Women and Nature Decolonialized: An Ecofeminist Reading of Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003)

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الملخص

ينتقد هذا البحث الثنائيات الكارتيزية المتأصلة في الأيديولوجيات الاستعمارية؛ ويدعو إلى إعادة تصور لاستعماري يهدف إلى تقويض التراتبيات الراسخة للسلطة؛ وتقوم الدراسة، ومن خلال منهجية تفسيرية نوعية لنظرية الإيكولوجية النسوية واللّااستعمارية، على تحليل رواية تشيماماندا نغوزي أديتشي "الكركديه الأرجواني" (٢٠٠٣)، تحليلاً نصياً متعمقاً، يكشف كيف تقاوم الرواية الرؤى الذكورية والانثروبولجية؛ كما تعزز الدراسة أخلاقيات الترابط والمقاومة الجمعية للاضطهاد؛ علاوة على ذلك، تبين الدراسة، ومن خلال إبراز النضالات المتوازية للنساء والعالم الطبيعي، تحدى رواية أديتشي لنظم الهيمنة، وتؤكد القيمة الجوهرية لجميع الكائنات؛ كما تبرز الدراسة كيفية تعبير شخصيات الرواية وصور الطبيعة عن رؤى التحرر والاستدامة البيئية في مواجهة إرث الاستعمار، مستندة في ذلك إلى الأطر النظرية للإيكولوجية النسوية واللّااستعمارية؛ في النهاية، يسلط البحث الضوء على الطرائق التي تتشابك فيها اهتمامات الجندر، والعرق، والبيئة في رواية "الكركديه الأرجواني"، مؤكداً أن تحرر المرأة واستعادة الطبيعة هما هدفان لا ينفصلان.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإيكولوجية النسوية؛ اللّااستعمارية؛ تشيماماندا نغوزي أديتشي؛ الكركديه الأرجواني.

ABSTRACT

This paper critiques the Cartesian binaries embedded in colonial ideologies. It advocates for a decolonial reimagining that dismantles entrenched hierarchies of power. Through a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in ecofeminist and decolonial theory, the study conducts a close textual analysis of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). The analysis reveals how the novel resists phallogocentric and anthropocentric worldviews. It promotes an ethos of interconnectedness and collective resistance to oppression. By foregrounding the parallel struggles of women and the natural world, the paper demonstrates how Adichie's narrative challenges systems of domination and affirms the intrinsic value of all beings. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of ecofeminism and decoloniality, the study examines how the novel's characters and nature imagery articulate a vision of liberation and ecological sustainability in the face of colonial legacies. Ultimately, this paper illuminates the ways in which gender, race, and environmental concerns are interwoven in *Purple Hibiscus*, emphasizing that the emancipation of women and the restoration of nature are inseparable pursuits.

Keywords: ecofeminism; decoloniality; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; Purple Hibiscus.

INTRODUCTION

In the discourses of decolonization and ecofeminism, the interconnected destinies of women and the natural world rise as emblems of victimhood. Women and nature are captivated within the unyielding clutches of both patriarchal and colonial exploitations. These exploitations transcend the mere narrative of physical devastation; it echoes through the myriad existences of countless beings, each one tied to the oppressive mechanisms of capitalism that perpetuate their subjugation. The implications of these exploitation reach far beyond superficial destruction. It unveils a complex world marked by suffering, resistance, and resilience. In such contexts, one may encounter not only the stark realities of ecological degradation but also the strong spirit of those who strive to regain agency in a world that has long sought to silence them. This duality—of victimhood and defiance results in an exploration of the true nature of these relationships. Moreover, it initiates a critical examination of how systemic forces join to shape both human and environmental narratives.

Embarking upon this scholarly exploration unveils a myriad of meanings that skillfully interweave the experiences of women with those of the natural world. Both women and nature are caught in a unyielding struggle against the oppressive forces that aim to exploit and reduce them to the status of the nonsignificant Other. This paper aspires to shed light on the interconnectedness that exists between the lived experiences of women and the nature in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). In doing so, it seeks to cultivate an understanding of the symbiotic relationship between their paths to liberation. It emphasizes that the emancipation of one is inextricably connected to the liberation of the other. Through this critical lens, one can envision a future where the silenced

voices of the oppressed—both human and non-human—are in a harmony with each other. They are united in a collective struggle for justice and sustainability. Such a vision results in a recognition of the necessity of an inclusive discourse that honors the wisdom of all beings and acknowledges that true liberation cannot be achieved in isolation. Unraveling this interconnectedness can result in reimagining societal structures that have long perpetuated inequality and environmental degradation. This critique not only challenges prevailing paradigms but also advocates for a transformative approach that celebrates the resilience of those marginalized by history. Therefore, this paper endeavors to carve avenues toward a more just and sustainable life, wherein the interconnected destinies of women and the natural world are revered and celebrated in a collective pursuit of dignity and respect. The central aim is to illuminate "the link between the oppression of women and the domination of nature" (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996, p. xxiv). By so doing, it attempts to reveal the influence of patriarchal and colonial hegemonies on both women and nature.

