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A Postcolonial analysis in “Purple Hibiscus” by Chimamanda: How do fixity and Identity mold characters’ development?

THESIS

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II. **Abstract:** This study attempts to elaborate upon the use of concepts such as “identity” and “fixity” in one of Chimamanda’s most enlightening works, her very well-known novel *Purple Hibiscus*. The aim of this research is to outline the relevance these concepts have in people’s understanding of current reality and provide clear evidence to acknowledge the impact that Postcolonial theory has on literature. Postcolonialism has been debated since the concepts of masters and slaves changed the way humans used to coexist. The research also provides insights and strategies that tackle issues connected to culture, social relationships, power and identity, among others. The study investigates the way in which the majority of characters in *Purple Hibiscus* struggle with their own identities and are affected by the concept of fixity.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, identity, fixity, power, culture, Colonized, Colonizer.

Resumen: Este estudio intenta profundizar en el uso de conceptos como “identidad” y “fijeza” en una de las obras más esclarecedoras de Chimamanda, su muy conocida novela Purple Hibiscus. El objetivo de esta investigación es esbozar la relevancia que estos conceptos tienen en la comprensión de la realidad actual por parte de las personas y proporcionar evidencia clara para reconocer el impacto que la teoría poscolonial tiene en la literatura. El poscolonialismo ha sido debatido desde que los conceptos de amos y esclavos cambiaron la forma en que los humanos solían coexistir. La investigación también proporciona conocimientos y estrategias que abordan cuestiones relacionadas con la cultura, las relaciones sociales, el poder y la identidad, entre otros. El estudio investiga la forma en que la mayoría de los personajes de Purple Hibiscus luchan con sus propias identidades y se ven afectados por el concepto de fijeza.

Palabras clave: Postcolonialismo, identidad, fijeza, poder, cultura, Colonizado, Colonizador.

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Introduction

Postcolonialism emerged at the beginning of XXth century and transformed into a huge way of analyzing society, power and culture. Some of the most well recognized theorists and scholars within this field are Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Antonio Gramsci, Gayatri Spivak and Michel Foucault, who have made an interesting and revealing contribution to explain the context in which Postcolonialism emerged. Among the most well recognized writers in the field of Post Colonialist literature, we can locate Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. *Purple Hibiscus*, her debut as a writer, is a moving, worthwhile and rich work exploring the lives of two completely opposed families in a postcolonial and unstable Nigeria.

It is extremely interesting how the novel offers instances of analysis inside this field; the question of identity, fixity, and hybridity among others, are concepts developed by Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994). These terms are crucial to understand how postcolonial societies live and experience their position in life. Readers who are interested in postcolonial literature may find these concepts central to interpret postcolonial productions. There is no way of denying the existence of different viewpoints and ways of positioning ourselves in terms of Postcolonialism and this understanding can give us an insight about the coexistence of different realities.

David Huddart in *Homi k. Bhabha* (2006) declares “In fact, the colonial period is ongoing, and postcolonial perspectives contribute an original understanding of our colonial present, (p.1)” referring to the impact that colonial and postcolonial views exercise over the world. There was and still is an urgent need to get involved in this field, so as to find a fair position and move away from a more innocent or naive perception.

Colonial and Postcolonial perspectives are not only expressed through theorists' speeches or at universities' lectures, but in our everyday life. Novels, poems, music and even paintings express the way in which these perspectives operate and how they have been influencing people since memorial times. Indeed, it is in our hands the power to move forward and obtain a clearer view in connection to this incredibly interesting field. That is the reason why we found exploring and exploiting *Purple Hibiscus* so much valuable, as it would give us great insight regarding identity and fixity concepts that are the ones chosen for the purpose of this research. By now, there is little bibliography on the analysis of these terms within this novel. Finding instances in which we can clearly identify how Postcolonial concepts work in Chimamanda's novel would be relevant for us to understand the differences in power and status inside a particular society.

As Edward Said (1978) explained in one of the main books in the field, *Orientalism* (1978), Eurocentric Universalism has installed in our minds the superiority of the Western and the inferiority of the Eastern culture; this had and still has an impact on how writers express themselves through their works. It would not only be possible to detect how postcolonial and colonial discourses function inside the novel but also how the author's viewpoint is expressed. In this case, Chimamanda's viewpoint is not unknown; the novelist has given speeches in which she develops her thoughts about feminism, for example.

“To be a feminist is to believe that men and women are equally human. For me it's the simplest definition, and from there we can take away the little strains and the little examples of how things are different. But fundamentally it's the belief in human equality, that's really

what feminism is, but the reason why we call it feminism is that it is women who have been excluded from equality for so long. So we have to call it feminism because unless we are able to name the problem, we cannot solve the problem.” (Chimamanda, 2020)

This exploration would be a new opportunity to interact with her perspective as she has also been dealing with postcolonial topics in her novels and seems to be particularly interested in the field. In one of her speeches, in which she addresses Harvard’s Class of 2018, she states “... to read a novel is to give honor to art...” and one of the main purposes of this research is to give honor to art by embracing and exploiting the powerful tools that it offers us, we may not lose the chance to go deeper in this novel and discover two families who live and survive in postcolonial Nigeria.

Chimamanda expresses the importance of getting to know more than just “a single story”, a single-story regarding history, context, and realities. We may have a single story that is the one that we confront every single day, yet even being conscious about the existence of others. Acknowledging the existence of more than just our reality is key to be more patient, empathic, and supportive and to be able to evolve as a human being. Being aware of the exposure that we receive every day from the media, the art, the people that surround us, is crucial to identify how these several realities and “stories” coexist in the present. Allowing us to embrace new realities and stories is a way of progressing and moving away from our comfort zone, awakening our desires of curiosity and getting to know more about others.

We hope this work contributes to the understanding of the above mentioned reality by answering the research question: “In which ways are the concepts of fixity and identity portrayed in the novel *Purple Hibiscus*? “ we intend to prove two hypotheses:

1. There are passages in the novel *Purple Hibiscus* that lead us to identify how characters struggle with their identities.
2. Eugene is the only character that reflects upon the effect of fixity.

We presume to find possible answers to this question through passages that would lead us to identify how characters struggle with their identities, particularly, through Eugene’s. We hope this cogent argument will lead us to build adequate judgments afterwards, so we can contribute to a deeper analysis of the novel and Chimamanda’s position regarding colonial and postcolonial views.

Literature review

Different Postcolonial perspectives have been discussed in several research papers and articles. Most of these concepts are the ones that Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon and Gayatri Spivak, among others, developed, taking into account that they are the most outstanding theorists within the field. Within the literature about this topic, hybridity is one of the most controversial and relevant concepts these theorists have argued about. According to Harris in *The Womb Of Space* (1983) the present concept of hybridity is currently trying to break free from its past meaning, in which people tended to believe there was a “pure” culture and rejected what was considered “impure” or different. This “pure” from the past is antagonistic to the “composite” in current days. Now, societies are aware of the fact that there is no pure culture or race but that these are the composition of several aspects taken not only from a single culture but from many of them. (Ashcroft, B. Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. 1989).

Hybridity refers to a mixture, the creation of new transcultural forms within a territory that undergoes the process of colonization.

“Bhabha and Lionnet, who invoke Bhabha, use hybridity as a way of valorizing the struggles of subaltern subjectivities within history” (Prabhu, 2007, p. 6). Bhabha supports the idea of hybridity’s connection to the past and present or history, in this case. It is evident that there is a relationship among the two concepts (hybridity and time) that alters people’s conception of colonization. Depending on the side we might be on, hybridity could be either a real, current phenomenon of postcolonialism or a negative result of it, due to the fact that there are almost no more “pure” cultures. In “The Location of Culture” (1994) Bhabha argues that not only hybridity is an important aspect in colonial discourse but also fixity, which is relevant in the formation of the other’s ideological construction. It depicts a sign of historical, cultural difference and racial discourse as it refers to an immutable order, certain aspects regarding individuals of a particular culture or race, that never change.

Among other key concepts in Postcolonial theory, we can find fixity, which is a quite abstract concept that implies that a person or group of people feels limited in terms of its definition and identity. People have fixed identities and they cannot escape from them nor change them, they belong to them and they know there is no way they can accept other things outside them. Thus, they reject everything and everybody that does not fit into their fixed role. That gives them this feeling of “belonging” but it is just the same as being trapped, it is an illusion, as they cannot interact with “outsiders or not belongers” without struggling with their own mindset, and it is also impossible for them to accept the fact that there is more than one possible place to be fit in. As a result, it can be said that if you are fixed you are not free to choose, to change, to evolve, to accept and embrace differences among people or communities, it is as if you were blind and you are not able to see the biodiversity in culture.

It is known that inside the world of Postcolonialism, the word identity is extremely relevant and recurrent because in this world, we have roles and positions of power, dominant and dominated ones, hierarchies, and everything turns around them. When an individual has an identity, this one is placed in a particular time, taking into account a particular place. Sometimes this identity can be chosen and some others they are imposed due to the circumstances. In Colonial times, most natives could not choose their identity once they were conquered, they were imposed on them and there was no way to escape, they became fixed. So, whenever we talk about identities, we need to know that they are historically and culturally situated.

“Stereotypes are an example that identities are mere productions.” (David Huddart in *HOMI K. BHABHA*. 2006, p.47) By quoting Huddart’s statement we can go beyond and understand that the concept of fixity is an illusion as well as the concept of identity. They are shaped by stereotypes; it is not something pure and genuine but it is something we can construct by applying stereotypes effectively. As a conclusion, we can say that concepts such as identity are quite ambivalent as they depend on people, societies or communities’ interests and so, how they want to shape them.

Nowadays there is a different view regarding these concepts, as we know that in Postcolonial times, identity goes on a crisis and fixity as well. People’s awareness concerning this topic makes them realize that identities are not fixed roles and actually they cannot be, as we as human beings are evolving and transforming ourselves all the time, and it depends on

different aspects, such as our bonds, affections, surroundings, viewpoints and experiences in life.

The fact that identities undergo changes throughout people's lives is undeniable and by knowing this the concept of fixity does not make any sense now, but anyways it does and there still is people in the world that consider that certain humans, just for having different characteristics, need to be labeled in just one role for the rest of their lives. There is no understanding or chance to change and evolve for them. Actually, evolution is something they do not consider possible for people like that.

Objectives

The main and general objective of the current research is:

1. To identify instances in the novel in which the concepts of fixity and identity can be exposed and explained.

In addition, we have specific objectives, such as:

- a. To determine Eugene's position in the novel, regarding the concept of fixity.
- b. To analyze the changes that Kambili's identity undergoes.
- c. To recognize Kambili's fixed role at the very beginning of the novel.

One of our aims would be to study this role in connection to the concepts of identity and fixity. There are instances in the novel that offer us the opportunity to place ourselves in Eugene's shoes and see through their eyes. By experiencing his reality, we would be able to identify and understand how colonialism affects people's lives and thoughts. Not only will we examine Eugene's position but we will also attempt to recognize the struggles that the rest of the characters undergo due to the reality in which they find themselves. The analysis of "*Purple Hibiscus*" from a postcolonial viewpoint is a huge chance for us to reinforce our knowledge about the world's realities and histories.

Methodology

In order to gather the necessary information to support these two ideas, we will focus on choosing passages and quotes from the novel that serve us as examples to explain how the concepts of identity and fixity work. We will select them and explain the whole context so it will be easier to understand what is going on at that point, what are the feelings and thoughts of the characters and how these passages justify our explanation. The analysis will be carried out taking into account different scholars' perspectives and ideas, such as Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, Michael Foucault and Antonio Gramsci among others.

We will follow a qualitative approach as well as a content-based analysis in this research, that is so because we will be focusing on content, text, discourse and its meaning rather than on the form of the language. Our analysis will be focused around a thematic center that will be Postcolonialism and thus that content will allow us to reach our conclusions. Krashen (1985) states that it is better to learn about something than learning about the language itself, and that

is what the current study attempts to do by focusing on content rather than on the form of the language itself.

Organization

The first chapter of the research is a general outlook of Colonialism and Post colonialism. The purpose and hypotheses are also mentioned, which are two key aspects we need to know in order to follow the study and understand future chapters.

Literature review follows chapter 1 and it consists of an enlightening amount of the useful theory we need to know before analyzing Chimamanda's novel. Some of the main concepts of the greatest theorists inside Postcolonial studies are mentioned in this chapter. Last chapter is our conclusion in which we summarize our main and final ideas and thoughts in addition to the answers to our hypotheses.

Chapter 3 retells the methodology we stick to throughout the investigation, as well as the approaches we select to embrace research. Chapter 3 considers only the concept of identity inside Postcolonialism, its main aim is to prove one of our main hypotheses. The next chapter remarks the importance of fixity and the analysis of some of the characters inside Chimamanda's work; this one is in charge of answering our second hypothesis.

Chapter 1: Literature review

Postcolonialism is a historical phenomenon which provided useful strategies and insights for people to understand the importance of concepts such as culture, colony and empire. It has become such a controversial and relevant topic nowadays that its study is necessary and imminent. It has even represented a debatable topic in fields such as economy, environment and globalization, among others. The number of scholars, universities and people eager to learn, discover and know about it has been increasing during the last years.

This approach has been applied to several works in research papers and articles. These ideas are the ones that Homi Bhabha¹, Edward Said², Frantz Fanon³ and Gayatri Spivak⁴, among others, developed, taking into account that they are some of the most outstanding theorists inside the field. Within the literature about this topic, identity is one of the most controversial and relevant concepts some of these theorists have argued about.

Bhabha is one of the most notorious authors. In his essay “*Signs taken for Wonders*” (1985) he states “There is a scene in the cultural writings of English colonialism which repeats so insistently after the early nineteenth century - and, through that repetition, so triumphantly inaugurates a literature of empire...” (p.29). Since the very beginning of time, English and the English book were tools to conquer and these weapons were in hands of the powerful ones. The repetition strategy plays a relevant role in Colonialism too, without this there would not have been identity issues and conflicts in colonized lives. In this essay, Bhabha attempts to explain how colonizers manipulate books and information to repeat it constantly to such a point in which the colonized end up believing what those books tell. Thus, after manipulation takes place and exercises its power, they are ready to model these people’s identities as they wish. They are no longer who they used to be, and their beliefs seem to struggle. In this essay Bhabha also included comments from other authors who make allusion to their impressions of being and living as a colonized.

Following the same thought, Sheik Mehedi Hasan⁵ in *Of identities: Fixity, Fluidity and Postcolonial Musings* (2014) writes “... language and culture impact one’s identity... [...] ... language-based identity with a strong sense of cultural consciousness leads to a rigid form of identity. An extreme form of nationalism on a collective scale...”

He explains that the power of language is unique when talking about molding identities. It is incredibly strong as it is our main and basic way of communication, when a piece of information is written it has twice the impact of one expressed by another medium. Written words are there forever and writers have the power to express events, actions and history with personal objectives inside their minds. Masters were in charge of writing history, that is why language was a tool of conquering too.

¹ Homi K. Bhabha (b. 1949) is a literary and cultural critic, influential theorist of postcolonial culture, and engaged advocate for the humanities.

² Edward Said was a Palestinian American academic, literary critic and political activist.

³ Frantz Fanon was one of the most important writers in black Atlantic theory in an age of anti-colonial liberation struggle.

⁴ Spivak is an Indian scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic

⁵ Sheik Mehedi Hasan is a Postcolonial Poet Writing from Bangladesh.

“To be a colonial was to know a kind of security; it was to inhabit a fixed world. And I supposed that in my fantasy I had seen myself coming to England as to some purely literary region...” (Naipaul⁶, 1974. p.233). Once colonizers have the power of literature and books, the rest is history; Powerful empires start to spread their knowledge of the world as the one and only true story and the rest are obliged to accept it. Natives were told a unique truth, the truth from books, the truth in the Bible and the truth that came from literary people. From that point onwards colonizers started to doubt their own identity in order to rebuild it and embrace the truth that was gifted to them. That is how Colonialism and the power of its truth started to execute its power over the fragile ones. They build a regime of truth and claim to be the civilized ones and in the name of God they start colonizing and imposing their values over other communities.

