Throughout this narrative, one observes how the colonial experience shaped the identity and cultural constitution of the subjects involved. As discussed by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989) in *The Empire Writes Back*, postcolonial societies bear profound marks of colonial domination that extend beyond territorial occupation and manifest as well in the reorganization of narratives, language, and forms of cultural representation. The author makes this explicit through the transformation undergone by Nwamgba's family, particularly by her

son Anikwenwa, whose engagement with the Christian religion and European values reveals a progressive distancing from ancestral knowledge. Anikwenwa's transformation into Michael symbolizes not merely a change of name, but an identity transformation resulting from colonial assimilation and domination — a characteristic feature of colonialism that Lander (2005) terms the colonality of knowledge, a mechanism through which Eurocentric epistemologies become legitimized while local and ancestral knowledge is marginalized. This is observed throughout Michael's narrative arc, as the knowledge introduced by the colonizer is treated as truth, while the practices of his Igbo culture are gradually devalued over the course of the story.

In contrast to this assimilation into the dominant culture, his daughter Grace plays a fundamental role in the recovery of ancestral memory, becoming a historian and seeking to reconstruct the history of her people through the oral narratives passed down by her grandmother. Adichie(2009) work therefore does not merely represent the effects of the colonality of knowledge — through the character of Grace, it also enacts decoloniality, as Benevides (2024) affirms:

The field of decoloniality, by taking into account the non-passivity of individuals living in territories that have undergone colonial exploitation, understands borders — not only physical but also imagined ones — as spaces in which a decolonial project may emerge from border thinking. (Benevides, 2024, p. 4)⁴ [*translation mine*]

Thus, Grace's narrative not only reveals the effects of the colonality of knowledge imposed throughout the story, but also presents movements that reverse them, positioning Adichie's(2009) literature as a space for questioning established history. In this sense, Sylvestre's work corroborates this reading of resistance within the narrative, describing it as acquiring an additional dimension: the rewriting of one's own history. The story's protagonist, Grace, does not merely negotiate her identity but actively contests the colonial archive, proposing an alternative epistemology grounded in Igbo oral memory — a rewriting of history itself.

This theme is closely intertwined, first, with Nwamgba's refusal to convert to Christianity and to adopt new customs at the expense of her own. Bosi(1996) emphatically

⁴ O campo da decolonialidade, ao considerar a não passividade dos indivíduos que vivem nesses territórios que sofreram a exploração colonial, entende as fronteiras, não só as físicas, mas as imaginárias, como espaços em que pode surgir um projeto decolonial a partir do pensamento de fronteira. (Benevides, 2024 p. 4)

affirms that resistance arises from the conflict between values and counter-values, constituting an opposition to the forces that seek to impose hegemonic forms of thought and existence. Furthermore, the concept proposed by Augusto Sarmiento-Pantoja expands this definition of resistance, engaging directly with the Bosi(1996) framework. In his work *Resistência das existências*, Sarmiento-Pantoja(2022) understands resistance not only as direct confrontation with structures of power, but also as the symbolic persistence of subjects historically marginalized through their very existence. As the author discusses, certain female forms of existence resist precisely by refusing the erasure imposed by hegemonic discourses:

Hence the need to use the concept of survival, for although wars bring horror with them, they also give rise to an undeniable search for being, as we gradually learn to decipher the codes that allow us to understand our role in this world and why we survive. (Sarmiento-Pantoja, 2022, p. 150)⁵ [translation mine]

In this sense, both Nwamgba and Grace embody forms of resistance through existence, insofar as both survived — Nwamgba by maintaining her cultural practices, beliefs, and ways of life, and Grace by making use of the institutional space established by the colonizer to question official versions of history. This aligns with Canja's (2025) reflections on memory as an instrument of resistance in African women's literature. According to the author, African women writers create "spaces of remembrance" within their narratives, where women's stories relegated to oblivion are brought to light, challenging dominant and colonial narratives.

In Adichie(2009) story, this movement is embodied in the figure of the historian who, by rewriting the history of her Igbo people, recovers a collective memory that British colonialism sought to erase or distort. By becoming a historian, Grace assumes the responsibility of recovering and recording the memories of the Igbo people — both women resisting through their existence — while also acting as a mediator between two worlds: heir to the oral memory passed down by her grandmother, and, at the same time, bearer of the academic tools of Western knowledge. This position allows her to convert ancestral memory into historical record, transforming writing into an instrument of epistemic resistance. Unlike Michael, who distances himself from tradition, Grace performs an act of cultural recovery,

⁵ “Daí a necessidade de utilizar o conceito de sobrevivência, pois se as guerras trazem com sigo o horror, elas fazem emergir uma indubitável procura pelo ser, pois aos poucos vamos aprendendo a decifrar os códigos que nos fazem compreender qual o nosso papel nesse mundo e porque sobrevivemos.” (Sarmiento-Pantoja, 2022, p. 150)

breaking with the colonial monopoly over knowledge production. In this way, the character confronts coloniality by questioning epistemologies rooted in colonialism and by reclaiming the value of ancestral narratives, memories, and knowledge previously silenced by colonial structures. As Canja (2025) observes, the act of remembering and sharing stories serves to recover agency and challenge oppressive systems; the protagonist of Adichie's(2009) story thus performs a decolonial gesture by affirming the legitimacy of African and female narratives in the construction of knowledge.