ECOCRITICISM

Within the discourse of ecocriticism, this critical framework emerges as a vital lens, imbued with implications that illuminate the intersection of literary imagination and the natural world. It invites scholars and readers alike to engage in a rigorous examination of how narratives shape human environmental consciousness. By so doing, scholars and readers can reflect on the ways in which the stories one tells influence the perceptions of the ecological landscape. The intersection of literature and ecology should be understood not only as an effective tool for investigating multiple aspects of human life, of which the landscape is a central part, but also as a means capable of bringing to light the most hidden folds of

reality (Anderson 2010). This lens reveals how the natural world, in all its splendor and complexity, informs and enriches human narratives. It creates a reciprocal relationship that deepens our understanding of both. One can understand how the multiple typologies of relationships between humans and nature can avail themselves of valuable interpretative integrations. They adopt the point of view based on ecosystem dynamics. Moreover, they are encouraged by the cultural processes internal to environmental ethics (Hourdequin 2015).

Through this dynamic interplay, one can reveal the layers of meaning that connect the human experience to the ecological world. Ecocriticism calls for a critical re-evaluation of the dominant narratives that have long governed our understanding of nature and society. This ecocritical endeavor not only challenges established paradigms but also indicates a pursuit toward a more equitable and holistic vision of existence. Through such a vision, the voices of the marginalized, both human and non-human, are finally recognized, heard, and valued. In this reimagined context, one is to embrace an ethos of interconnectedness, where the destinies of diverse beings unite in a symphony of experience to encourage a deeper appreciation for the life that sustains us all. The notion of ecocriticism, although already presented in the Seventies of the last century by William Rueckert and Joseph Meeker, was recognized as a real discipline only at the end of the Nineties (Meeker 1972; Rueckert 1978). From this period onwards, the task of the literary approach began to assert itself as a tool capable of providing a critical awareness of the relationship between the environment and development processes. Thus, ecocriticism serves not merely as an academic pursuit but as a transformative call to action, urging us to cultivate a more compassionate and sustainable future.

ECOFEMINISM

The notion of "ecofeminism," first unveiled by Françoise D'Eaubonne in 1974, ignited a crucial awareness of the nexus between ecological and feminist discourses. Yet, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, these vital intersections languished in obscurity. It is overshadowed by mainstream discourses. In the 1990s that ecological literary studies began to blossom, thanks to the illuminating contributions of ecofeminist critics like Gaard and Murphy (1998), Carr (2000), and Campbell (2008). As Vakoch (2012) states, "Ecofeminists act to realize a world free of sexist oppression that is also environmentally sustainable and sound" (2012, p. ix). In other words, ecofeminists envision a flourishing future for both women and the earth. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (1996) underscore the imperative of an ecological lens in literary critique amidst environmental crisis. They warn that a narrow focus on major literary works risks obscuring the existential threats to the planet. This resonates with the ecofeminist ethos. They highlight the power of literature to reflect and tackle ecological dilemmas. Greta Gaard (2011) traces the roots of ecological studies back to feminist discourse, emphasizing the emergence of ecofeminism in the 1980s at the intersection of gender advocacy and environmentalism, as seen in the works of Susan Griffin (1978) and Carolyn Merchant (1980). These texts unveil the interconnected oppressions of gender, race, and nature.

One principle of ecofeminism highlights the interconnectedness of all beings: "it is much concerned with the way culture and society are constructed by the nonhuman world through the engagement of not only literary studies, but historical, social, economic and political ones as well"

(Ourkiya, 2023, p. 55). In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), nature transcends mere backdrop, intertwining with the narrative. Richard Di Giulio and Emily Monosson (1996) observe that this interconnection "is both intuitive and significant" (Di Giulio & Monosson, 1996, p. 4). The exploitation of marginalized bodies—enslaved peoples and women—reflects a colonial logic, wherein their suffering fuels the advancement of White civilization. This hierarchy establishes a triad of modernity/coloniality/decoloniality, with decoloniality revealing "the darker side of modernity" (Mignolo& Walsh, 2018, p. 109). Enrique Dussel (1998) argues that nature suffers under modernity, as it is merely a medium of production destined for destruction (Dussel, 1998, p. 167). Dussel's views resonate with Verena Conley (2000), who asserts that patriarchy "spells the death of woman and nature," emphasizing that men objectify both (Conley, 2000, p. 149). In *Purple Hibiscus*, Beatrice's act of killing Eugene challenges his possession of her body, symbolizing decoloniality. Timothy Morton (2007) draws parallels between violence against nature and women: "Putting something called Nature on a pedestal [...] is a paradoxical act of sadistic admiration" (Morton, 2007, p. 5). This echoes Virginia Woolf (1957), who critiques male representations of women in literature: "woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men" (Woolf, 1957, p. 45). Thus, a decolonial and ecofeminist stance must contest the exploitation of both women and nature.