Hybridity is a concept that Bhabha mentions in this work as well, and it is intimately connected to Identity as one influences the other. He states “Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities, it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the “pure” and original identity of authority)” (1985, p.34). There are not only strategies to conquer and model people’s identities such as repetition and having the control of literature and information but there is also another tool that is called disavowal. Colonizers make colonized people think they are not pure enough and that is the reason why they need to modify their entire lifestyle. Their culture is completely denied, their music, customs, clothes, religion, language and food are totally devalued. They install the idea of “pure” and “superior” inside their minds and they continue to repeat this over and over again until they actually believe that is true. Thus, they surrender and change their identity in order to be “better” and “pure”. Colonizers discriminate against them and make them feel less valued but they also offer them the solution, to imitate them and try to embrace a new culture forgetting their old one. As a result, we have new hybrid identities, identities who constantly suffer changes and that are struggling to be considered pure.

That is how the strategies of Colonialism to rebuild natives’ identities emerge and this phenomenon gives birth to the concept of hybridity. In *The Location of Culture* (1994) Bhabha developed and explained most of the basis of the post colonialist theory known up to now. The author starts by mentioning the concept of the “beyond” which is actually connected to people’s identities and the fact that it has by nature an ambivalent characteristic. There is a recurrent idea of people not knowing very well where they belong to or in which side or team they are. “The beyond is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past [...] here and there, on all sides, *fort/da*, hither and thither, back and forth.” (p.1).

This feeling of confusion that the concept of “beyond” expresses, is similar to the emotion colonized people have, without knowing what to do, what to believe or where to go. Being a hybrid with no clear identity and destiny, being part of the colony in which they adopt the colonizers’ culture. Half and half, inside the colony and missing their old community, that is what the beyond means and represents. It is a clear metaphor for the ones who struggle with their identity and have no answer to know who they really are or want to be.

The fact that colonized people have a constant struggle regarding their identity is inevitably due to their desire to occupy the master’s place at least one time and be considered a powerful one. Bhabha mentions this idea in *The Location of Culture* (1994) and it is actually taken

⁶ Naipaul, a Postcolonial novelist and writer.

from Fanon. He goes "... the very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a place of splitting. The fantasy of the native is precisely to occupy the master's place while keeping his place in the slave's vengeful anger." (p.44). The presence of the beyond is also relevant here, they are talking about how ambivalent is to be a slave, a colonized, because they want to occupy both places, they want to be here and there at the same time and they yearn for that position of power but yet want to take revenge for all the pain colonizers cause them. So again, we find ourselves in a controversial position and it is useful for us to interpret why and how the colonized struggle and suffer when they have to rebuild a new identity.

This concept is actually a totally unifying one because of its connections among most of the Post colonial concepts we find. It brings unity and demonstrates to be one of the basis of its enlightening theory.

"Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* reveals the doubling of identity; the difference between personal identity as an intimation of reality, or an intuition of being..." (p.51). Once again, we find quotes like that, they express a constant sense of ambiguity and conflict when talking about identity. It is hard for natives to build a new identity as part of a colony and have to abandon their values and culture; and it is that sacrifice they do the one that puts them inside that position of ambivalence. They want to survive and have their normal life but at the same time in order to survive they have to leave behind everything that is familiar for them. There is no doubt of the suffering that this in-between position brings them, all in all they get to build a new identity that is considered to be half and half, a hybrid.

We have mentioned repetition, literature and disavowal as the tools colonizers employ in order to weaken people's identities. Yet, those are not the only tools they have. Bhabha also mentions the concept of stereotype to explain how fake representations of natives make them believe they are really impure and not worthy. Colonizers create these ideas because they can also use them to reinforce their own power and image. On the one hand, all the negative stereotypes are dedicated to slaves, they are inferior, they have diseases and they are considered barbarians. On the other hand, colonizers are civilized, literary, pure and powerful. "The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference, constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations." (Bhabha, 1994. p.75)

Stereotypes then, are tools to destabilize people's identities to make them fragile and thus be able to model them as the powerful ones wish. They have the power to break our identity and self-image and make us feel miserable and not worthy enough of respect.

Sheik Mehedi Hasan in *Of identities: Fixity, Fluidity and Postcolonial Musings* (2014) states "The question of identity is crucial in a postcolonial society. Postcolonial society has inherited a diversity of cultural, social and political hierarchies owing to colonial rule." (p.75) This quote expresses the urgency and the need we have to tackle the controversial topic of Postcolonialism and its influences on people's daily lives. Such importance derives from the fact that we are the result of both colonial forces and monarchies; we as society and citizens are a consequence of the different cultures, languages, customs and traditions that arise from colonial rule.

Our ancestors suffered colonialism and as a result they had to surrender and gave up what they already knew. Now, we belong to the diversity of multicultural people from all around the world that embrace their previous generations and past cultures without judgment. There are plenty of identities constructed and being constructed thanks to the phenomenon of Colonialism and that is the reason why we need to be aware of it and decipher its current influences.

“Colonialism as a dominant discourse, on the other hand, has developed through the logic of modernism which substantiates the process of legitimation of oppression. The colonial masters tried to make their subjects confused and hybridized with regard to their cultural and national identity.”
(Sheik Mehedi Hasan, 2014. p.75)

It is undeniable that identity is an issue that deserves to be observed and analyzed. Colonialism was not only a period of time in which the powerful ones tried to dismiss other people’s identities, just for being different to their eyes, but it was also an epoch in which the concept of oppression and domination were legitimized.

Masters tried to fix their subjects in a label of inferiority and devaluation knowing that afterwards, the process of oppression would be easier. Once subjects were affected and infected by masters’ stereotypes, the confusion was total. Therefore, masters were ready to execute all their power over them.

Apart from the fact that people’s identities have been affected since the very beginning of time and thus, it is an issue that requires attention, it is necessary to establish its specific connection to time, “...the subject of identity is culturally and historically situated; sometimes, the individual does not have a choice to assume an identity independently since identity is imposed as well. In a postcolonial society, identity crisis is considered one of the dominant phenomena.” (Sheik Mehedi Hasan, 2014. p.76)

As mentioned in the quote, identity undergoes a crisis during Postcolonialism. This is so because colonized people are exposed to two different cultural and historical contexts, the one of their own home towns and the one the masters impose on them. So, the crisis is inevitable and predictable, they are hybrids that do not know where they belong anymore. They have no power to decide which culture to follow, it is directly imposed on them, they are required to abandon their previous one and as a result of masters’ stereotypes and manipulation, subjects fail in recognizing themselves. They are not sure about what they are or to which culture they need to praise; they endure a big burden of constant uncertainty and unexpectedness, living their lives on the borders, between what they want to be and what they need to be in order to survive.

On the one hand Sheik Mehedi Hasan in *Of identities: Fixity, Fluidity and Postcolonial Musings* (2014) states “The later Foucault moved away from his previous concept of fixed identity and pointed out that there is no such thing as a fixed self. One’s identity can undergo

changes in relation to discursive formations and surroundings he comes across. Given a particular condition, say colonial condition, identity can be fragmented...” (p. 76-77) He is supporting our previous idea by taking Foucault’s concept of identity as an unfixed self, something that can evolve and transform depending on the conditions that it is exposed to. In the case of colonial conditions, subjects find themselves at a crossroad; they end up fragmented as they yearn to recover their real identity and at the same time, they must embrace a new one to survive. That fragmented identity is what we call hybrid, half and half, you are not sure where it is located and it is a foreseeable situation for subjects under colonial control.

There is a constant negotiation of identities, cultures and traditions and it is a never-ending game, a repetitive cycle in which no one wants to lose. Your gender, race, language, ethnicity and class are at risk and with the passing of time we become trans cultural beings thanks to this constant exchanging.

On the other hand, he goes “Franz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* points out that—in adopting the values of white colonial power, the subaltern black people deny their own identity and are thus led into a psychotic condition” (p.78) A distinct way of seeing this fragmented identity arises if we take into account Fanon’s idea. He suggested that in the moment that subjects embrace any pattern connected to white colonial power they resign their own identity and as a result they find themselves into a psychotic condition. Fanon explains a more psychological view in which subalterns’ minds and psyches are affected when they try to accept white’s values, this fragmented identity gives birth to a conflicted one. it is a breakdown inside their minds, a never-ending identity crisis.

He continues “For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white. . . and all his efforts are aimed at achieving a white existence” (p.78-79). He makes an allusion to the fact that, even though subalterns try to hold onto their past values, at the end, deep in their minds they wish to be like their masters. That is why they fragment and live an illusion, trying to be like colonizers. This quote also expresses the fact that identity can be defined by shared values and cultures. If you share some aspects of the masters’ values, then your identity will be linked to that. Association and inheritance affect and define the concept of identity, it derives from a shared culture. Sheik Mehedi Hasan (2014). There is a clear idea taken from this author and that is that identity is fluid and moldable, therefore any aspect surrounding us can have an influence on it and mold it.

Sheik Mehedi Hasan explains:

“Though identity tends to be fluid in nature, certain issues like social or political groups, cultural practices, personal experiences, ontological concerns etc. contribute to constructing particular identities [...] Nation, culture, and society influence individuals, make up their values, and give insights into the world. Human beings cannot hold themselves apart from some form of cultural influence.” (2014, p. 81)

Essentially, he tells us that there is no way to escape from cultural influence added to the fact that identities are unfinished products and they remain in continuous change throughout all our lives.

In conclusion, we can say that our undeniable fragmented identities lead to the construction of a wide variety of groups and subcultures to which all of us belong in one way or another. Being fragmented or hybrids is part of human nature, since the very beginning of time when colonialism governs till nowadays that we have free will to decide what we wish to do, we have decided to be a member in more than only one defining group. Even if the circle is connected to religion, job, academic fields, politics or hobbies, we belong to more than a single one and that defines us as well.

Sheik Mehedi Hasan expresses “In our normal lives, we can see ourselves as members of a variety of groups—we belong to all of them.” (p.83). Bhabha (1994) states that we should see colonialism as straightforward oppression, domination, violence only but also as a period of complex and varied cultural contact and interaction. Bhabha also suggests the idea that Colonialism gives birth to the wide number of cultures and societies we have nowadays. Even though it is considered a dark period in history due to the fact that it brought desolation, desperation, murders, slavery and deprivation it also contributed to the existence of hundreds of hybrid communities.

The cultural exchange was that big in that period and it still is in current days that it is inevitable to accept that Colonialism has both a positive and a negative aspect. Although colonizers and masters believe that they are a unique, pure and superior race, their attempts to keep it pure fail the moment they force subjects and colonized people to leave their original lifestyle to adopt their own. On the contrary, in doing this, they only give the possibility of multiculturalization to take place. Subjects would never deny their own roots completely. Even if they try to hide them in front of their masters, their values continue living inside them, that is why the mixture between two cultures occurs.

Bhabha is successful in expressing how colonialism affects the present and how it is compulsory for us to transform our ideas and understanding of how cross-cultural relations work nowadays. He states that there is a constant negotiation between colonizer and colonized and they are both aware of it. Culture is what their business is about, they are in constant exchange of traditions and values. (Bhabha, 1994).

This negotiation is such an important aspect inside Post Colonial analysis as it is what allows us to build up identities inside this kind of society. In order to know who we are, we need to also identify who we are not or to what places we do not belong to; thus, we will be able to construct our own identity. Knowing the other is the most significant action regarding the idealization of our identity, it is only after it that we will get to know if the other is a threat, a similar pair, an inferior or superior one. Actually, this mindset is what leads colonizers to colonize. They recognize the other as something inferior, of no value, people who are in need

of civilization, proper values, food and buildings; they live in poverty, they are savages, barbarians. This thought is the colonizers' master phrase to defend themselves and justify their horrifying actions against their subjects.

Huddart⁷ (2006) sustains this idea explaining:

“This doubling is a different way of imagining colonial knowledge’s ambivalence, always both an aggressive expression of domination over the other and evidence of narcissistic anxiety about the self. The colonizer aggressively states his superiority to the colonized, but is always anxiously contemplating his own identity, which is never quite as stable as his aggression implies.” (p.29)

What Huddart states supports our previous idea, the colonizer is at a crisis after colonizing the other. Firstly, the stated belief that they are owners of perfection creates such a big feeling of anxiety inside them that they need to face a constant struggle to survive and be able to resist it. Consequently, coercion appears in order to build up a fake image of superiority and control. The fact that they need to show themselves as stable and perfect human beings is a controversial aspect because when the time of confronting doubts, regarding their identity and supremacy, comes there is an entire breakdown inside them; that is expressed with rage and aggression towards the object that raises those doubts, the colonized. These people are the ones that threaten white supremacy, subjects are in charge of making them question their own superiority and value and those questions are the ones that generate the anxiety they have to control to avoid their own destruction.

David Huddart in “*Homi K. Bhabha*” (2006) remarks:

“Culture has a dual identity, rather like colonial discourse. On the one hand, it is homely or realist, asserting its coherence and stability: it is made meaningful by those to whom it belongs. On the other hand, it is unhomely because it is always changing: it is always being made meaningful by others, those to whom it apparently does not belong. Because culture has this dual identity, it is never quite coherent and self-sufficient. Its narratives seem stable and confident, but they always get drawn into strange displaced relationships—with other cultures, or texts, or disciplines.”
(p. 56)

He expresses how the concept of culture affects the concept of identity too deeply. When analyzing what “culture” means thoroughly, we can decipher its flaws. One of them and the most relevant one is how ambivalent culture is and that ambivalence is transferred to people’s identities. Both concepts are in a constant interplay of meanings, thus it generates an inner conflict in human beings. They tend to doubt and question their identities, whether or not they

⁷ David Huddart is an academic researcher from Liverpool John Moores University. The author has contributed to research regarding Homi Bhabha’s concepts in Postcolonialism theory.

feel comfortable in the place where they are and if that place actually represents them. We depend on ourselves but also on others to be conscious about what culture is the one to which we belong to, we may know it but we also need the different ones to make it meaningful.

As a result, we face identity's duality and its conflictive issue inside people's minds, we never know for sure if the culture to the one we think we belong to will be the same for the rest of our life; we are constantly influenced by other communities and cultures. People exchange viewpoints and have contact with other societies and ecosystems that affect the way in which we live. We adopt and adapt the manners and traditions we may think are positive or effective and in doing so, we evolve, transform and change our identity one more time.

Now we know for sure that identity is not a fixed concept at all, that it suffers an incessant transformation all the time and we need to be aware of that not to be conflictive with our own identity but to be able to understand its duality as a natural process in human beings.

“Contemporary culture is hybrid, just like colonial culture. The idea of hybridity usefully characterizes the mechanisms of the colonial psychic economy. In the same way as the structures of colonial identity can also be found in contemporary contexts, the structure of hybridity is also found in contemporary cultures. The important point to recognize is that cultures are always retrospective constructions, meaning that they are consequences of historical processes.” (Huddart, 2006, p.83)

He also sustains that identity as well as culture are constructions that are affected by past events, it means that both are being constantly affected by them and as a result are creations of history. That is why, as we previously said, they are not finished concepts since they evolve over time. Besides, we live in a world in which everything is vertiginous and these concepts do not escape this modernity phenomenon. People pursue modernity as fast as they can and at the same time they adopt and adapt concepts such as culture to rebuild their identities. It is important to acknowledge that each historical process we go through will affect the way in which we live, who we are and the constructions in which we believe. We are not fixed creatures and the inconstant experiences we are exposed to mold our identities.