FINAL REMARKS

This research had as its main objective to investigate the ways in which the themes of resistance and decoloniality permeate the narrative of Adichie's(2009) short story "The Headstrong Historian," considering both its thematic content and its narrative form. Accordingly, the study sought to understand how Adichie's(2009) narrative operates as a space for contesting hegemonic versions of history and for valuing historically marginalized forms of knowledge, drawing on the theoretical framework provided by the concepts of resistance proposed by Alfredo Bosi (1996), Augusto Sarmiento-Pantoja (2022), and Antônia Edivânia Lima da Silva Canja (2025), as well as by the postcolonial and decolonial studies of Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989), Lander (2005), and Bernardino-Costa (2016).

Based on this theoretical framework, the findings indicate that resistance in the story manifests, first, as immanent to the writing itself, as proposed by Bosi(1996), and operates through two complementary planes. On the plane of content, the female characters Nwamgba and Grace embody acts of resistance against colonial power. Nwamgba, representing the first generation, resists the arrival of the white man and Christian conversion by maintaining her cultural and religious practices, refusing to abandon the customs and culture of her Igbo people in the face of the colonizer's imposition. Grace, Nwamgba's granddaughter, in turn, by becoming a historian, appropriates the colonizer's own tools in order to rewrite the history of the Igbo people through the oral narratives passed down by her grandmother, thereby challenging the official version imposed by the colonizer and breaking with the colonial monopoly over the production of knowledge. Moreover, Adichie's(2009) very narrative construction functions as a tool for questioning Eurocentric knowledge, constituting a decolonial gesture that challenges Western epistemology and values ancestral forms of knowledge, in line with Bosi's (1996) reflections on resistance as a form immanent to writing.

In response to the research problem, it can be affirmed that resistance and decoloniality manifest in the story along two fronts. The female characters resist historical erasure by claiming the right to tell their own history, while the narrative, by breaking with Eurocentric formal structures, offers a model of knowledge production that values memory and orality as legitimate sources of knowledge — as discussed by Castro (2007) regarding fiction's role in the production of historical knowledge. Thus, the story not only reveals and denounces the impacts of colonialism through the trajectory of Anikwenwa/Michael, whose assimilation illustrates what Lander(2005) terms the colonality of knowledge, but also proposes epistemological alternatives that shift the center of knowledge production from the colonizer to the colonized, aligning with the decolonial project advanced by Bernardino-Costa (2016).

The results obtained in this study engage directly with the contributions of Sylvestre (2018), who analyzes resistance in the stories of *The Thing Around Your Neck* through the notions of non-place and in-betweenness, and with the reflections of Canja (2025), for whom this space functions as an instrument of resistance in African women's literature. Furthermore, this research broadens the scope of these analyses by demonstrating that, throughout the narrative, resistance acquires an additional epistemological dimension: through the rewriting of her own history, the character Grace not only questions her identity but actively contests the colonial history established as fact, proposing instead an alternative epistemology grounded in the recovery of Igbo memory. In this sense, decoloniality occurs precisely because it moves beyond the scope of personal identity and reaches the level of knowledge production, aligning more directly with the decolonial project (Lander, 2005; Bernardino-Costa, 2016).

While Bosi establishes the conceptual foundations for understanding resistance within the narrative field as a form immanent to writing, Sarmento-Pantoja(2022) broadens this perspective by highlighting literature's role in bringing visibility to marginalized trajectories, particularly with regard to female experiences. In this sense, both Nwamgba and Grace embody what Sarmento-Pantoja (2022) calls "resistance as existence," insofar as both survive and resist the erasure imposed by hegemonic discourses — Nwamgba by maintaining her cultural practices and beliefs, and Grace by making use of the institutional space established by the colonizer to challenge official versions of history, converting ancestral memory into historical record and transforming writing into an instrument of epistemic resistance.

It is important to note that this research was limited to the analysis of a single short story from the collection *The Thing Around Your Neck*, which precludes broader generalizations about Adichie's(2009) body of work as a whole. Furthermore, although the theoretical framework proved sufficient to address the research problem, this study did not delve into questions concerning the reception of the work in Nigeria or comparisons with other African women writers — aspects that could provide fruitful ground for future research and further enrich subsequent studies, whether by expanding the scope to other stories in the collection or to other Anglophone women writers.

In conclusion, this research seeks to reaffirm literature as a legitimate space for the production of historical knowledge and for the contestation of established knowledge, as proposed by Canja (2025) and Sylvestre (2018). Throughout the narrative of "The Headstrong Historian," a space emerges that gives voice to a woman who rewrites the history of her people — one that not only denounces the violence of colonialism but also points toward the possibility of a future in which subalternized narratives occupy the center of the debate. Thus, the work of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie remains a powerful testament to the fact that resistance through the word is, above all, an affirmation of existence — one that, as Sarmento-Pantoja (2022) argues, resists erasure and reclaims its place in history.

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