DECOLONIALITY

Decoloniality offers a transformative reimagining of existence. It challenges the deep-rooted beliefs of colonialism

and patriarchy that have long elevated white Western men as the standard of humanity. This framework systematically objectifies women, reducing their identities to cultural instruments while the exploitation of nature remains a shadowy oversight. The interconnections between the subjugation of women and nature reveal a shared oppression rooted in colonialism. Recognizing nature as integral to existence opposes Western narratives steeped in Cartesian dualism—mind/body, man/woman, colonizer/colonized. Dismantling these binaries fosters a shared quest for liberation among all beings. Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) critique the anthropocentric worldview. For them, this view is based on Judeo-Christian values. So, it elevates humanity while fostering hubris and leading to "senseless exploitation and domination" (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996, p. 232-33). This logocentric thinking detaches the soul from nature, commodifying it, with women relegated to inferior roles, existing solely for reproduction (Boyages, 2024, p. 27). To confront the binaries of nature/culture and body/mind, we must adopt "corporeal feminism," which places the body at the core of dismantling Cartesian dualisms (Yaka, 2023, p. 71). This approach encourages women to see themselves as intrinsically connected to nature. Yaka (2023) asserts that corporeal feminism destabilizes the nature/culture binary "by attacking, conceptually, the idea of the passive and inert matter-body-nature and by refusing to line up with either nature or culture or to reduce one to the other" (Yaka, 2023, p. 77). Alaimo (2000) argues that concepts like nature and culture are gendered constructs. Redefining these ideas posits that "woman's 'nature' has been socially constructed and – at the same time – can deploy the value of 'the natural' to carve out a position for women that does not destine them solely for reproduction" (Alaimo, 2000, p. 99). This deconstruction fosters a decolonial

attitude, valuing the body as part of nature, resonating with Haraway's (2003) notion of "natureculture," which contests human sovereignty.

Coloniality positions man at the center, demanding that all beings serve him, while ecofeminism must address the environmental degradation stemming from colonial capitalist thought. Andy Smith (1997) notes that individualism and capitalism erode meaningful connections with nature: "Our individualist, capitalist society tends to destroy our sense of meaningful connectedness" (Smith, 1997, p. 31). To decolonize thought, one must embrace an integrated view of all beings. Catherine Walsh (2018) advocates for "the harmonious interrelation of all beings (human and otherwise)" (Mignolo& Walsh, 2018, p. 64). Alaimo (2000) posits that, despite being a site of oppression, nature also represents feminist potential: "nature has also been a space of feminist possibility" (Alaimo, 2000, p. 23). All forms of exploitation contribute to domination, and through decolonial perspectives, the subjugation of lives is rejected. The interconnected oppressions of race, gender, and social class are intricately linked to the exploitation of nature. Alaimo emphasizes that we must view nature as more than a passive resource: "understand nature as something other than as a passive resource for the exploits of Man" (Alaimo, 2008, p. 244). She introduces "the agency of biological bodies" as essential for understanding their complexity (Alaimo, 2008, p. 245). This perspective aligns with Karen Barad's notion of intra-action, which reworks traditional causality (Barad, 2008, p. 133). Thus, Purple Hibiscus reveals that nature is not merely a backdrop but a character imbued with agency. The decolonial perspective dismantles hierarchies between humans and more-than-human entities, challenging capitalist views that exploit beings. This stance is deeply intertwined with trans-corporeality and intra-action, which assert that all beings constantly

influence one another. Trans-corporeality emphasizes the agency of nature, highlighting the exchanges between human and non-human entities. To decolonize our understanding of the environment is to reject its view as merely a site for consumption, recognizing it instead as a realm of beings with their own needs and actions, making dissociation impossible. Finally, this connection initiates a discourse between decoloniality and feminist ecocriticism.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is grounded in a qualitative, interpretive approach that combines textual analysis with the theoretical frameworks of ecofeminism, decolonial theory, and ecocriticism. The study conducts a close reading of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* to examine the interconnectedness between the oppression of women and the domination of nature, as well as the ways in which both are shaped by patriarchal and colonial hegemonies. Drawing on foundational ecofeminist and decolonial theorists (such as Françoise d'Eaubonne, Glotfelty & Fromm, Gaard, and Mignolo & Walsh), the paper analyzes how literary representations of women and the environment in the novel reflect and resist systems of exploitation. Through this lens, the methodology seeks to illuminate the mutual entanglement of ecological and gendered struggles. It emphasizes the significance of narrative, symbolism (such as nature imagery and flowers), and character agency in articulating a vision for justice and sustainability. The analysis is restricted to the primary text *Purple Hibiscus* and is informed by secondary theoretical sources. It aims to reveal how the emancipation of women and the liberation of nature are inextricably linked within both the narrative and the broader context of decolonial ecofeminism.