The concept of hybridity from Bhabha is alarmingly relevant in this discussion; although masters do not like it, we are all hybrids thanks to our past, there are no pure races considered to be supreme anymore. On the contrary, people are aware of the fact that we are mixed races, the result of the exposition we have received from hundreds of years since colonization started its roots. It goes without saying that multiculturalism is seen as a positive phenomenon in postcolonial times, we are grateful for sharing values, customs, food and languages among others. There are currently no limits for cultures and identities to be mixed and expanded, we lend and exchange aspects of our own without having any concern nor greed and people are even proud of it. There are reasons to sustain that the mere phenomenon of colonization is the one that promotes hybridity to take place.

Bhabha (1994) in *Signs taken for Wonder* explains “If the effect of colonial power is seen to be the production of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions, then an important change of perspective occurs.” (p.35). It is evident that masters' attempt to control and submit inferior ones has an opposite result. Even though they try to transform them into their slaves and make them believe they are barbarians, they pave the way for identities and cultures to mix and give birth to hybrids; they attack their own belief of the existence of a unique, pure and superior race because from that moment onwards there would not be “purer” race anymore.

As Raab & Butler in *Introduction: Cultural Hybridity in the Americas* explains “everything that owes its existence to a mixture of traditions or chains of signification, everything that links different kinds of discourse and technologies, everything that came into being through techniques of collage, sampling, or bricolage” (2008, p.1). By stating this they share their own concept of hybridity and therefore support the idea that the existence of a single pure and majestic identity and culture is not a potential one in colonial and postcolonial times.

They continue “the concept of hybridity questions ideas of purity and homogeneity and thus opposes essentialist notions of culture or identity” (p.1). By sustaining these thoughts, they provide us with the insight to say that colonizers' conquering does not encourage essentialism as they believe it did; but it also provides subjects with knowledge and tools to say masters are no longer pure because they have already shared their customs and beliefs with inferior people, thus, there is no treasure to take care of and no purity to praise anymore.

“Hybridity can be understood as the ongoing condition of all human cultures, which contain no zones of purity because they undergo continuous processes of transculturation” (As Raab & Butler, 2008, p.2). As these authors explain, the existence of pure cultures is not possible due to the fact that it is a mere human condition to keep advancing and evolving; we undergo a never-ending process in which we reformulate ourselves over and over again without reaching an ultimate goal. Our contact to several cultures is inevitable and that is what allows us to mention multicultural identities and communities, the fixed vision of an immovable identity that remains the same throughout a whole life is not acceptable now, after all changes societies have experienced, we are able to say that they constantly grow by the adoption and adaptation of new cultural aspects.

The constant battle between purity and hybridity is done by now, people embrace new perspectives of approaching the concepts of identity and culture and this new ways of seeing them enlarge their knowledge of the world. There is a wider view of the way in which we need to live, there is no longer “you and me”, “black and white”, “mine or yours”, “me and others”, “master and subject”, “colonized and colonizer”, but most of people have adopted “our culture”, “our country”, “our nation”, “our identity”. However, there is no denial of the matters that still affect our society nowadays, we still face racism and hate towards what is considered to be “different”.

“Bhabha applies the term especially to (cultural) identity and argues that hybridity is to be understood as “the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority)” (As Raab & Butler, 2008. p.2)

As a result, we can say that hybridity is a strategy used to reverse the process of colonization, it is a phenomenon that fights against the denial of native identities.

When colonizers arrived and met native communities, they forced them to deny every aspect connected to their past identity and culture. By doing this, they gained territory and were able to mold them freely.

What hybridity does is to reverse this process of denial and turn it into a process that helps native people to go back to their previous stage by holding some aspects of their own culture and adopting new ones from the new culture in which they are forced to immerse.

Hybridity then becomes what Bhabha calls “the third space”, a place in which you are in between colonizer and colonized, turning yourself into a dangerous mixture that emerges from black and white interaction and a series of different interactions with other cultures.

Nagendra Bahadur Bhandari in *Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space Theory and Cultural Identity Today: A Critical Review* explains “To subvert colonial domination, Bhabha (1994) proposes the in-between space of the cultural encounter of the colonizer and colonized which he calls the third space of cultural enunciation. This space primarily undermines “the binary thought and essentialist identities produced by colonial knowledge” (p.1). In this essay the author states the meaning that Bhabha proposes regarding the concept of “third place”. It is actually a place in which the person finds himself resisting colonial power and oppression whilst deconstructing the concept of binary oppositions. There are not colonizers and colonized, ambiguity governs inside this third place, there are not clear limitations or borders, not clear colonial authority or masters, there is only uncertainty.

Furthermore, he states

“Bhabha (1994) conceptualizes the third space of enunciation in coloniality and postcoloniality in a political discourse of in-betweenness and hybridity. He scrutinizes a formation of hybrid cultural identity of colonized people in their cultural encounter in colonial domination and inequality. For him, hybridity is the process by which the colonial power attempts to transform the identity of the colonized people within a uniform global framework, producing something recognizable and new “(p.2)

Here we have a concise explanation of the uncertainty that exists inside Bhabha’s third space. It is an undeniable step which colonized people have to go through, the experience of being transformed and changing from one identity to another takes place inside it. The concept of third place as well as hybridity can be seen as processes in which colonial power intends to mold subjects’ identities. Both are mere tools for colonial masters to achieve their goals.

There is nothing left to say in connection to the relevance of the concepts of identity, culture and hybridity inside colonial and postcolonial analysis. Through the analysis of different authors, we have discovered it is compulsory to know about the relevance they have in people's current lives, the concept of identity is sometimes not given the correct amount of seriousness it deserves. Nowadays it is a quite controversial and even informal concept that people tend to use carelessly. However, the need we have to approach this unawareness towards the depth that identity carries and how important it is for us to embrace it, is undeniable.

But identity and culture are not the only ones to take into account. Fixity is another concept that urges to be tackled. Fixity, according to the dictionary, refers to the quality of not changing. So after everything we have said, it is actually the opposite to the nature of the concepts of culture and identity that Bhabha explains.

Moreina-Slepoy, G. in *The Essentialist Representation of the Colonial Subject in Colonial Discourse*. (2022) states:

“Homi Bhabha considers fixity « as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, which is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition » (The Location of Culture). The stereotype can be then conceptualized as the crystallization of the notions of fixity and essentialism that informed colonial discourse, and as such, it is to be analyzed in terms of a central discourse strategy of colonialism. “

Fixity is considered another of the key concepts developed by Bhabha in Post Colonial theory and its relevance to understand how colonial power functions is of great importance. Bhabha states a clear definition from which we can identify that the concept makes reference to an immovable representation, fixed patterns and identities that do not evolve and do not move from the borders and limitations they have. There is no freedom inside this concept, only pure, static, definite and absolute ideas. He also mentions stereotypes as a form of strategy inside colonialism, a tool used by masters to control and mold subjects' identities, to make them believe what they want, to make them feel they are only colonized people and they cannot move even a step outside of that fixed place. “The stereotypes exploited by colonial discourse tended to associate the notions of degeneracy, savagery and backwardness with skin colour for, as Partha Chatterjee (1993) argues, race, whose most visible trait is skin colour, is « the most obvious mark of colonial difference »” (Moreina-Slepoy, G. 2022). She argues that stereotypes are mostly related to characteristics that would make colonized people feel inferior to their masters, this proves that colonial power uses stereotypes as a strategy to take control over these people by pointing out aspects that are considered “negative” or “less valued”.

Bhabha suggests that “skin, as the key signifier of cultural and racial difference in the stereotype, is the most visible of fetishes, recognized as ‘common knowledge’ in a range of cultural, political and historical discourses, and plays a public part in the racial drama that is enacted every day in colonial societies “(1994, p.78). He supports the idea that race and skin are the most powerful topics to establish stereotypes about because of its visibility, it is something we easily identify when we look at a person and thus it makes those stereotypes the most effective, direct and violent ones.

Bhabha continues “Equally, he stresses the primal moment when the child encounters racial and cultural stereotypes in children's fictions, where white heroes and black demons are proffered as points of ideological and physical identification.” (1994, p.76)

Logically, colonial power employs some binary opposition to fix colonized people. Some of them are good and evil, black and white, and heroes and demons. By spreading these stereotypical representations, they are controlling other people’s viewpoints regarding what a colonized is and who are the good and bad people inside history.

He argues:

“The taking up of any one position, within a specific discursive form, in a particular historical conjuncture, is thus always problematic - the site of both fixity and fantasy. It provides a colonial ‘identity’ that is played out - like all fantasies of originality and origination - in the face and space of the disruption and threat from the heterogeneity of other positions. As a form splitting and multiple belief, the stereotype requires, for its successful signification, a continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes. The process by which the metaphoric ‘masking’ is inscribed on a lack which must then be concealed gives the stereotype both its fixity and its phantasmatic quality...” (1994, p.77)

Here we are delighted to acknowledge that stereotypes do not work in isolation, they need to work in a package of more than one to validate one another in a successful way. Bhabha sustains that stereotypes need to be repeated over and over again so it gets inside our minds and there finally, it achieves its goal.

In the essay *Of identities: Fixity, Fluidity and Postcolonial Musings* (2014) Sheik Mehedi Hasan explains:

With regard to postcolonial identities a variety of opinions exist which are based on surveys, analyses and intuition. One of the aspects of postcolonial identities as being static, imposed, assumed, ascribed or moving is thoroughly debated in studies on identity. However, the force of identity is pervasive enough to transcend binaries and move freely in and out of spaces.” (p.1)

What he declares is that there is and there has always been an idea that considers postcolonial identities as fixed ones. The concept of fixity then has always been around the discussion of identities in postcolonial theory, the impression that masters and subjects belong to their unique places and they are immovable remains in people's minds for such a long time. Identities are fixed and we cannot change what we are, that is basically the idea that the concept of fixity sustains, there are patterns or stereotypes that we follow that make us, unconsciously, be what we are meant to be. Edward Said⁸ supports in *Culture and Imperialism* that "we live in a world not only of commodities but also of representations, and representations, their production, circulation, history, and interpretation are the very elements of culture" (1994, p.56).

Those representations are the fixed patterns we are supposed to follow, and it is inevitable to confront them because they are part of culture and the everyday life that people own. Ashcroft, B. & Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H⁹. in *Post-Colonial Studies, The key concepts*. explain "Most of these rectifications were, predictably, downwards within the white-imposed hierarchy of race. The process demonstrated the sheer fictionality of suggesting that these racial divisions were either fixed or absolute..." (2000, p.15)

As they mentioned in this quote, there was a belief that supports that the division of races was exact, pure and absolute, there was no mixture available, they had to stick to the racial group they belonged to. They continue "The problem with such claims to cultural authenticity is that they often become entangled in an essentialist cultural position in which fixed practices become iconized as authentically indigenous and others are excluded as hybridized or contaminated." (2000, p.17)

They sustain that the concept of fixity is part of an essentialist point of view of culture and identity. Therefore, inside this viewpoint, stereotypical or fixed patterns are considered as icons, authentic and pure and everything that is mixed or combined is left aside because it is considered impure. There is no place for hybridity here, the richness of multicultural identities is not acknowledged and the possibility for two cultures to combine and create a new one is totally unseen, "...and therefore, in the first instance involving black and white, European and African, in a fixed superiority/inferiority relationship..." (Ashcroft, B. & Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. 2000. p.52)

In this quote the division is clear, what fixity means is clear too. There is no possible blending here, what you are defines you as either black or white, superior or inferior, master or subject, colonized or colonizer. Being a half blood means being a no one, having no space inside culture or society, you are not worthy of value and respect.

⁸ Edward Said, a professor of literature at Columbia University, was among the founders of postcolonial studies and wrote "Orientalism", an enlightening work in Postcolonial theory.

⁹ They are the editors of *The Post Colonial Studies Reader* and the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, both published by Routledge.

Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994) states “To be a colonial was to know a kind of security; it was to inhabit a fixed world” (p.104)

Clearly, as Bhabha states, the idea of fixity conveys the idea of security as well; in the past, they were used to that, the unknown was not secure and people were afraid of it. They lived together in a world in which fixed ideas, stereotypes and patterns provide a feeling of safety and people were glad about it. Identities were constructed from ancient, imposed and fixed ideas. If you were a native, you probably had certain characteristics that made you look like that. On the contrary, if you were a master, you had opposite characteristics that showed you belonged to that racial group. With the passing of time this belief of fixed, pure and absolute races weakened and new theories refuted it.

Huddart (2006) goes “Obviously colonialism has been a political and economic relationship, but it has importantly depended on cultural structures for its coherence and justification. Because it is not self-evident that colonial relationships should exist at all, something needs to supply an explanation for colonialism. One explanation has often been the supposed inferiority of the colonized people. Through racist jokes, cinematic images, and other forms of representation, the colonizer circulates stereotypes about the laziness or stupidity of the colonized population. These stereotypes seem to be a stable if false foundation upon which colonialism bases its power, and are something we should perhaps simply dismiss.” (p.24)

Huddart takes the concept of stereotype to express his viewpoint regarding its effect and the fixity it produces over people. Mockery is another factor when trying to explain how stereotypes and fixity work; by applying these disrespectful jokes, images and forms, the colonizer starts spreading a negative and inferior aspect of the ones that are different. According to this author, stereotypes appear to be the basis for colonialism. Without them, fixity would have no existence or it would not be given much importance but due to the circulation of stereotypes, fixity gains power and people become more and more labeled.

According to Velautham, L. (2015) “... the “rigidity” of colonial discourse and the reinforcement and perpetuation of racial stereotypes through the act of constant repetition until these ideas become fixed in the minds of the general population.” (p.67).

Concepts such as identity, hybrid, fixity, stereotype and third space work together inside Post Colonial theory.

“Hybridity is precisely about the fact that when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself; it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them [...] indicates that the hybrid identity is one that is fluid and open to the creation of a new position and he refers to this new position as the “third space.” Bhabha (1990. p.211)

It is hopeless to think that identities are fixed and immovable, people change over and over again because we are flexible beings, beings that evolve with the passing of time to embrace

challenges and difficulties. Our ability to transform into better beings eliminates all the possibilities of stable and static lives, it has always been like this since the very beginning of time and it will be like this in the future.

‘Persons’ and ‘events’ exist only as a state of process, in a world of becoming which escapes fixity of bias or episteme, and which is emphatically not preliminary to the re-establishment of any fixed system. Destructive binaries are impossible to sustain, character escapes fixity both within and between texts, even the life and death of characters are not absolutes, and no text is ever finally written. Each new text, whether novel or commentary, both builds upon its predecessor and by a series of ‘paradoxical juxtapositions’ deconstructs the earlier work by recasting and re-distributing its elements. Ashcroft, B. Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (1989, p.152)

These authors support our idea; not only in written texts but also in real life we find people and events escaping fixity because that is not their nature. We rethink and rebuild as many times as it is necessary for us not to live fixed and limited. We deconstruct previous works to analyze its elements and thus, create a brand-new system in which we can feel comfortable and natural. Societies have been experiencing this phenomenon for decades and that is the way in which they survive, they transform.

“...Identity as a “production” which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside [...] Nation, culture, and society influence individuals, make up their values, and give insights into the world. Human beings cannot hold themselves apart from some form of cultural influence.” (Sheik Mehedi Hasan. 2014, p.81).

Chapter 2: Methodology

Throughout this research we follow a qualitative approach as well as a content-based analysis. The former refers to a type of analysis used to answer research questions that are connected to experience, meaning and perspectives, they are usually answered from the standpoint of the participant. Inside these types of analysis, we tend to investigate and focus on beliefs, attitudes and concepts related to people's behaviors. Qualitative research also involves a huge amount of data collection and a complex theoretical background. (K. Hammarberg, M. Kirkman, and S. de Lacey, 2015). "A research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1278)

The purpose of applying a qualitative approach is to understand and interpret social interactions, in this case inside a novel. Our selected group of study is not randomly chosen because we need to be sure they gather the necessary characteristics we aim to observe; plus, we do not only observe people but also semantic relations through observation and analysis of different scenes inside the work. After paying attention to our characters' behaviors and personalities, we inevitably identified patterns and features that lead us to prove our previous hypothesis.

Qualitative content analysis is a valuable alternative to more traditional quantitative content analysis, when the researcher is working in an interpretive paradigm. The goal is to identify important themes or categories within a body of content, and to provide a rich description of the social reality created by those themes/categories as they are lived out in a particular setting. Through careful data preparation, coding, and interpretation, the results of qualitative content analysis can support the development of new theories and models, as well as validating existing theories and providing thick descriptions of particular settings or phenomena. (Yan Zhang and B. M. Wildemuth. 2005)

By applying a qualitative analysis then, we emphasize a viewpoint in which we integrate texts and their specific social contexts, which is extremely relevant to be able to understand social reality in a subjective and scientific way. What we look for are the hidden psychological meanings that enable us to comprehend physical messages.

The latter refers to "analysis of the manifest and latent content of a body of communicated material (as a book or film) through classification, tabulation, and evaluation of its key symbols and themes in order to ascertain its meaning and probable effect. " (Krippendorff, Klaus, 1980).

In this particular case, our communicated material is *Purple Hibiscus*, and we carried out a complete evaluation and tabulation in the analysis chapter to be able to understand and decipher manifest as well as latent content regarding characters and scenes. This study concentrates on content rather than on language. Even though we consider there are plenty of opportunities to draw convincing conclusions from the analysis of words and language, this analysis follows a postcolonialist approach and the chance of focusing a specific theoretical perspective. .

In order to organize our research and the necessary evidence to prove our hypotheses and be able to answer our research question, we followed different steps.

First, choosing the appropriate chapters from the novel that reflect our object of study.

Second, we connected the theoretical background to the story considering the main exponents of the approach: Homi Bhabba, Edward Said and Frantz Fanon. We decided to focus on the concepts of identity and fixity. We found that there are three characters in the novel that highlight these ideas: Jaja, Kambili and Eugene. Not only because they represent and signify what we need to analyze but also because we need to narrow down the scope in order to carry out a proper and concrete study.

Chapter 3: The role of identity in “Purple Hibiscus”

As we previously mentioned, one of our main axes in this research is to work with the concept of identity and for this purpose we need to analyze excerpts from "speaking with our spirits" and "The pieces of God" parts.

Purple Hibiscus shares the story of a fifteen year old Nigerian girl, called Kambili and his brother Jaja. Both experience a very restricted childhood due to the fact that their father, Eugene, is an authoritarian man, who praises God's will, charity and goodness while inside home with his family he feels free to mistreat them violently.

Purple Hibiscus is divided into four parts, in each of these parts we move forward or backward in time. It starts when Jaja, the main character's brother, in an act of rebellion, decides not to go to communion on Palm Sunday. From that moment onwards everything fall to pieces in Kambili and jaja's life. That's why this part is called “breaking gods” as a connection to the action that unfolds catastrophe. The following one is “speaking with our spirits”, this part shares all the anecdotes they have in connection to their visit to Auntie Ifeoma's house, before Palm Sunday, so it expresses different flashbacks regarding their experiences at Nsukka.

The following part is called “the pieces of god” and here the novel depicts how characters try to deal with their reality once they have met a different one. The last part retells what happens in the present time and how Jaja, Kambili and their mother, Beatrice are coping with the consequences of their actions and it is called “a different silence”.

For this analysis, we will focus , as we said, on three different chapters inside “speaking with our spirits” and “the pieces of good”.

CHARACTERS STRUGGLING WITH THEIR IDENTITIES

In order to explore Kambili's first attempt to express her opinions and emotions we focus on the part “Speaking with our spirits”

“I knew Jaja would not have enough time to slip the painting back in the bag, and that Papa would take one look at it and his eyes would narrow, his cheeks would bulge out like unripe udala fruit, his mouth would spurt Igbo words. And that was what happened. Perhaps it was what we wanted to happen, Jaja and I, without being aware of it. Perhaps, we all changed after Nsukka — even Papa — and things were destined to not be the same, to not be in their original order.”

“What is that? Have you all converted to heathen ways? What are you doing with that painting? Where did you get it? Papa asked” (p.209)

“I lay on the floor , curled tight like the picture of a child in the uterus in my Integrated Science For Junior Secondary Schools.

" Get up! Get away from the painting!" I lay there, did nothing.

“Get up!” Papa said again. I still did not move. He started to kick me. The metal buckles on his slippers stung like bites from giant mosquitos. He talked nonstop, out of control, in a mix of Igbo and English, like soft meat and thorny bones. (p.210).

In this scene, Jaja and Kambili return from Nsukka with a very special gift from his cousin, Amaka. It is a painting from Eugene’s father, Papa-Nnukwu, as they call him. Eugene does not want his family to be in touch with him as he considers his father a heathen as he is not transformed into Catholicism. So, even though their children make a connection with their grandfather and are happy about that, Eugene still considers that as a sin and he does not care if he breaks the only healthy bond their children have, he will destroy it anyway.

Many other times before this point in the novel, Eugene has cruelly and violently punished their kids for not following his strict and unreasonable rules or for having fallen in the devil’s hand, as he said, and committed a sin. In all those previous times, neither Kambili nor Jaja have shown any discontent with his father’s retaliation. However, this time Kambili had an atypical reaction, she did something instead of remaining in silence and suffered or held her pain in agony. She decided to express something, a tiny sign of rebellion and anarchy against Eugene’s dictatorship and that’s what she did, she held tight to the pieces of her grandpa painting that remained on the floor, shouting “No!” when Eugene started to destroy the paper till it turned into pieces.

This action is actually a reflection of how much that painting meant for Kambili, this new short-term relationship she could establish with her grandpa before he died was represented by that painting, a memory of a healthy bond with someone in her family and so, she refused to let it go and she wanted to grab to this warm memory with all her forces. The result was that she was hospitalized as Eugene kicked her so hard that she was seriously injured.

Not only did Eugene expose his vulnerability regarding his identity but he also exposed the fact that even though he tried so hard to position himself as an English educated man with elegant and polite manners among society, when the moment of rage and anger appeared he demonstrated that he was a mixture of both cultures. The one he wanted to leave in the past, his heathen and Igbo old identity and his new one, the catholic and aristocratic man. The moment he experienced strong and uncontrolled emotions such as wrath in this painting occasion, he could not control himself and he ended up expressing those emotions in Igbo and in English although he did not want their children to speak that language because it was connected to pagans.

This hybridity that Eugene portrayed is also evidence for us to consider that he underwent several issues regarding his own identity. “...the concept of hybridity questions ideas of purity and homogeneity and thus opposes essentialist notions of culture and identity...” Raab and

Butler (2008, p.1) As Raab and Butler mentions, hybridity weakens terms such as homogeneity and essentialism, and the issue is that those are the basis of Eugene's identity. Thus, this hidden hybrid inside him that tries to set free is responsible for his identity conflicts. There are two opposite and at the same time, compatible forces fighting inside Eugene's mind every time he experiences episodes that threaten that stability and homogeneity he believes he has.

The painting episode arose in Kambili a sense of revolt and rejection towards her father, but towards her mother as well, as she could not understand why she did not react and defend her from her violent father. "I stared at the movement of her lips. I was not seriously ill. She knew that. Why was she saying I was seriously ill?" (p.212). "I wished I could get up and hug her, and yet I wanted to push her away, to shove her so hard that she would topple over the chair" (p.213).

This novel is full of important, key concepts, references and connections, and we truly believe that Kambili and Jaja were affected and colonized by his father's beliefs, traditions, rules and faith. Eugene, himself, was colonized and transformed into a British like Nigerian man, who studied in London, spoke English imitating the British accent and preached about Catholicism. He avoided her previous culture, the Igbo one, and judged people who were not converted into Christianity for being pagans and sinners.

This colonial authority that powerful countries like England have over not so powerful ones, like Nigeria, is the one that was once imposed and accepted by Eugene and the one that then, he as father wanted to impose on his children. Homi Bhabha in his essay "*Signs taken for Wonders*" (1985) declares "To be a colonial was to know a kind of security, it was to inhabit a fixed world"(p.31) and this was exactly how Kambili felt about the world that his father offered her, a world that at the very beginning seemed to be secure as it was the only one she knew and her identity felt safe being and coexisting there with her restricted family, yet, when she discovered a different reality something inside her awoke and from that moment onwards she would never be the same again. What in the past felt safe, was not safe anymore, because she could realize then that there were other places in which she could be safer and this feeling of discovery gave her the strength to fight in order to change that fixed world in which she was.

In the same essay, Homi Bhabha (1985) establishes "Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention (p.33)" and Kambili's character is expressing here that this is the case, she is not resisting Catholicism nor political views, she is resisting Eugene's violence and oppression, his senseless rules and his manic tendency to see sin in everything they do. She is a colonized young girl who is struggling with her identity as the one she used to hold in the past is not the one she wants to continue holding anymore.

Sheik Mehedi Hasan in *Of identities: Fixity, Fluidity and Postcolonial Musings* (2014) explains " However, in a colonial situation, where the natives are forcefully colonized and any attempt to resist is suppressed violently, dominant language and culture can rigorously

reshape one's identity". Eugene is a violent father, full of anger and punishments for his children whenever he considers there is a sign of rebellion against his rules or beliefs. Even though they belong to the same nucleus, the colonizer, dominant, powerful, violent image of Eugene is in contrast with the submissive image of Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice. Thus, we can talk as if Eugene is in charge of colonizing them, making them good Christians, making them obey God's will and not fall in sinful actions or thoughts. Actually, he imposes on them his viewpoint in life and they must follow it without questioning. That is exactly the way in which colonizer and colonized function, and due to this we can affirm that Eugene reacts in the same way as colonizers when a native wants to break free from their rules and impositions. This father creates the worst tortures for their children to understand they must follow the path he creates for them, the punishments are cruel and he seriously injures them when administering them. From boiled water poured on their feet to beat them so hard till they have to be hospitalized. This man shows that he is in control of the situation and that at any attempt of resistance he will react by applying violent penalties that can re-shape his children's identities and clarify their sinful thoughts. Eugene adopts a strong role inside the family, pushing away everything that he considers impure to settle the new basis and commandments for them to follow indisputably.

Apart from the colonized and colonizer we need to give space to the concept of culture. Culture has a dual identity, so it means that home and stability and changes and the unknown coexist all the time, and the concepts of culture and identity are always made meaningful by others. (David Huddart, 2006, p.56). Kambili's reaction was actually encouraged by the exposure and the experience she had had in aunty Ifeoma's house, when she could be in touch with other kind of relations and family, different ways of communication, and a free place in which debate, feelings, emotions and opinions were allowed and were taken as the most normal aspects inside a home. Thus, what Huddart states about the fact that identity and culture became significant by others is seen in this scene. Kambili's old identity is obsolete now that others show her a more meaningful identity to embrace, so now she is striving among two different Kambilis, the one that her father wants and forces her to be and the one that she really wants to be, the one that makes her feel free, cheerful and happy, the one she can be inside her aunty's home.

As Kambili was hospitalized, Eugene hired a private teacher so she could go on studying.

"My private tutor came the following week. Mama said Papa had interviewed ten people before he picked her. She was a young Reverend Sister and had not yet made her final profession. The beads of the rosary, which were twisted around the waist of her sky-coloured habit, rustled as she moved. Her wispy blond hair peeked from beneath her scarf. When she held my hand and said, *Kee ka ime?* I was stunned. I had never heard a white person speak Igbo, and so well" (p. 215)

It is the first time that this little girl can connect both worlds, "the white world", the one of the colonizer and the powerful one, with her own world, the one in which people speak Igbo, a

language spoken by native people in Nigeria, the colonized world. Chimamanda in *The danger of a single story* (2009) goes "... how impressionable and vulnerable we are in the face of a single story, particularly as children." And we strongly believe that Kambili, a 15 year old girl, is an example of this statement. She has been heavily influenced by his father regarding the colonizer's culture. What she has to believe, think and say is all Eugene's creation, Kambili and Jaja are both the result of a unique version of the world, Eugene's single story. The story tells them what their family, particularly his father and god, expect from their behavior in order to be worthy enough to go to heaven and be free from sins. Eugene has taught them not to speak nor sing in Igbo when in church, he rejects that kind of language because it is connected strictly to his past, his pagan past. So, for Kambili to connect a white woman and a language of heathens like Igbo, is something difficult and strange to do. Her identity struggles in the presence of such a weird connection and this surprises her as it is something unexpected and unfamiliar too.

Being able to move away from this single story and realize there are plenty more options is a difficult task to undergo for a teenager that has been oppressed and stuck to only one way of living life through all these years. "The concept of identity is assumed to convey a picture of social uniformity. It is also supposed to be linked to social, cultural or national inheritance and association" (Sheik Mehedi Hasan, 2014, p.77)

As this author explains, the concept of identity is sometimes misunderstood, and in this case, Kambili's conception of this term is not the appropriate one. Yet, this is not Kambili's matter but it is the outcome of Eugene's influence, this uniformity associated to being white, English speaker, Christian and wealthy is the one in which this family lives and this is what they are used to, this is their identity and aspects like Igbo, their pagan grandpa, and even other trivial things such as not being first at school, were considered sins and thus, were avoided. They consider identity as something uniform, and what they seem as different are directly opposed to them, almost like antagonists. So, in this world, Kambili's world, there is no place for Igbo and white people to coexist, as both things belong to completely different and antagonistic spaces. The idea of belonging to two distinct worlds or sharing things from one and other seems distant to Kambili yet.

Furthermore, Sheik Mehedi Hasan in *Of identities: Fixity, Fluidity and Postcolonial Musings* (2014) writes "... language and culture impact one's identity... [...] ... language based identity with a strong sense of cultural consciousness leads to a rigid form of identity. An extreme form of nationalism on a collective scale..."

The role of both languages, Igbo and English, in this novel are of huge importance. They represent identities and cultures, we would say that there is a mixture of both in the novel as well as some characters that belong to an extreme. Eugene seems to completely reject Igbo and thus it is so much difficult for Kambili as her daughter to establish a bond among two concepts as distant as white and Igbo. Eugene has developed a language based identity so strong that when he listens to people speaking Igbo it annoys him. It is totally opposite to him and to his rigid identity, he can not stand priests who sing in Igbo when delivering a mass. He

tends to speak in Igbo when he seems to be out of his mind, in a range of anger and when he becomes violent and loses control over himself. He and his family are positioned in an extreme, rigid zone that it is too hard for them to take a step away from it.

Kambili seems confused and lost when listening to the white woman speaking Igbo, and that is because her rigid language based identity does not allow her to see beyond, to understand that that extreme does not actually exist, that are people like Eugene the ones who create and impose it to the rest of their community to feel identify as a community. The sense of extreme nationalism that Eugene expresses every time he can is an example for his children and they have taken this with them and apply it in their everyday life. The feeling of resistance that Kambili has towards different actions, thoughts, feelings or emotions are connected to the fact that she knows that her father would say that is wrong or sinful. Thus, she constantly acts according to what his father would think, do or say on certain occasions. She assumed that he would be mad at that white woman for speaking that Nigerian, heathen language, as a result we have her discomfort in this situation.

Another passage not included in the previously mentioned sections of the novel is relevant to understand Eugene's attitude towards Igbo and his identity struggles.