PURPLE HIBISCUS: WOMEN AND NATURE

The narrative of *Purple Hibiscus* reflects political and feminist perspectives. From a decolonial and ecofeminist viewpoint, Adichie's novel challenges deep-rooted patriarchal and colonial standards. The narrative and inclusion of female writers disrupt the foundational tenets of Western thought, which have long favored the supremacy of white European men in knowledge and power. The presence of African women in the literary canon signifies a notable achievement, despite facing considerable resistance. Creating space for these writers, alongside other marginalized groups like Indigenous peoples, is a vital step toward decoloniality. To challenge socially constructed and naturalized oppressions, one must explore the interplay between human and more-than-human beings, moving beyond the body/mind and nature/culture dichotomies.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili, Ifeoma, Amaka, and Beatrice confront these binaries and hierarchies. They reflect on oppression and become agents of change, aiming to heal colonial wounds. By rejecting male dominance over their bodies, they decolonize gender. Moreover, Kambili, inspired by Ifeoma, values literacy and defies the notion that men embody scientific knowledge while women align with nature. Thus, she works to decolonize knowledge itself. Recognizing our connection to nature allows us to reframe it not as a site of colonial oppression but as integral to our existence, influenced by and influencing us. These dichotomies are cultural constructs, deeply ingrained and persistent. Our relationship with nature involves decolonizing its colonial conception, linking it to our bodies and movements against oppression. In the novel, nature imagery—flowers, wind, and water—reflects the characters' actions and emotions, symbolizing the

interconnectedness of life and the cosmic elements within the imagination.

FLOWERS

In *Purple Hibiscus*, flowers play a pivotal role, as articulated by Jean-Charles (2019), who notes that "the flower has long occupied a significant role in the literary imagination." Flowers are not merely ornamental; they serve as "a living object that can be deployed for the expression of more complex philosophical ideas" (Jean-Charles, 2019, p. 17). As living objects, they embody the trans-corporeal relationship, wherein "the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world" (Alaimo, 2008, p. 238). The delicate exchange of petals in the opening passages of the novel stands as a metaphor for the intricate interconnectedness of lives and the reciprocity that binds bodies together.

Adichie paints a vivid picture of hibiscuses in the family's garden, often subjected to the hands of visitors and particularly those of Beatrice:

> They seemed to bloom so fast, those red hibiscuses, considering how often Mama cut them to decorate the church altar and how often visitors plucked them as they walked past to their parked cars. It was mostly Mama's prayer group members who plucked flowers; a woman tucked one behind her ear once […] But even the government agents, two men in black jackets who came some time ago, yanked at the hibiscus as they left. (Adichie, 2003, p. 9).

In this narrative, the act of plucking flowers is fraught with meaning, often resulting in their untimely decay. This gesture can be interpreted as a metaphor for the violence inflicted upon marginalized groups within the frameworks of colonialism and patriarchy. The flowers' premature demise resonates with the forced dislocation experienced by peoples throughout history, particularly during periods of colonization and oppression. However, when Beatrice, herself a symbol of the oppressed, engages in the act of plucking, it may foreshadow the violent act she will later commit against her husband, Eugene. Such an act serves as a metaphorical repudiation of the patriarchal structures that dominate her existence, culminating in her decision to poison Eugene. Therefore, the act of flower plucking emerges as a potent symbol of violence and resistance.

WINDS

The Palm Sunday passage, followed by Beatrice's violent shattering of figurines, carries deep significance. In the Catholic tradition, the leaves of branches are often taken home during Lent, which metaphorically parallels the mutilation of the family unity at the hands of the violent patriarch. The branches, gathered for religious observance, become emblematic of the dismemberment of familial bonds. Arranged on the table, they are destined to be reduced to ashes, mirroring the fragile peace maintained by the family, who attend church with their photograph displayed prominently. Beneath this facade, however, violence simmers, leading to a disintegration reminiscent of the leaves' decay. Such a decay signifies death within the family, particularly evident when the figurines are shattered.

This theme of disintegration is further underscored after

the patriarch's death, when the family is irrevocably transformed. As Eugene hurls Beatrice's figurines and strikes the missal, tension fills the air:

> Everything came tumbling down after Palm Sunday. Howling winds came with an angry rain, uprooting frangipani trees in the front yard. They lay on the lawn, their pink and white flowers grazing the grass, their roots waving lumpy soil in the air. (Adichie, 2003, p. 257)

This imagery evokes a parallel between nature's fury—trees battered by violent winds—and the familial assault orchestrated by the patriarch. The "lumpy soil" sways, mirroring the scattered remains of the shattered miniatures, while the exposed roots of the frangipani underscore Eugene's overt brutality. The fragility of these roots, laid bare amidst the storm, symbolizes the fragmentation of familial structure, akin to the shattered figurines that once represented unity. Thus, a dynamic interaction unfolds between the human and the more-than-human, wherein the violence inflicted upon flowers, figurines, and Beatrice herself illustrates the fragility of integrity. The "angry rain" that lashes at the frangipani mirrors Eugene's wrath, which violently disrupts the lives of his wife, daughter, and son, culminating in the destruction of the ballerina figurines. In this convergence of nature and human emotion, Adichie skillfully illustrates the interconnectedness of existence, where the personal and the political intertwine in a harmony with resilience and resistance.