Papa was staring pointedly at Jaja. "Jaja, have you not shared a drink with us, *gbo*? Have you no words in your mouth?" he asked, entirely in Igbo. A bad sign. He hardly spoke Igbo, and although Jaja and I spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak it in public. We had to sound civilized in public, he told us; we had to speak English. Papa's sister, Aunty Ifeoma, said once that Papa was too much of a colonial product. She had said this about Papa in a mild, forgiving way, as if it were not Papa's fault, as one would talk about a person who was shouting gibberish from a severe case of malaria. (p.13)

Eugene openly expresses his discontent regarding every aspect connected to his Igbo and heathen past, such as their language. Instead, he considers English as a civilized language and the one they have to stick to, leaving aside any other kind of dialect. Besides, for their family it is a bad sign that Eugene speaks Igbo, as they know it means he is losing control of his emotions and feelings, the "real" Eugene arises when he speaks Igbo. It is a sign of his identity struggling inside him, the battle between Igbo and English is just one of the battles connected to identity that this character needs to undergo during the novel.

Furthermore, Colonialism has a huge effect on this character and his sister, Ifeoma, mentions it. Eugene is seen as a colonial product, so much influenced by this imperial power that he, in his psyche, feels he is one of them and exercises that same authoritarian power on their family, banning them the possibility to choose the language they want to speak to communicate. As any other empire does, he oppresses them and imposes on them one of the most important elements in terms of identity, language.

“Colonialism and its handmaiden, racism, strike much more deeply into the social and individual psychology of the colonized [...] the colonial looks at the world and sees only a reflection of imperial power which has replaced an enabling sense of otherness. The colonial condition prevents, therefore, the formation of workable forms of social and cultural life by creating psychological dependence on these substituted images of domination and inferiority.

In other words, colonialism attacks the very essence of identity in its subject peoples by inducing a form of mental illness” (Chew, S. and Richards, D. 2010 p.11)

This quote explains how Colonialism and Racism affects the colonized at a higher level. Not only can we identify how these concepts affect a person through his actions but also at a psychological level.

We can identify this issue if we take Eugene as an example; He is incapable of recognizing that there are more realities than his. He does not have the ability to understand that there are other people that can be different from him and his sphere and still be considered good people. He only sees the reflection of that imperial power that he yearns to have and that he tries all the time to build and exercise. He exercises that imperial power over his family and workers and he is convinced that is the only and the best way to live his life. There is no place for another way of living or believing, there is no room for that sense of otherness, he will never consider the possibility of accepting another conception of the right and the wrong.

There is an imperial and colonizer view inside Eugene’s mind that controls every action he does. All the ways direct him to the same aim and that is to preserve his fixed identity, moving away from threats such as Igbo. From an emperor’s or colonizer’s point of view, what is different and not considered civilized will be barbarism and that is what they are meant to battle. As we have stated before, Eugene portrays the role of a colonizer and in doing so he also rejects the possibility of the existence of others, for him the ones who are different need to be colonized, to be fixed back in the right path, that’s for example what he thinks regarding his father, sister and nephews.

Not only Kambili and Eugene’s characters appear to be struggling with their identity but his brother, Jaja, is also undergoing a similar situation. Taking into account that both have been affected by Eugene’s upbringing, both have this single image of how life and the world is and both have been slightly mobilized since they went to Nsukka to spend some days with a totally different family. On this occasion, both have arrived again at Aunty Ifeoma’s house to share some days with them. They were all about to prepare food when a neighbor came home and gave them a chicken.

“I’ll kill it.” Jaja said. And we all turned to stare at him. “Nna m, you have never killed a chicken, have you?” Aunty Ifeoma asked. “No. But I can kill it” “Okay,” Aunty Ifeoma said, and I turned to stare, startled at how easily she had said that. Was she absent minded because she was thinking about her student? Did she really think Jaja could kill a chicken? (p.234-235)

For these siblings, preparing food, killing animals to eat or even peeling vegetables to help in the cooking was something they had no idea about. Again, it was connected to the fact they

have never needed to do that at home, they had servants who did that for them, not even their mum, Beatrice, did that at home. So this was so distant and almost impossible for them to experience in their life, something that was not associated with their single story at home in Enugu. This was not even something that came to their mind and they wanted to learn about as there was no space nor time for it in papa's schedule. Eugene was also in charge of preparing their timetables for the week, weekend and even when they were away from home, they were stuck to follow it and no activity outside it could be considered by them. Kambili's reaction was the expected one, she could not imagine how her Aunt could agree with Jaja killing the chicken, she did not believe he could do it.

Jaja on the other side, was experiencing a different and more quickly identity crisis, in which he urged to move from the old Jaja's identity to a new one, he was building a new sense of identity, he was embracing and adopting practices, actions and behaviors that he associated to his Aunty Ifeoma's family, the one he considered was a warmer and happier one, the one he wanted to belong to.

“... the subject of identity is culturally and historically situated; sometimes, the individual does not have a choice to assume an identity independently since identity is imposed as well. In a postcolonial society, identity crisis is considered one of the dominant phenomena” (Sheik Mehedi Hasan , 2014, p.76)

This quote explains that it is impossible to avoid a crisis when a certain identity has been imposed on a person. Not all people have the opportunity to build, create or choose an identity and when this is the case, identity crises arise. Eugene imposed this single, unique story and identity on his children and now the consequences are visible.

Jaja tried to emancipate from this identity that was only associated to his father and all that meant, the punishment, the violence, the money, the religion and the schedules, he wanted to break free from that and he thought that by starting to embrace the same practices that his cousins had in Ifeoma's home, he could start rebelling against the old Jaja and rebelling against Eugene at the same time. This identity crisis that he was experiencing was thanks to the imposition of identity in the past. Now, Jaja is culturally and historically situated in a different time and place, he has other ways of thinking and seeing the world and is looking for ways that help him to change and re-build his identity the way he considers is the best. The fact of being exposed to another story, Ifeoma and her children's story, and seeing a different reality and way of living life, situated him in a distinct place in the world. Now he has the opportunity of choosing, expressing and changing things if he wants to and he knows that, so he starts doing little changes when he can, and that helps him to build confidence in this new active role, the role of being the one constructing his own identity. Now, he is in charge and not Eugene. From now on all his efforts are aimed at achieving a new existence.

We may think that the word crisis has mostly a negative connotation however; Jaja and Kambili demonstrate that this is a highly positive crisis, the one that opens a new way of seeing life, this crisis is the beginning of a new era in their life, this crisis means freedom. The following quote is an example of this identity crisis phenomenon

“If Aunty Ifeoma leaves, then I want to leave with them, too. He said, I said nothing. There was so much I wanted to say and so much I did not want to say.” (p.235)

Ifeoma tries to get a visa to leave the country and emigrate to the USA, when Jaja knows about this news he shows anger and desolation, he has a feeling of loneliness because the place in which he feels safe and happy now is about to disappear. The place and people that help him to rebuild his identity and to make choices regarding what he wants to be and how he wants to act is just about to vanish and leave him alone in this process and with this feeling of loss, without knowing exactly where he belongs.

“...Identity as a “production” which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside...” Sheik Mehedi Hasan (2014, p.81). He sustains that identity is always evolving, a never-ending process in which our mindset, beliefs, experiences, memories, ideas and opinions are involved, we are the ones in charge of creating and molding it from the inside, even though the outside influences us, what is in our minds is what has the control over the whole process of identification. Jaja finds himself in the very center of the evolution, he experiences different moments that encourage and also push him to embrace change and evolution in order to be who he really wants to be. Due to this, he makes decisions that Kambili cannot believe he makes, and expresses opinions he would never do before, he strives with the past Jaja and the present one in order to get to understand which Jaja he will be in the near future and forever.

Although identity tends to evolve, change and be considered something moldable, there are particular issues throughout our lives that can affect the construction of this identity, such as cultural practices, belonging or being in touch with social or political groups, and personal experiences. (Sheik Mehedi Hasan, 2014, p.81). We are clearly aware of this and we now know that identity is built from the inside but the outside also affects, our bonds and relationships affect us, the people that surround us are of high importance because they are the ones with whom we interact, we exchange and we coexist. Father Amadi, an Igbo Christian priest very fond of Ifeoma’s family, enters Kambili’s life and changes it for the better and forever. He wants to help her to be happy, to enjoy and laugh and play as the rest of the children in that house, so they spend some afternoons together. While they are in the car going back to Ifeoma’s house, he says something really significant for Kambili.

“I can’t act, I’ve never acted,” Kambili said. “You can try,” he said. He turned the key in the ignition, and the car started with a squeaky shudder. Before he eased it onto the crowded market road, he looked at me and said, “You can do anything you want, Kambili.”
As he drove, we sang Igbo choruses. I lifted my voice until it was smooth and melodious like his. (p.239)

Father Amadi raises a whole new world of emotions, feelings and thoughts inside the little girl, for the first time an adult that she really loves, says something important and gratifying to her. These few words mean the world to her and make her think about things she would have never been able to think about in the past. She dreams about doing a sport, being good at something, being recognized and capable of admiration and recognition. Father Amadi awakens this change inside her, this identity crisis that helps her to rethink what she is, how she lives and what she wants for her in the future. It is one of the most meaningful bonds Kambili has in the novel and that is why he is the one that has the strongest connection and influence in her life, the personal experiences she experiments with him allow her to transform and evolve for the better, she begins to laugh, to play and to enjoy with the rest of the family, she begins to construct a new Kambili, her own identity.

Sheik Mehedi Hasan (2004) explains “Nation, culture, and society influence individuals, make up their values, and give insights into the world. Human beings cannot hold themselves apart from some form of cultural influence.” Even though Eugene makes such a huge effort to keep his children away from the influences he considers inappropriate or sinful, it is impossible for human beings to remain untouchable and uninfluenced. We coexist all the time with others in the same ecosystem and at the same time those ecosystems coexist with other ones, the possibility for a human to remain in the same place all life is too low, as it is part of us and cultural or social influences cannot be separated from human beings. In consequence, Eugene’s attempts to restrict Jaja and Kambili from the outside and the outsiders he considers dangerous for their established identity are pointless for it is in our very instinct and nature to be influencing and being influenced by others.

FIGHTING TO BUILD A NEW IDENTITY

Jaja and Kambili find themselves in a state of disconcert after the violent episode on Palm Sunday and after having shared some days in a totally opposite home. After Jaja refused to go to mass that Sunday, he and Kambili have been hanging around the house with no clear purpose.

“There was something hanging over all of us. Sometimes I wanted it all to be a dream — the missal flung at the étagère. the shattered figurines, the brittle air. It was too new, too foreign, and I did not know how to be or what to be.” (p.258)

Kambili is completely lost, she walks around the house meaninglessly, confused by all that had happened and how those experiences affected her now, in a different way. “I walked to the bathroom, kitchen and dining room on tiptoe. At dinner I kept my gaze fixed on the photo of Grandfather, the one where he looked like a squat superhero in his Knights of St. Mulumba cape and hood, until it was time to pray and I closed my eyes.” (p.258) Her routine is purposeless now, with a tremendous struggle going on inside her regarding her identity, she

feels lost and tries to discover what and how she is supposed to act inside that home, inside that nucleus that she no longer recognized as her own.

“... the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy - it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image. The demand of identification - that is, to be for an Other - entails the representation of the subject in the differentiation order of otherness. (Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*,1994, p.45)”

We can assume that what he states is that the fact that someone or something grants us a pre-built identity does not mean that we will embrace it without questioning. That is an impossible dream and it is always in vain for people to try to impose something as personal as that. The process of identification is not involved with a fixed image or identity that is pre-given to us but instead, it is connected to our own construction of ourselves regarding our surroundings, people among us, our strongest bonds. Thus, in relation to other human beings, it is possible for us to start building drafts of our possible identity, even knowing that this process is a never-ending one and that potential identity might change in the future and must change whenever we, as human beings, consider it necessary. As evolution is part of our race and part of the universe itself, we belong to others and because of our relationship with others we make decisions regarding what we want to be and how we want to act. Jaja and Kambili undergo exactly the same situation, due to all the exposure with new enriching bonds at Ifeoma’s house they can reinvent their identities and they strive with these new feelings and thoughts that changes brought.

“Jaja didn’t come out of his room, even though Papa asked him to. The first time Papa asked him, the day after Palm Sunday, Papa could not open his door because he had pushed his study desk in front of it” (p.258). Jaja expresses the changes he endures by having a new rebellious face and attitude. He tries with all his forces to create an identity strong enough to defy his father and thus, be able to emancipate and take care of his mum and his sister. This episode portrays the concept of identity in its pure nature. The process of identity is a chaotic one and unfinished product and it will always be a problematic one till it reaches a stage of totality and yet it is always open to evolution. (Bhabha, 1994)

Throughout this chapter Jaja embraces this new insubordinate role and position regarding the things he now dislikes and rejects from the old identity he was forced to hold. He undergoes a process of transformation and evolution regarding his identity, he is now open to embrace changes but until he reaches totality, as Bhabha says, it will be all chaos in his life. He expresses the chaotic situation inside him with Kambili as well, he understands that Kambili’s process takes more time and sometimes this situation upsets him. We can observe that in this quote: “I didn’t know she hadn’t talked since he died,” I said. “It is almost four months now. Thanks be to God” Jaja looked at me silently for a while. His expression reminded me of the old looks Amaka used to give me, that made me feel sorry for what I was not sure of. “She

will never heal,” Jaja said. “She may have started talking now but she will never heal.”
(p.259)

By rebelling against his old version, he rebels against most of the traditions, beliefs and rules that Eugene imposed on him. The fact that Kambili still follows some of those impositions and still shows a careless attitude exasperates Jaja, but the case is that both struggle with their identity but both express that differently. On the one hand Jaja decides to change his old role into an active one, he does and says things to show the world the new Jaja that is born. On the other hand, Kambili is still a passive character and less disrupting one but that does not mean that she does not have internal fights trying to rearrange their ideas.

Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994) mentions “Fanon’s Black Skin, White Masks reveals the doubling of identity; the difference between personal identity as an intimation of reality, or an intuition of being...” (p.51)

The fact that identity has a double face is easy to recognize with these characters as examples. Jaja and Kambili’s struggles are the result of two different voices inside them fighting to see who wins. One of them is connected to intimation of reality, what for them is real, concrete, palpable and daily, such as Eugene’s rules, schedules, punishments and religion. However, there is another voice connected to intuition of being, that represents what human beings want to authentically be in a social and cultural world. It is connected to their instincts and desires, their dreams and wishes and there they can find themselves trying to be more like their cousins and their aunt, they want to be free, to have opinions and debate, to hug and laugh and play under the rain. The problem is, both voices are strong, they have been submissive for years and they have been supporting those customs throughout all their short life, they are intimately connected to Eugene and his influence. Nevertheless, the other voice represents what is deep inside their hearts and souls, it represents happiness and freedom, feelings that they long for since they experienced them. Thus, we are in the presence of one of the most difficult battles, the battle to rebuild an identity under these conditions is extremely hard to overcome without some scars. “As I left Jaja’s room, I pushed the study desk a little way aside. And I wondered why Papa could not open Jaja’s door when he tried earlier; the desk was not that heavy.” (p.259)

There are a lot of inexplicable aspects about a father and a man like Eugene, but in this case, Kambili realizes something important and key to understand what goes on regarding Eugene’s identity. He needs to digest their children’s changes and attempts to emancipate from his authoritarian upbringing. Even though he has the strength to open Jaja’s door, he is not emotionally and psychologically ready to accept that his subordinates are rebelling against his powerful reign. In the past he had applied harsh punishments on them whenever he considered it was necessary to bring them back into God’s path, the fact is that now this is not the case. He knows they are not just speaking in Igbo or talking about their heathen grandpa, this time something bigger happens and he is afraid of losing control over them, over their imposed identities.