The ferocity of wind sweeping through the novel symbolizes chaos and destruction. Powerful gusts uproot trees

and scatter fruit, instilling fear akin to Eugene's menacing demeanor. As noted, wind represents "empty-headedness, fickleness and instability" (Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 1994, p. 1110), uprooting frangipani trees and strewing their blooms across the lawn (Adichie, 2003, p. 257). Eugene's violence disrupts those around him, repressing and assaulting, much like the wind tearing at roots. Bachelard (2018, p. 25) states, "Wind is always a power of coordination," highlighting its interaction with the earth as it uproots flowers and destabilizes trees, bending them "as if bowing to a dusty god" (Adichie, 2003, p. 53). Eugene's aggression mirrors this force, pulling and pushing, disfiguring his son Jaja's hand into a "deformed like a dried stick" (Adichie, 2003, p. 145). Upon returning from Ifeoma's, the harmattan wind "tore across the front yard," bending trees and coating cars with dust (Adichie, 2003, p. 189). This aligns with Eugene's oppressive influence on his family, reflecting the wind's destructive nature, which symbolizes "instability and loss of life" (Gebreyohannes and David, 2022, p. 183). Dust represents the sorrow and beliefs imposed by Eugene, the "dusty god" needing to be questioned.

The wind evokes a sense of lightness, beauty, strength, and freedom for Kambili during an outing with Aunt Ifeoma and her family. This connection is pivotal in her memories of Father Amadi, bringing her joy. The sensation of wind outdoors symbolizes liberation: "I took off, too, feeling the wind rush past my ears. Running made me think of Father Amadi, made me remember the way his eyes had lingered on my bare legs [...] I laughed. It seemed so easy now, laughter" (Adichie, 2003, p. 284). In this newfound freedom, laughter and spontaneity become acceptable. Kambili learns this lesson through her time with her aunt and cousins. The sensual gaze of Father Amadi intertwines with nature's sensations, giving Kambili a feeling of metaphorical flight: "It's so strong," he said, holding a

grasshopper, “I can feel the pressure of its wings” (Adichie, 2003, p. 285). Thus, the wind symbolizes freedom and joy, amplified by Ifeoma’s spontaneity.

This lightness connects with freedom, prompting the characters to embrace their activities. Mignolo’s concept of “the grammar of decoloniality” seeks to create knowledge structures from experiences of humiliation, aiming for a world where many coexist (Mignolo, 2007, p. 472). Kambili’s laughter embodies this decolonial stance: “I laughed loudly, above Fela’s stringent singing [...] Because Nsukka could free something deep inside your belly that would rise up to your throat and come out as a freedom song. As laughter” (Adichie, 2003, p. 299). Climbing the hill symbolizes a higher freedom intertwined with music and physical liberation, reflecting an expanded perspective. Ifeoma challenges Kambili’s understanding of her father’s truths, with the wind embodying this liberating thought. While the wind can be destructive, uprooting flowers and distorting trees, it also signifies transformation and renewal. The wind stirs emotions of freedom and lightness for Kambili and her family, rekindling her memories of Father Amadi. Ultimately, the wind represents nature’s ambivalence—it destroys yet also renews, acting as a vital agent of change.

The notion of interconnectedness resonates with decoloniality, challenging deep-rooted dichotomies. Decoloniality demands dismantling the hierarchies rooted in colonialism, leading to an appreciation of life's myriad forms and their interconnections. Eugene embodies colonialism's legacy, perpetuating the false superiority of certain cultures. As patriarch, he oppresses his family, dismisses his heritage, and elevates Catholicism—representing European dominance—as the ideal of progress. The Christmas setting reveals this tension; Eugene values the holiday yet embodies passivity. His authority

manifests in the family's preparations: "Papa stood by the hibiscuses, giving directions..." (Adichie, 2003, p. 53). The atmosphere is stifling, enhanced by the harsh winds that strip leaves from the trees, mirroring the family's uprooting. The winds bend the trees, as noted: "The morning winds were swift on the day we left..." (Adichie, 2003, p. 53). The reference to a "dusty god" signifies a decaying reverence for Eugene; his authority is increasingly questioned. His impending downfall parallels the natural cycle of decay and rebirth, where both fruit and flesh return to the earth.