Sheik Mehedi Hasan in *of identities: Fixity, Fluidity and Postcolonial Musings*" (2014) writes "...Globalization might have a different effect on some individuals and their identity shifts. In particular contexts, globalization can drive them to take up positions in order to retain a collective identity." (p.82)

After reading this quote and knowing Eugene's behavior we might say that he has a globalized idea of identity. He is a Nigerian Igbo black man who decides to transform into Christianity and abandons his old beliefs to embrace European ones, he decides to go to London to study English and sound like a British avoiding his old pagan language as much as he can. The outside world reaches him and he embraces it, he praises God as well as white European people and their culture.

Eugene chooses to take up this position to guarantee himself a collective identity inside home and outside as well because he makes sure his surroundings stick to the same position in which he is. The urgency he has to retain the imposed collective identity of strict colonizer rules inside home vanishes when Kambili and especially Jaja start to express their new desires, it is the moment when Jaja openly demonstrates that he wants to look for a new position towards his identity, that Eugene's one starts to collapse as he can no longer sustain this reign of collective, unique and shared identity at home.

"I watched him knock on Papa's door and go in. "We are going to Nsukka. Kambili and I," I heard him say. I did not hear what Papa said, then I heard Jaja say "we are going to Nsukka today, not tomorrow. If Kevin will not take us, we will still go. We will walk if we have to." (p.261)

Jaja sustains his new challenging role, hoping to be able to emancipate from Eugene. Rarely, Eugene does not react in the way it is expected, aggressively desperate to maintain control by violent punishments.

Kambili is shocked at this new behavior his father has and cannot explain how it is that Jaja has the courage to do that, to face Eugene in such a fearless manner. Eugene's actions evidence that he is undergoing an identity struggle, Jaja and Kambili's attitudes, but mostly Jaja's, throw him into a new reality of disconcert and unpredictability, his static daily world begins to tremble and that gives him a sense of uncontrol that he is not used to.

David Huddart in *HOMI K. BHABHA* (2006) states "The colonizer aggressively states his superiority to the colonized, but is always anxiously contemplating his own identity, which is never quite as stable as his aggression implies" (p.29).

Even though the colonizer tries to maintain his command over the colonized there is a point in which the situation cannot be managed anymore and even the colonizer's identity strives and trembles. The colonizer's aim to violently impose stability inside his reign is the same energy he needs to invest in winning the constant battle he has inside. No matter how stable Eugene's punishments are or how static his routine of rules and schedules are, that will not diminish the anxiety he experiences regarding his identity, regarding the fact that he longs for a fixed identity in which he finds stability and security, but that is impossible. As we had previously

mentioned, identity's main characteristic is that it evolves all the time and we need that to happen in order to adapt and improve as human beings.

The desperation of Eugene to live in a structured world in which all his nucleus behaves in the same way as him and have the same identity as him is extreme and that consumes himself. His identity loses its center when Jaja and Kambili start to change and express themselves differently than in the past. Thus, we can understand and justify Eugene's reactions towards Jaja's defying attitude; he feels that his aggressive and violent actions or punishment will no longer be useful, as now he undergoes a deeper and more complex issue. He is more preoccupied by the fact that he needs to recover his center and his identity rather than on the fact that his children are openly defying him and his fatherhood. Eugene's energies are directed to gain stability and power again, one of the most important aspects in his life. A man like that, who has power in all the spheres of his life except inside home, his children rebel against him and that threatens his identity that is highly vulnerable and unstable, totally opposite to what he believes it is. Eugene's vulnerable identity exposes he is vulnerable too, no power and no punishments nor aggressive behaviors can erase that from his mind and he needs the time to cope with that before facing his children's emancipation issue.

Returning to Kambili's character and identity struggles, we can mention the following scene in which she and Amaka share a cheerful moment for the first time, and Kambili feels enlightened by her words. "Amaka laughed, a hearty laugh that shows her gap. You're funny, she said. I had never heard that before. I saved it for later, to ruminate over and over that I had made her laugh, that I could make her laugh" (p.266).

By this moment in the novel Kambili has already constructed a significant part of a new identity, that identity she herself wanted to build, and so she started to hold tight to moments that she was eager to cherish in her memory, the memories that really belong to her and the ones that might help to erase the harsh ones from the past. Prabhu,A. (2007) explains

"...there are at least two different ways of thinking about "cultural identity"...[]. The first posits a oneness and shared culture, while the second position recognizes that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference..." (p.4)

This quote expresses exactly the process which Kamibili undergoes, she comes to a point in which she can understand that being part of a nucleus as Eugene's home does not mean that she cannot be and feel part of another nucleus too. The fact that she is able now to see this is because of the difference she starts to find between her home and Ifeoma's home, that significant difference is stronger than the rest of the similarities. So even though she feels identified with Eugene's culture of strict religion and rules, she also identifies with love, laughter and happiness inside Ifeoma's home. Eugene represents that set of similarities that offer a unique shared culture and Ifeoma and her children portray that deep and meaningful difference that encourages Kambili to open her eyes and think out of the daily structure in which she was immersed. For Eugene, difference is something negative, it means heathen and sinful, it means disrespect and impurity; However, Kambili embraces that difference and transforms it into her one difference, now she is also different and she feels connected to music and TV programmes and games and debates while having dinner and that is the place where she wants to stay.

On the one hand the old Kambili was not even able to believe herself capable of making someone else laugh, laughing was not something normal in her everyday life, on the contrary, it was too far away from her imagination that she did not even care about not having it. On the other hand, from the moment she is in touch with it in Ifeoma's home, she feels warmed by it and she realizes about that significant difference that the author mentions. This means so much for her as this opens up a new world of possibilities. Getting to know "The different" encourages her to stand up for their new beliefs and desires, now she wants to be able to protect and improve these wishes and yearnings, now she feels strong enough to build something new from that difference onwards.

This last quote in these extracts analysis is an example of how Kambili experiences both ways of cultural identity in a doubleness that awakens inside her, this never ending identity struggle. She is at Ifeoma's house talking to Father Amadi.

"So tell me what you're thinking about", he said.

"It doesn't matter"

"What you think will always matter to me, Kambili" ... [] "I was thinking about my father. I don't know what will happen when we go back ". "Has he called?" "Yes. Jaja refused to go to the phone and I did not go, either."

"Did you want to?" He asked gently. It was not what I expected him to ask.

"Yes," I whispered, so Jaja wouldn't hear... [] I did want to talk to Papa, to hear his voice, to tell him what I had eaten and what I had prayed about so that he would approve, so that he would smile so much his eyes would crinkle at the edges. And yet, I did not want to talk to him; I wanted to leave with Father Amadi, or with aunty Ifeoma, and never come back" (p.268)

There are certain people in new Kamibili's life perspective that represent a significant difference, among them we have Father Amadi, Aunty Ifeoma and her cousins, they are the ones that enhance Kambili's opinions and beliefs regarding herself, her culture, her family and the context in which she lives. This last quote is as significant as the difference itself, as it expresses how Kambili moves from one identity to the other one, from one world to the other one, from one reality to the other one. The old Kambili and the new one fight against each other to gain territory inside her, but the question is she belongs to both worlds, she becomes a hybrid without even knowing it and from that point on she will be able to firmly construct the new Kambili, taking into account now, which are the beliefs, customs and ideas she wants to hold and which ones are the ones she will leave aside, and in this way she will give birth to the new identity she longs for.

Chapter 4: The role of fixity in “Purple Hibiscus”

Taking into account the richness of post-colonial productions, we will analyze the concept of fixity, which we consider is of high relevance. Such a concept will give us the opportunity to thoroughly explore the characters’ concerns into the story and the way they evolve and develop. Identity and fixity are supplementary concepts according to post-colonialism and bringing both of them for our research will provide connections, reflections and conclusions regarding the characters in the novel.

We will focus on two different excerpts; both are found in the “Breaking Gods” part; (p. 110-161 and p.162 -205). We will also highlight pertinent parts from “Speaking with spirits” (p.108, p.55-57, p.90-91 and p.15-16). We believe that “The Breaking Gods” part is the richest one in connection to characters' flourishing and development. They experience crucial situations and confront inside and outside battles regarding their identities and beliefs.

In the previous chapter we focused mainly on Kambili and Jaja as the oppressed ones and on Eugene as the oppressor and how they cope with their identities undergoing hard issues inside that family. In this chapter we will try to understand how the situations in which these oppressed characters find themselves affect them and how they foster their fixed role inside home. There is a detonating fact inside Breaking Gods that is actually a reflection of what Jaja and Kambili will feel inside themselves. One day all of a sudden, they find out that Nigeria experiences a coup and there is a new government.

The definition of coup¹⁰ is crucial to this part. We need to understand that a country experiencing a coup is a country in which you have no opportunity to express yourself. You are under the oppression of people who want to take your voice, rights and freedom away and take control over it all by force and violent actions. That is what Kambili and Jaja live at a higher, social, broader level. However, at an inner, deeper and insight level they experience the same inside their house thanks to Eugene.

The same military forces that Eugene hates and criticizes because of their savage and illegal actions are the ones that he has with his family. This is ambivalent and controversial as

¹⁰ One of the most relevant coups in the history of Nigeria and in connection with Purple Hibiscus' context is the one of General Ibrahim Babangida. He played a significant role in the coup that replaced the civilian government of Shehu Shagari with the military regime led by Muhammad Buhari. However, deep dissatisfaction with Buhari's restrictive governance led Babangida to oust Buhari in August 1985. In the process, the Babangida government has been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of students and others who demonstrated against its policies, the detention without trial of thousands of government critics, the silencing of opposition organizations and the erosion of the rule of law. In 1991, the continuation of those practices furthered the deterioration of an already crumbling civil society. Babangida's tightly controlled program of transition to civilian rule, due to be completed by October 1, 1992, purports to be building a democracy. But the program has included a prohibition on all independent political parties and the denial of the right to vote to many other Nigerians. The government claimed that such controls were necessary to eliminate the ethnic, religious and regional violence that has plagued the country in the past. During 1991, however, escalating political violence and several outbreaks of religious riots in the north indicated that the old problems remain unsolved.

Eugene's actions and words do not coincide at all and he, on the contrary, causes the same damage over their children as this new social coup causes over Nigeria.

Their children have no right to express or feel, there is no room for complaints or debates and it is totally forbidden to disrespect Eugene's rules because children know there could be strict punishments as consequences. These teens live the worst of experiences inside and outside home, they are oppressed in both places and there is no space for opportunities, changes or new identities. They live the life of the colonized.

“It was during family time the next day, a Saturday, that the coup happened. Papa had just checkmated Jaja when we heard the martial music on the radio, the solemn strains making us stop to listen. A general with a strong Hausa accent came on and announced that there had been a coup and that we had a new government. We would be told shortly who our new head of state was.

Papa pushed the chessboard aside and excused himself to use the phone in his study. Jaja and Mama and I waited for him, silently. I knew he was calling his editor, Ade Coker, perhaps to tell him something about covering the coup. When he came back, we drank mango juice, which Sisi served in tall glasses, while he talked about the coup. He looked sad; his rectangular lips seemed to sag. Coups began coups, he said, telling us about the bloody coups of the sixties, which ended up in civil war just after he left Nigeria to study in England. A coup always began a vicious cycle. Military men would always overthrow one another, because they could, because they were all power drunk.” (p.24)

After reading this passage we may have a better understanding of Eugene's ambivalent actions. It is incomprehensible that Eugene on the one hand, expresses his disagreement against injustice and oppressors. But, on the other hand, he displays the same role of oppressor at home. We consider that this brief analysis of the context in which characters struggle is fundamental to have a preferable view in the future.

The following excerpts offer us the opportunity to venture out and get a deep analysis regarding fixed characters and their struggles either to combat this fixity or to preserve it. Characters in these extracts will interact with each other in a way that will permit us to enlarge our knowledge about the difficulties they have to face. Those are the reasons why we will concentrate on this key part in this chapter.

FIXED AND UNFIXED CHARACTERS IN “*PURPLE HIBISCUS*”

In order to understand how a character can be considered fixed or unfixed, we need to identify coherent examples. First of all we need to mention the moment in which, for the first time, Jaja and Kambili go to their Auntie Ifeoma’s house. The first time in their life in which they abandon their home, Eugene’s home, and discover a new and different way of living.

“It was the fourth block we came to, a tall, bland building with peeling blue paint and with television aeriels sticking out from the verandahs. It had three flats on each side, and Auntie Ifeoma’s was on the ground floor on the left. In front was a circular burst of bright colors — a garden — fenced around with barbed wire. Roses and hibiscuses and lilies and ixora and croton grew side by side like a hand-painted wreath. Auntie Ifeoma emerged from the flat in a pair of shorts, rubbing her hands over the front of her T-shirt. The skin on her knees was very dark”

“Jaja! Kambili!” She barely waited for us to climb out of the car before hugging us, squeezing us close together so we both fit in the stretch of her arms. (p.112-113)

Everything turned out to be different in Jaja and Kambili’s lives for the first time. Ifeoma’s house was not as luxurious as their own house, they did not have plenty of food to enjoy in their meals and they did not have the pleasure of having drinking water and natural gas, for example.

It is the very first clash of totally different realities in these teenagers’ lives. They realize there is more than just one single reality and they collide with the fact that there are different ones. This a key point in the novel, a turning point and a relevant one for the development of a new Jaja and a new Kambili, from that moment onwards they start to experience new sensations regarding who they really are and who they really want to be.

I heard Kevin and Jaja come into the flat.

“We have finished bringing the things in, Mah. I’m leaving now,” Kevin said. He spoke from the living room, but the flat was so small he did not have to raise his voice.

“Tell Eugene I said thank you. Tell him we are well. Drive carefully”

“Yes, Mah.”

I watched Kevin leave, and suddenly my chest felt tight. I wanted to run after him, to tell him to wait while I got my bag and got back in the car.

“*Nne*, Jaja, come and join me in the kitchen until your cousins come back.” Auntie Ifeoma sounded so casual, as if it were completely normal to have us visit, as if we have visited so many times in the past.” (p.115)

These siblings find themselves in a different world. In the case of Kambili, she gets desperate to run away from it, facing a place plagued by distinctions that means an enormous threat for her. According to Bhabha, fixity is the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, it is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. In this sense, fixity is seen as an enigmatic phenomenon, something that is not clear to decipher because it plays a double role. On the one hand, the role of belonging to a certain place, race or state in life, that is the rigidity he mentions; and on the other hand, the disorder it can cause when fixed people are exposed to “the different”. Not being able to accept it arises in these particular people a feeling of discomfort and anxiety. Fixed people do not want to be exposed to unknown environments, they are used to the one and only environment they know and that is the way in which they want to keep it for themselves.

In this scene, Kambili feels extremely anxious and uncomfortable due to the fact that all her surroundings are entirely different to her fixed life, home and identity. That fixity gives stability and certainty to Kambili’s life, she feels secure and everything is perfectly scheduled, she has a routine and strict rule to follow. The freedom inside Auntie Ifeoma’s house is completely the opposite and she does not really understand how to manage inside that new sphere. This new situation awakens inside her this urgent feeling of fleeing away, going back home with Kevin. The moment Kevin leaves Ifeoma’s house, Kambili knows that there is not going to be a chance to escape from “the different” anymore, she will have to confront it.

The concept of fixity is quite ambivalent. Thus, from this moment on, characters start to be ambivalent as well, as they find themselves in a constant fight between two forces, their fixed identity and the new one which wants to emerge.

The concept of ambivalence is a term first developed in psychoanalysis to describe a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite. It also refers to a simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action (Young, 1995, p.161).

Jaja and Kambili are logical examples of how the ambivalent character of fixity works in them, they want to remain in the same place they were in the past. However, they also want to move forward, to make a step outside the predictable, they want to experience the unpredictable, the unexpected. Once in Ifeoma’s house, both Jaja and Kambili start to be part of them; Jaja does it faster and more freely than Kambili.

“We still haven’t bought the soft drinks, Mom,” Obiora said.