WATER

In the novel, Kambili's bathing scene—water pouring over her—symbolizes self-discovery: "I did not heat the water, either, because I was afraid that the heating coil would make the rainwater lose the scent of the sky. I sang as I bathed" (Adichie, 2003, p. 270). This cleansing water evokes freshness, aligning with Bachelard's notion of water's poetic essence, described as "spring-like," where "Coolness impregnates the springtime with its trickling waters" (Bachelard, 1993, p. 31). Spring signifies renewal and embodies revolution, resistance, and agency. The erotic tension between Kambili and Father Amadi further illustrates this resistance against colonial norms. Father Amadi's interaction with Kambili— 'You look worried,' he says before playfully killing a mosquito on her leg—underscores intimacy. His touch brings warmth and pleasure: "His finger felt warm and alive […] I could hear the sound of the raindrops sliding off the leaves" (Adichie, 2003, p. 268), suggesting a possible climax. This interaction intertwines nature, the mosquito, and flowers, reflecting attraction.

Ifeoma likewise contends with water scarcity in Nsukka. Kambili depicts her aunt's bathroom:

> An empty plastic bucket was near the toilet. After I urinated, I wanted to flush but the cistern was empty; the lever went limply up and down. […] 'Our water only runs in the morning, o di egwu. So we don't flush when we urinate, only when there is actually something to flush. Or sometimes, when the water does not run for a few days, we just close the lid until everybody has gone and then we flush with one bucket. It saves water.' Aunty Ifeoma was smiling ruefully. (Adichie, 2003, p. 121)

Kambili perceives the class disparity between her father and her aunt, a contrast underscored by the narrative's melancholic water scarcity. The interconnection of nature and nourishment, often overlooked, merits reflection. Kambili observes her grandfather casting food into the yard, embodying a serene communion with the land's deity: "he threw the molded morsel out toward the garden, where parched herbs swayed in the light breeze, asking Ani, the god of the land, to eat with him" (Adichie, 2003, p. 65). Her own tears swell within her, likened to an internal flood: "I downed glass after glass of water to push them down, and by the time Papa started the grace, my stomach was swollen with water." (Adichie, 2003, p. 41). These torrents of tears, rain, and water intertwine with colonialism. Under Eugene's oppressive rule, Kambili feels submerged in a sea of abuse, where even food becomes a symbol of her struggle against the rigid rules suffocating her family. In this stifling context, "The boiled yam and peppery greens" (Adichie, 2003, p. 41) react to her body, leaving her choked and imbalanced. Walsh (2018) argues that true well-being hinges on a collective existence, aligned with all beings:

"collective struggles and contexts much less known to English-language readers, contexts and struggles that defend life against violence taken to the extreme" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 35).

Water thus becomes a metaphor for drowning in oppression. The redness in Eugene's eyes reflects an oppressive system, reminiscent of the red hibiscuses and Beatrice's blood, all overwhelmed by water. This flood in *Purple Hibiscus* symbolizes fear inflecting Eugene's household, where Kambili chokes on her food, unable to digest the harsh realities of colonial violence. The rain mirrors Eugene's threats, as he strips his family of autonomy. The sacred nature of water also emerges during Palm Sunday: "Mama placed the fresh palm fronds, which were wet with holy water, on the dining table […] They would stay there until next Ash Wednesday" (Adichie, 2003, p. 3).

Holy water, a symbol of purification, contrasts sharply with Beatrice's suffering, highlighting the futility of ritual in the face of domestic violence. Eugene's ritualistic use of holy water serves to impose a false sense of cleanliness upon his family, coercing Kambili and Jaja into a cycle of forgiveness: "Father Benedict sprinkled us with holy water." (Adichie, 2003, p. 35). Even post-abortion, the water symbolizes cleansing for Beatrice, who uses it to purify her figurines, an act of reclaiming purity amidst aggression (Bachelard, 1983). Eugene, too, seeks redemption in water, washing his hands before meals in a ritual that reinforces his colonial piety: "Papa was washing his hands in the bowl of water Sisi held before him. […] For twenty minutes he asked God to bless the food" (Adichie, 2003, p. 11). His attempts to erase African heritage create a profound dissonance within the family.

Therefore, water's associations are manifold, linking our bodies to nature. Adichie's narrative explores this element's

religiosity and critiques the exploitative systems surrounding it. Through feminist ecocriticism and decolonial perspectives, we must dismantle hierarchies between human and non-human entities to realize the "collective well-being and the good life" that Walsh (2018) envisions—one that fosters harmony rather than destruction.

THE GARDEN

In his analysis of the garden theory, John Dixon Hunt asserts that gardens possess the remarkable ability to reflect the myriad needs of humanity (Hunt, 2000, p. 13). Within Purple *Hibiscus*, Ifeoma's garden emerges as a symbol of harmony cultivated through the embrace of diversity. Ifeoma herself embodies a decolonial character that enthusiastically resists the forces that seek to marginalize the natural world and its beauty (Hunt, 2000, p. 117). She stands as evidence of the mixing of cultures and languages. This creates what Stuart Hall terms as multiple identities within the diaspora, where "identities become multiple" (Hall, 2019, p. 207). These identities nurture a collective sense of well-being that brings up harmonious interactions with the natural environment (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 64).

Ifeoma's garden transcends mere aesthetic appeal; it serves as a utopian heterotopia—a "counter-space" where a multitude of cultures converge, coexist, and are both represented and contested (Foucault, 1967, p. 239). In this green space, diverse traditions intertwine to create a dynamic discourse that actively challenges oppressive ideologies and cultural hegemony. Within the confines of Ifeoma's garden, a liberated relationship with nature flourishes to starkly contrast the oppressive context that encircles Kambili's upbringing.

Amidst the blooms and aromas, the garden transforms into

a space of possibility that embraces the complexities of life. The air is thick with the scent of resilience, where the flourishing flora serves as a metaphor for the resilience of identity amid the cacophony of cultural narratives. The intertwining roots of the plants echo the interconnectedness of human experiences. They suggest that genuine growth arises not from the denial of differences but from their celebration. In this space, the garden becomes a site of healing. It is a space where the insults and oppressions inflicted by colonial and patriarchal historiography begin to be healed through the cultivation of diverse voices and stories.

Ifeoma's garden reveals itself as a radical act of defiance against the backdrop of oppressive structures, embodying evidence to the possibility of coexistence. The garden is an ambivalent space where joy and sorrow intertwine. It stands as an example of hope as it illuminates the path toward a harmonious co-existence in which nature and humanity merge in a delicate balance. Finally, Ifeoma's garden symbolizes the potential for a liberated connection with the world. It is an ambivalent space that endorses diversity and unity at the same time. enriching the tapestry of life and affirming the beauty inherent in our shared humanity.

FEMALE AGENCY AND TRANS-CORPREALITY

BEATRICE

On Eugene's death, Kambili's mother, Beatrice, asserts control by denying entry to the mourners. By so doing, she defies patriarchal traditions. Adamu, the gatekeeper, is perplexed by this break from custom. Beatrice's actions illustrate her struggle against patriarchal norms. However, she grapples with voicing her truth. When Jaja takes the blame for Eugene's death, Beatrice attempts to claim her agency, but

society silences her: “She went about telling people that she killed Papa...” (Adichie, 2003, p. 300). As a subaltern, her voice is marginalized, demonstrating the challenges women face in asserting their identities and experiences. Ultimately, Eugene’s funeral intertwines human and non-human lives; decaying fruits and Eugene's body merge with the earth. This convergence emphasizes our intrinsic connection to nature. Gaard and Murphy (1998) assert that ecology is about recognizing interrelations, warning against exploiting nature under the guise of progress (Gaard & Murphy, 1998, p. 5-6). Literature reveals these truths, highlighting the active participation of all beings in a shared ecosystem. In this dynamic, transformation is perpetual.

Throughout the narrative, Beatrice remains oppressed and silenced, yet her eventual uprising against her oppressor culminates in Eugene's death. The death of Eugene can be read as a metaphor for Beatrice’s defiance. This highlights the necessity of decentralizing human experience to dismantle the deep-rooted hierarchies in colonial logic. Colonized peoples were often forced to assimilate the language and culture of their oppressors, a reality embodied in Eugene's imposition of colonial language and customs upon his family, striving to sever their Nigerian roots.

The dynamics within the Achike family reverberate beyond the domestic sphere, echoing nature itself. Ifeoma is a key figure in Kambili’s liberation, with purple hibiscuses symbolizing women’s rightful place in the scientific world. This color, once linked to Beatrice’s bruises, transforms into a narrative of liberation. The act of uprooting flowers metaphorically reflects the violence of colonialism, while Beatrice’s extreme act against her husband represents a decolonial stance against patriarchy. Despite her intentions, her

crime leads to Jaja's condemnation, highlighting the complex interplay of violence and resistance in their lives. The imagery of flowers and earth further explores themes of violence, sexuality, and creativity, emphasizing our trans-corporeal relationship with nature.

IFEOMA

Ifeoma's academic transformation is entwined with the transformations of her purple hibiscuses. These blossoms reflect a decolonial ethos, symbolized by their striking hue. Through Ifeoma, the protagonist begins to find her voice, challenging her father's oppressive norms—the "old silence" fractures. The flowers astonish Kambili and Jaja: "'I didn't know there were purple hibiscuses.' Aunty Ifeoma laughed and touched the flower, colored a deep shade of purple that was almost blue. "Everybody has that reaction the first time" (Adichie, 2003, p. 128). This wonder mirrors Ifeoma's liberated existence, unbound by colonial restraints, despite adversity. For Kambili, "Aunty Ifeoma's little garden next to the verandah of her flat in Nsukka began to lift the silence" (Adichie, 2003, p. 16).