“Did I not tell you to buy them before you left, *gbo?*” Auntie Ifeoma slid the onion slices into hot oil and stepped back.

“I’ll go now. Jaja, do you want to come with me? We’re just going to a kiosk in the next compound.”

“Don’t forget to take empty bottles,” Auntie Ifeoma said.

I watched Jaja leave with Obiora. I could not see his face, could not tell if he felt as bewildered as I did.

“Let me go and change, Mom, and I’ll fry the plantains,” Amaka said, turning to leave.

“Nne, go with your cousin,” Aunty Ifeoma said to me.

I followed Amaka to her room, placing one frightened foot after the next. The cement floors were rough, did not let my feet glide over them the way the smooth marble floors back home did. Amaka took her earrings off, placed them on the top of the dresser, and looked at herself in the full-length mirror. I sat on the edge of the bed, watching her, wondering if she knew that I had followed her into the room.

“I am sure you think Nsukka is uncivilized compared to Enugu” she said, still looking in the mirror. “I told Mom to stop forcing you both to come.”

“I... we... wanted to come”

Amaka smiled into the mirror, a thin, patronizing smile that seemed to say I should not have bothered lying to her. (p.116-117)

Edward Said (1994) “we live in a world not only of commodities but also of representations, and representations, their production, circulation, history, and interpretation are the very elements of culture” (p.56).As we can notice, fixity is highly connected to representations, the way in which people see other people, other realities, other lives and traditions. Kambili’s representation of life is immensely distinct from her cousin’s. Amaka’s idea of how Kambili will picture this new reality is expressed in the scene. She considers Jaja and Kambili different, they come from an opposite context and so, the new context in which they find themselves will be considered uncivilized if they compare it to their expensive and luxurious life in Enugu.

Even the locations in which they live are opposite. Enugu is a very popular and crowded city, full of restaurants, attractions and enjoyable places to visit. Whereas Nsukka is a town in which people harvest their food and take care of the animals that provide them goods. There is a lot of countryside and not too many buildings to visit. So, not only representations are different in this case, but also realities are extremely distinct. These representations are products of our culture; Kambili and Jaja’s culture cannot be compared to Amaka’s one. Even though they are cousins their representations set them aside, as Amaka knows Kambili is so much fixed to her unique way of living that this new world overwhelms her.

Kambili, during her first meal in this different place, has a strange feeling. She does not feel like she is part of it, but instead, she sees that scene as an outsider. She is someone that is an observer and is analyzing step by step how these people, her family, in a place that is completely antagonistic to her own home, behave in such an unrecognizable way that she cannot conceive what she sees.

Obiora used plastic ones while the rest of us had plain glass plates, bereft of dainty flowers or silver lines. Laughter floated over my head. Words

spurted from everyone, often not seeking and not getting any response. We always spoke with a purpose back home, especially at the table, but my cousins seemed to simply speak and speak and speak.

“Mom, *biko*, give me the neck,” Amaka said.

“Didn’t you talk me out of the neck the last time, *gbo*?” Aunty Ifeoma asked, and then she picked up the chicken neck on her plate and reached across to place it on Amaka’s plate.

“When was the last time we ate chicken?” Obiora asked.

“Stop chewing like a goat, Obiora!” Aunty Ifeoma said.

“Goats chew differently when they ruminate and when they eat, Mom, which do you mean?”

I looked up to watch Obiora chewing.

“Kambili, is something wrong with the food?” Aunty Ifeoma asked, startling me. I had felt as if I were not there, that I was just observing a table where you could say anything at any time to anyone, where the air was free for you to breathe as you wished.

“I like the rice, Aunty, thank you”

“If you like the rice, eat the rice,” Aunty Ifeoma said.

“Maybe it is not as good as the fancy rice she eats at home,” Amaka said.

“Amaka, leave your cousin alone,” Aunty Ifeoma said. (p.120)

Kambili is fixed at such a high level that she cannot even conceive the idea of being part of this kind of context and family. She has the feeling of not belonging, her fixity causes her to feel in that way, the moment she understands that this home does not function in the way she thinks all homes do, she struggles with this reality. The fact that her cousins do not need to ask for permission to give their opinion or express a comment is something unthinkable for her and in her immature and fixed mind that scene destabilizes her completely. The distance that is in between her home and Aunty Ifeoma’s home is tremendous and Kambili does not find a single similarity from which she can hold and sustain her unique world and story.

According to Huddart (2006) “Colonial power, for Bhabha, worked to divide the world into self and other, in order to justify the material inequalities central to colonial rule ... [] He stresses the unexpected forms of resistance that can be found in the history of the colonized, and the equally unexpected anxieties that plagued the colonizer despite his apparent mastery. Most often, he achieves this end simultaneously, by picking on one phenomenon in which both colonizer and colonized participated, such as the circulation of colonial stereotypes” (p.5)

Huddart quotes Bhabha’s work and mentions that Colonialism divides the world into self and other, colonizer and colonized, powerful and powerless people, the one that dominates and the one that is dominated. As a consequence, after this phenomenon takes place and the differentiation of the world in only two groups appears, it is extremely complicated to move away from that fixed image and recognize the possibility that other people can also be “selves” inside their worlds. The possibility to acknowledge the existence of other realities and homes is an awkward aim for the ones that just recognize themselves as “self”.

Kambili in this case is “self” and the moment she arrives at Aunty’s home everything starts to be “other”. The way in which they live, what they eat, how they behave when having lunch, how they interact, what they say and sing, how they dress and what they do during their daylife, from the tiniest aspect to the biggest one, they are “other” and Kambili cannot establish any connection among them and herself.

Kambili is also involved in the unexpected forms of resistance that Huddart mentions. Without even being aware of that, she tries to keep herself inside her initial stage as much as she can, she knows what is forbidden and how she has to behave according to what her dad expects her to do, and she wants to stick to those rules to remain in the same safe and familiar place in which she was before getting to know the unknown. The anxieties mentioned in the quote are also identified in Kambili’s behavior. The part in which her aunt asks her about the rice is when she experiences this moment of absence in which she finds herself observing the scene from the outside, as she does not belong to that reality. That moment acts as a defense mechanism for her, as the scene causes inside her too much anxiety that she needs to create a kind of escape from that overwhelming experience and have time to think about what is going on right now in her life, what is that new family she has to live with, which are the new traditions and habits they have and how she will cope with all those new issues.

Another important and key character is Amaka, Kambili’s cousin. This teenager tries all the time to establish the difference between their cousins and them. She makes an effort to highlight Kambili’s habits and reactions towards her house, in this case she mentions that maybe Kambili eats fancy rice at home and the one they eat does not like her. Thus, she puts a wall between them both, as self and other and she attributes certain characteristics to Kambili that Huddart identifies as colonial stereotypes.

Huddart (2006) goes “Obviously colonialism has been a political and economic relationship, but it has importantly depended on cultural structures for its coherence and justification. Because it is not self-evident that colonial relationships should exist at all, something needs to supply an explanation for colonialism. One explanation has often been the supposed inferiority of the colonized people. Through racist jokes, cinematic images, and other forms of representation, the colonizer circulates stereotypes about the laziness or stupidity of the colonized population. These stereotypes seem to be a stable if false foundation upon which colonialism bases its power, and are something we should perhaps simply dismiss.” (p.24)

As Huddart explains, there are cultural structures that give coherence and a reason to the existence of Colonialism and to the differences among equal people. In this case, Amaka is the one that needs to mark those differences and cultural structures by highlighting each aspect that she, in her mind, considers she and Kambili may have. Inside Amaka’s psyche Kambili and Jaja are her rich and aristocratic cousins who come from a big city, speak English, reject Igbo and pagans, live with lots of luxuries and can afford expensive goods and

services. While they are only immersed in a rich, aristocratic and expensive world, they are oppressed and mistreated and they cannot even enjoy those luxuries as Amaka imagines. They cannot watch television, for instance or be free to decide when and what to play if they want to. However, Amaka's colonial stereotypes of how people who live in a big city and have money may be and behave, control this initial situation and Amaka's relationship with Kambili.

Throughout the novel, Amaka's character plays different jokes or makes certain comments making reference to the fact that Kambili is different and by doing that she establishes the forms of representations she has and how she pictures, inside her mind, Kambili and her life.

Amaka put the yam slices in a plastic bowl, I offered to help peel them and she silently handed me a knife.

"You will like Father Amadi, Kambili," Aunty Ifeoma said.

"He's new at our chaplaincy, but he is so popular with everybody on campus already. He has invitations to eat in everybody's house."

"I think he connects with our family the most," Amaka said-

Aunty Ifeoma laughed. "Amaka is so protective of him."

"You are wasting yam, Kambili," Amaka snapped. "Ah! Ah! Is that how you peel yam in your house?"

I jumped and dropped the knife. It fell an inch away from my foot. "Sorry,"

I said, and I was not sure if it was for dropping the knife or for letting too much creamy white yam go with the brown peel.

Aunty Ifeoma was watching us. "Amaka, ngwa, show Kambili how to peel it."

Amaka looked at her mother with her lips turned down and her eyebrows raised, as if she could not believe that anybody had to

be told how to peel yam slices properly... [] "Maybe I should enter it in your schedule, how to peel a yam," Amaka muttered.

"Amaka!" Aunty Ifeoma shouted. (p.134)

This scene is a clear and concrete instance in which Amaka tries to establish her own forms of representations regarding her cousin, she considers rich people do not know how to cook or, in this case, how to peel a vegetable and baring that in mind she has some comments that express the colonial stereotypes Huddart mentions. The fact that Amaka makes fun of those stereotypes and brings them into the scene every time she can, may give us the idea that she herself is the one who feels inferior because of all the economic and political differences they have. They are not only distinct regarding politics and economy, but also religion, language and traditions; all these aspects are key for anybody's identity and whereas Kambili's one is so much fixed that she cannot bare living in a different reality, Amaka's identity experiences anxieties because the newcomers make her see how many differences they have and how much inferior she feels regarding her cousins. What Amaka does not know is that Kambili

and Jaja will soon feel the same but the other way round. As they will be yearning what Amaka and her siblings have; love, freedom and happiness.

Taking into account Amaka's stereotypes and colonial fixed images, we can assume that Kambili functions under them as well. She can be seen uneasy inside that place due to the fact that those stereotypes she has at home do not operate in Auntie Ifeoma's house anymore. Desperately, she tries to look for a way to reconnect to that secure and familiar manners she used to have, to go back to the previous stage in which she was fixed, but it is not easy.

Auntie Ifeoma came out holding a huge rosary with blue beads and a metal crucifix. Obiora turned off the TV as the credits started to slide down the screen. Obiora and Amaka went to get their rosaries from the bedroom while Jaja and I slipped ours out of our pockets. We knelt next to the cane chairs and Auntie Ifeoma started the first decade. After we said the last Hail Mary, my head snapped back when I heard the raised, melodious voice. Amaka was singing!

"Ka m bungie afa gi enu..."

Auntie Ifeoma and Obiora joined her, their voices melding. My eyes met Jaja's. His eyes were watery, full of suggestions. No! I told him, with a tight blink. It was not right. You did not break into song in the middle of the rosary. I did not join in the singing, and neither did Jaja. Amaka broke into song at the end of each decade, uplifting Igbo songs that made Auntie Ifeoma sing in echoes, like an opera singer drawing the words from the pit of her stomach.

After the rosary, Auntie Ifeoma asked if we knew any of the songs.

"We don't sing at home," Jaja answered.

"We do here," Auntie Ifeoma said, and I wondered if it was irritation that made her lower her eyebrows.

Obiora turned on the TV after Auntie Ifeoma said good night and went into her bedroom. I sat on the sofa, next to Jaja, watching the images on the TV, but I couldn't tell the olive-skinned characters apart. I felt as if my shadow were visiting Auntie Ifeoma and her family, while the real me was studying in my room in Enugu, my schedule posted above me. I stood up shortly and went into the bedroom to get ready for bed. Even though I did not have the schedule, I knew what time Papa had penciled it for bed. (p.125-126)

As we can observe in this particular scene, Kambili again feels like an outsider, an outcast that has no place inside this home. Unlike Jaja, Kambili has this feeling of discomfort all through the first days of stay at Auntie Ifeoma, her ability to adapt seems not that developed and this is the case because in the past, she has never been exposed to such a change. This is a 15-year-old girl who, for the first time, crossed the barrier of her unique world to say hello to a new one in which, fortunately, everything is completely different as in Eugene's house.

According to Velautham, L. (2015) "... the "rigidity" of colonial discourse and the reinforcement and perpetuation of racial stereotypes through the act of constant repetition

until these ideas become fixed in the minds of the general population.” (p.67). Velautham explains the relevance of the connection between two important colonial aspects such as the rigidity of the colonialist discourse and how stereotypes work. Both aspects can be identified in the scene and throughout the novel, particularly taking into account Kambili and Amaka. The former can be observed in Kambili’s behavior, there is a constant urgency inside her in returning to her previous stage, she wants to be under Eugene’s roof where she can follow schedules, pray the rosary without Igbo songs because they are connected to pagan practices and Eugene does not allow that, and above all, feel safe; No matter the mistreatment and the violence experienced inside that house, that is “familiar” to her and the fixity and rigidity inside her is so strong up to the point to which she prefers to live that as long as nothing changes and remains the same. Thus, the rigidity of colonial discourse mentioned in the quote is crucial to understand why Kambili feels in the way that she feels and why she acts the way she acts.

Eugene, as the colonizer and the powerful and oppressor figure, is the one in charge of imposing on his children this rigidity and fixity regarding different colonial aspects that, for him, are the correct ones to follow and respect, such as the religion, language and culture factors. Whereas Kambili is the result of that colonial discourse fixed inside her as it is what she has been receiving for years since she was a little kid.

This question of continuity and persistence is what Velautham explains and Eugene has a key role regarding this aspect, he is the one taking charge of the reinforcement and perpetuation of racial stereotypes. The constant repetition makes these ideas become fixed inside Kambili and Jaja’s minds, and that result is the one seen in this scene. Kambili is fixed to certain actions and behaviors, she repeated them so many times in the past, that now, she cannot let them go, she cannot stop holding them because that would be breaking Dad’s rules; breaking her own fixity and security. Without even being aware of all these, Kambili has the particular issue of considering wrong practices that are just different to hers. The moment in which her cousin starts to sing in Igbo, she immediately looks for Jaja’s eyes so she can make him any sign to show them her disapproval of that behavior, Kambili is for Jaja a smaller version of Eugene. She is in charge of judging every new behavior inside that family and talks about it as if it is not her own family, she goes “Aunty Ifeoma and her family”. She imagines that her shadow is the one trapped in that house, that is there just as a visitor, whereas the real Kambili is where she belongs to, where she is fixed to, inside her bedroom, studying and looking at her schedule; that means security for her and that is the reason why she grabs at this fixity too hard.

Instead of watching TV and enjoying some leisure time with her cousins, she prefers to go to the bedroom and get ready to go to bed, as she remembers that is the exact time that Eugene decides they have to go to bed. The rigidity and fixity inside Kambili’s mind is what does not allow her to move away from the “normal” rules, the “normal” Kambili. The version of “normal” for Kambili is simply her world, which is actually Eugene's world. So, she will stick to that up to the point of rupture in which she discovers there can be more than one “normal” and that must be respected. In the meantime, due to her fixity, she cannot enjoy the

opportunity of being away from the “hell” inside her home, sharing and building new and happy memories with this family.

The fact that Kambili’s struggles regarding fixity concretely appears in her life when she goes to Auntie Ifeoma’s house, gives us the impression that she does not embrace the new and different with gratitude so as not to experience violent episodes at home anymore. However, Jaja does embrace this opportunity and at the very moment they arrive, he can adapt himself to that new lifestyle without problem. On the one hand, deep in his heart, Jaja feels and knows that despite all the poverty at his aunt's house, they are happier than at home. On the other hand, Kambili does not feel this, on the contrary she feels overwhelmed by such abrupt changes.