Gabriel and Dawodu (2019) classify Ifeoma as an ecofeminist, highlighting her dedicated care for her garden. They assert, "Aunty Ifeoma is classified an ecofeminist because like all ecofeminists, she is conscious of her environment and tries as much as possible to maintain a healthy and beautiful relationship with that environment" (2019, p. 144). Ifeoma's connection to nature is vivid: "Look at that, green and pink and yellow on the leaves. Like God playing with paint brushes" (Adichie, 2003, p. 142). The act of trimming dead leaves symbolizes renewal and the liberation of women's voices, profoundly affecting Kambili. By involving her niece in garden rituals, Ifeoma invites her to embrace freedom. Gabriel and Dawodu remark, "Aunty Ifeoma is a quintessential ecofeminist

as she single-handedly manages her home effectively, ensuring its neatness and beauty as well as relating well with her environment" (2019, p. 146). Ifeoma's relationship with nature is characterized by mutual influence.

Beyond her ecofeminism, Ifeoma embodies a decolonial spirit. Her words about the flowers— "'This is about to bloom,' […] 'Another two days and it will open its eyes to the world'" (Adichie, 2003 p. 144)—illustrate nature's agency, urging recognition of its vitality. Blooming signifies renewal, and Ifeoma is mindful of her garden's need for care: "In front was a circular burst of bright colors—a garden—fenced around with barbed wire" (Adichie, 2003, p. 112). This diversity requires protection, paralleling the need to safeguard bodies and homes from societal violence. Ifeoma approaches the garden as a scientific endeavor, distancing her relationship with the flowers from essentialism. In this trans-corporeal exchange, the hibiscuses influence her as she nurtures them, prompting her own evolution toward autonomy—balancing cultures, pursuing a career, and more. Ifeoma's purple flowers symbolize a transformative reciprocity.

KAMBILI

The relationship between humanity and nature is poignantly illustrated in the tension between Kambili and Father Amadi, the object of her newfound desire: "I wished I were alone with him. I wished I could tell him how warm I felt that he was here, how my favorite color was now the same fired-clay shade of his skin" (Adichie, 2003, p. 221). As noted by Chielozona Eze (2016), young women like Kambili "hunger for affirmation from the men of their world. They know no other way to express this wish to be seen as human beings than in sexual language" (Eze, 2016, p. 64).

In Ifeoma's home, Obiora observes, “Is it me or does Father visit more often whenever Kambili is here?” (Adichie, 2003, p. 266). While the priest recounts his missions in Germany, Kambili is entranced by his “radiant” skin: “The sun was red, as if it were blushing, and it made his skin look radiant” (Adichie, 2003, p. 267). Here, the sun's warmth and crimson hue intertwine with Kambili's awakening passion, stirring her senses: “I turned. ‘Is this the flower you can suck? The one with the sweet juices?’ he asked. He had slid the allamanda off his finger and was examining its yellow petals. I smiled. ‘No. It’s ixora you suck’” (Adichie, 2003, p. 269). The flowers exchanged between them evoke the intimacy of sexual touch, with moist petals symbolizing desire. This interaction reveals the underlying sexual tension, as the act of tasting flowers carries erotic implications. It suggests deeper connections to femininity and reproduction (Issit & Main, 2014, p. 194). Thus, a trans-corporeal dynamic emerges to reflect human emotions onto the natural world, where erotism flourishes through this interconnection.

CONCLUSION

Summing up, this paper examines Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* through the dual frameworks of decoloniality and ecofeminism. It reveals a significant gap in existing scholarship. The analysis highlights the relationships among gender, nature, and colonial legacies. These intersections position the narrative not merely as a story of familial struggle. The novel depicts a space where women's destinies and the natural world interconnect under patriarchal and colonial oppression. Female characters such as Beatrice, Kambili, and Ifeoma embody a resistance against these dual forces. They promote liberation that transcends mere survival. The hibiscus symbolizes both the fragility and resilience of women and their

environment. Nature acts as an active participant in the narrative. It reflects the emotional dynamics of human experience. This interaction reveals a critique of colonial ideologies as it challenges the hierarchies that deem both women and nature as non-significant Other.

Adichie's work calls for a reimagining of human relations with each other and with the natural world. She urges for the dismantling of binary oppositions that have long governed the human understandings of identity. By embracing a transformative vision, the narrative highlights a collective coexistence that gives credit to the interconnectedness of life. The novel serves as a catalyst for cultural critique. It draws the attention to the importance of reevaluating African female writers in their attempts to expose the patriarchal and colonial biases. Such biases that persist in historiographical narratives. It weaves history and modernity in a way that reveals how the oppressions faced by African women are linked to broader ecological and colonial struggles. These themes culminate in an optimistic vision of liberation, embodied in the characters' transformations and their aspirations for a harmonious future. Through the interplay of laughter, nature, and resilience, Adichie invites us to envision a decolonial future where all beings coexist in mutual respect and flourishing.

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