I dreamed that Amaka submerged me in a toilet bowl full of greenish-brown lumps. First my head went in, and then the bowl expanded so that my whole body went in, too. Amaka chanted, “Flush, flush, flush,” while I struggled to break free. I was still struggling when I woke up. Amaka had rolled out of bed and was knotting her wrapper over her nightdress.

“We’re going to fetch water at the tap,” she said. She did not ask me to come, but I got up, tightened my wrapper, and followed her.

Jaja and Obiora were already at the tap in the tiny backyard; old car tires and bicycle parts and broker trunks were piled in a corner. Obiora placed the containers under the tap, aligning the open mouths with the rushing water. Jaja offered to take the first filled container back to the kitchen, but Obiora said not to worry and took it in. While Amaka took the next, Jaja placed a smaller container under the tap and filled it. He had slept in the living room, he told me, on a mattress that Obiora unrolled from behind the bedroom door and covered with a wrapper. I listened to him and marveled at the wonder in his voice, at how much lighter the brown of his pupils was. I offered to carry the next container, but Amaka laughed and said I had soft bones and could not carry it. When we finished, we said morning prayers in the living room, a string of short prayers punctuated by songs. Auntie Ifeoma prayed for the university, for the lecturers and administration, for Nigeria, and finally, she prayed that we might find peace and laughter today. As we made the sign of the cross, I looked up to seek out Jaja’s face, to see if he, too, was bewildered that Auntie Ifeoma and her family prayed for, of all things, *laughter*. (p.126-127)

This scene reveals how much fixed Kambili is in her inside, how much she struggles to combat the threats about this new pagan way of living. Even in her dreams she fights against it and the figure or image of that threat is her cousin, Amaka. For having such a questioning and confronting personality, Amaka is the one in charge of pushing Kambili to confront the truth and accept her world is not the only one, Amaka exposes Kambili to brand new experiences, peel a vegetable, help with the chores at home, going to look for water at the tap.

These are things Kambili does not recognize as familiar and safe, this way of living feels obscure and unknown and thus she wants to avoid them as much as she can.

The dream shows Kambili that, inevitably, Amaka submerges her in this new reality, despite being rude sometimes, Amaka helps her by doing this. She is revealing Kambili a new opportunity, she provides her with tools to differentiate what is normal and what actually is wrong.

Even with the passing of some days living with this new family, Kambili cannot embrace at least one of their habits and she feels constantly bewildered by the actions they have. The fact that her Aunt prays for laughter is something that moved her, she tries to find complicity in her brother's eyes but Jaja is already moved away from that previous stage from which Kambili cannot separate. The laughter concept is a controversial one due to the fact that at the very beginning of Kambili's struggles she rejects this because at home Eugene does not consider laughter as something relevant that deserves attention; whereas at Auntie Ifeoma's house peacefulness, happiness and laughter are the values they keep as the most important ones and actually, these are the values that Jaja, and secretly Kambili, long for.

Fanon (1989) goes "... I stumbled, and the movements, the attitudes, the glances of the other fixed me there, in the sense in which a chemical solution is fixed by a dye." (p.109). He depicts and explains a situation in which people who surround you have the power to fix you by their attitudes towards you, simply a word can position you under a label. In this case, Kambili's influence regarding her own fixity derives from her dad, Eugene.

In his controller and colonizer role, this father is the one that sets the margins and the rules for Kambili's world. By only uttering a word or by a glance, he can limit Kambili's behavior and that influence is so heavy that even in the distance it oppresses Kambili's actions. We find herself frequently thinking about what Dad would think, say or do regarding her actions and that is a constant filter inside her mind. Due to this powerful fixity imposed by Eugene, she thinks and rethinks before carrying out an action. Thus, it is that behavior that reinforces over and over again the fixity set by her dad at the very beginning; but now Kambili is the continuation of Eugene's world. She also functions as a filter for Jaja most of the time, trying to find his eyes to confirm he feels the same indignation or bewilderment or to give him the idea she does not approve of something by only eye contact or nodding.

A clear example in which Eugene sets the margins and the rules for their children to respect can be found in this extract:

Papa examined Mama's face for a while. "Okay," he said. He turned back to Jaja and me. "Go up and pack your things. You can take twenty minutes from your study time."

We climbed the curving stairs slowly. I wondered if Jaja's stomach rumbled at the lower part like mine did. It was the first time in our lives that we would be sleeping outside home without Papa.

“Do you want to go to Nsukka?” I asked when we got to the landing.
“Yes,” he said, and his eyes said that he knew I did, too. And I could not find the words in our eye language to tell him how my throat tightened at the thought of five days without Papa’s voice, without his footsteps on the stairs.

The next morning ... [] “Here are your schedules for the week you will stay in Nsukka,” Papa said. The sheet of paper he thrust into my hand was similar to the schedule pasted above my study desk upstairs, except he had penciled in two hours of “time with your cousins” each day.
(p.108)

It is clear that each step Eugene carries out is based on the promotion of that fixity that keeps his children in the position he wants them to remain. Eugene takes the job of designing schedules for the week, weekends and in this case for the special occasion of going to visit Aunty Ifeoma’s house. The control he exercises over the children is something that he does not want to loosen. It is especially through these manners that he can fix them, Kambili functions in this way and she is more used to it than Jaja, as he has already developed a sense of freedom and shift inside his mind thanks to what he experiences in Nsukka.

“Double-consciousness and the consequent drive to imitate the oppressor, which develops within the framework of a Hegelian master-servant relationship, is ultimately a survival strategy. The Hegelian « lordship-and-bondage relationship » is a paradigmatic power relation that closely resembles that established between the colonizer and colonized.” Moreina-Slepoy, G. (2022)

As the author explains, there are two main concepts inside post-colonialism; double-consciousness and the pattern to imitate the oppressor that function as a survival strategy or a defense mechanism. Both concepts can be identified in Kambili’s conduct. Kambili’s two different worlds and realities push her to build a double-consciousness because there are aspects from her Aunty Ifeoma’s house that she wants to hold and embrace but there are previous values set by Eugene that do not let her be the one she really wants to be. Some paragraphs above we mentioned that Kambili is the continuation of Eugene as a controller and filter to Jaja’s behavior, and that is because she tries to survive by imitating the oppressor, by imitating his father and following all her rules without complaining. Kambili is the clear example of how these two mechanisms gather to help her survive.

“Father Amadi was here. Chima had fallen asleep on the sofa, and Obiora leaned against him throughout the rosary. Father Amadi led the first decade, and at the end, he started an Igbo praise song. While they sang, I opened my eyes and stared at the wall, at the picture of the family at Chima’s baptism. Next to it was a grainy copy of the pieta, the wooden frame cracked at the corners. I pressed my lips together, biting my lower lip, so my mouth would not join the singing on its own, so my mouth would not betray me.” (p.138-139)

After reading and analyzing this example, it is clear that Kambili's character attempts to survive over and over again by rejecting episodes that her oppressor, Eugene, would consider as pagan and sinful. Even though she knows there is nothing wrong in singing an Igbo song she has to imitate and copy the same reaction that her oppressor teaches her to copy. As a result, we have this character escaping all the time from herself and from that double identity; that double-consciousness that confuses her and makes her doubt about her previous values and lifestyle. She is afraid of the issue of having two consciousnesses, she is aware of the fact that it can betray her and that is what she says "... so my mouth would not betray me". In order to escape from the hazardous possibility for her mouth to open and sing that Igbo song, she displays an emergency plan in order to distract her mind from that thought and play a safe game by using this survival strategy.

Later on, when days passed and Jaja and Kambili were even more used to the fact of living in a completely different home than theirs, they decided to go on a visit around the nearby and visit Aunty Ifeoma's workplace, the university of Nigeria.

The wide schoolyard, enclosed by a trimmed whistling pine hedge, was cluttered with long buildings as if they had all sprung up at will, unplanned. Aunty Ifeoma pointed at a building next to the school, the Institute of African Studies, where her office was and where she taught most of her classes. The building was old; I could tell from the color and from the windows, coated with the dust of so many harmattans that they would never shine again. Aunty Ifeoma drove through a roundabout planted with pink periwinkle flowers and lined with bricks painted alternating black and white. On the side of the road, a field stretched out like green bed linen, dotted by mang trees with faded leaves struggling to retain their color against the drying wind.

"That's the field where we have our bazaars," Aunty Ifeoma said. "And over there are female hostels. There's Mary Slessor Hall. Over there is Okpara Hall, and this is Bello Hall, the most famous hostel, where Amaka has sworn she will live when she enters the university and launches her activist movements."

Amaka laughed but did not dispute Aunty Ifeoma.

"Maybe you two will be together, Kambili."

I nodded stiffly, although Aunty Ifeoma could not see me, I had never thought about the university, where I would go or what I would study.

When the time came, Papa would decide. (p.129-130)

The immense gap between both worlds is evident in this quote. On the one hand, we can see Amaka and her mother sharing the same code and knowledge regarding Amaka's academic future and career. The space they have to communicate ideas, desires and wishes is available all the time and it is something normal and familiar for them to do. On the other hand, the opposite happens. Kambili has no chance to speak without Eugene's permission nor to express her opinion about anything connected to herself. The fact that Aunty Ifeoma asks her about

this makes her realize that it is the first time she ever considers the idea of her future in her hands, it is the first time that someone mentions it and gives her the possibility to build an opinion about it and express herself. Thus, as this is something distant for her, she immediately redirects this decision to her father, Eugene. She knows that she cannot handle it because of her past events, her past has conditioned her and her future actions. She knows for a fact that she has no power over her own life and as a result she ends up delivering all the power of decision to her father, the one that, inside her mind, is in charge of deciding her own career.

This unbalanced bond among Kambili and Eugene is something already established in her life, and it is so thanks to Eugene, the one in control of perpetuating his powerful and repressing role.

“... the relationship established by two consciousnesses involves a conflict. The outcome of these two opposed modes of consciousness is a lordship-and-bondage relationship in which one consciousness imposes its self-certainty upon the other and considers it as an object of desire that only exists to fulfill the master consciousness' wishes. The bondsman thus loses his independence, being reduced by the lord to a servile consciousness. The bondsman then becomes defined by the lord and, in his stance as an object of desire, internalizes the lord's definition of himself.” Moreina-Slepoy, G. (2022)

Bearing in mind what Moreina-Slepoy states in connection to this particular lordship and bondage relationship we can thoroughly analyze Kambili and Eugene bond. There is a continual conflict inside this relationship, as it is stated above; besides, its outcome is a lordship and bondage link. A relation in which one side of the balance is totally oppressed and controlled, whereas the other one seems to have free will of taking any action over the subordinated and controlled one. It is a colonizer and colonized relationship in which the colonized not only feels underestimated and inferior but also it feels obliged to continually fulfill the colonizer's orders, wishes and requests.

Actually, taking into account what the author explains, we can see that not only Eugene considers Kambili an object whose only function is to see him as a master and fulfill his consciousness' wishes, but also Kambili is the one that positions herself inside that role of unquestionable obedience. In some way, Kambili can be seen as fixed in only one role in her life and that role is Eugene's subject.

Kambili is tied to a bondage life towards his father's orders and rules and we can observe this because inside the novel there is almost no room for issues or aspects outside Eugene's mandate. The servitude spirit that Kambili has built throughout all these years is now what allows Eugene to govern over her in the way he does. Kambili is defined by his master, his father, the one in charge of controlling every tiny aspect in her life, from the moment she gets up to the moment she goes to bed at night. Every time and schedule is managed by this man,

who proclaims that everything he does is done in order to protect them and show them how to live in a life free of sins and pagans. The ambivalence of Eugene's words and actions is a clear sign that he is fixed inside that "colonizer box" and thus he is exploiting his children by treating them as subjects; which is actually a frequent characteristic of this father. Eugene is used to manipulating people in order to make them into his slaves, this is what happens with people inside his village, at work, at church, and obviously he repeats this pattern inside home as well. He is so blind by money, manners and power that cannot see that these people are his family and not workers or followers.

There is an occasion for Christmas Eve in which Eugene's family goes to Abba, a small town in Nigeria to do charity and give out food for the families that do not have something to share on that day. In this extract we can identify how Eugene's consciousness works. He decides to show a generous and warm-hearted attitude towards the villagers and religious followers he has there by giving them food, money and clothes among other stuff. However, in exchange, these people will serve and obey them because they know what he is capable of and they are afraid but attached to him because of the goods and services he provides. That is the strategy Eugene uses to take advantage of people and gain control over them.

Our house still took my breath away, the four-story white majesty of it, with the spurting fountain in front and the coconut trees flanking it on both sides and the orange trees dotting the front yard. Three little boys rushed into the compound to greet Papa. They had been chasing our cars down the dirt road.

"*Omelora!* Good afun, sah!" they chorused. They wore only shorts, and each one's belly button was the size of a small balloon.

"*Kedu nu?*" Papa gave them each ten naira from a wad of notes he pulled out of his hold-all. "Greet your parents, make sure you show them this money." ... [] ... we were always prepared to feed the whole village on Christmas, always prepared so that none of the people who came in would leave without eating and drinking to what Papa called a reasonable level of satisfaction. Papa's title was *omelora*, after all, The One Who Does for the Community. But it was not only Papa who received visitors; the villagers trooped to every big house with a big gate, and sometimes they took plastic bowls with firm covers. It was Christmas. (p.55-56)

It seems impossible not to see Eugene's hidden intention in doing all that charity on Christmas Eve. The fact that he gives money to those children in Abba and mentions them not to forget showing the money to their parents is a clear sign of manipulation and control. He knows that these people are in deep need of all goods and services and by providing them with a minimum portion of charity he has control of them.

Eugene gains territory, power and reputation over small towns by doing exactly the same, giving them money, clothes, food, medication or any other thing they will require him. He even has a title that proclaims he is a natural and divine giver, as he has that title and he does

help the community, in exchange the community develop a feeling of servitude and slavery due to the fact that they have nothing to offer him but that, their total and indisputable loyalty and respect towards his master.

In conclusion, we can say that the same strategy that this man uses with these people is the one he uses with Kambili. He has a mask that he has decided to show and that is the mask of a provider, a protector, a carer and a giver but beyond that is a hidden intention. The intention of controlling them all is behind those benevolent words and actions and actually this strategy works out well for Eugene, as he is in control of the villagers, the family and his workers as well. All of them being fixed inside the colonized place whereas Eugene is seen and treated as a master. Another occasion in which this character expresses this strategy to gain control, respect and prestige inside the community is this one:

After mass, we accompanied Papa to a fund-raising in the multipurpose hall next to the church building. It was for the priest's new house. An usher with a scarf tied tight across her forehead passes out pamphlets with pictures of the priest's old house, uncertain arrows pointing at where the roof leaked, where termites had eaten up the door frames. Papa wrote a check and handed it to the usher, telling her he did not want to make a speech. When the M.C. announced the amount, the priest got up and started to dance, jerking his behind this way and that, and the crowd rose up and cheered so loudly it was like the rumblings of thunder at the end of rainy season.

"Let's go," Papa said, when the M.C. finally moved on to announce a new donation. He led the way out of the hall, smiling and waving at the many hands that reached out to grasp his white tunic as if touching him would heal them of an illness. (p.90-91)

Eugene's attitude exposes his inside desire of calling the attention of people when doing any charity, he does not do this just to benefit the ones in need but to make them see that he is a benevolent and kind man.

His actions have the intention of being recognized and admired by people, he wants them to praise him because in that way he feels a powerful, aristocratic master. Before giving the check out, he says to the usher he is not going to give a speech, making the usher understand this is a huge donation because he does not want the opportunity of being recognized to be lost. Besides, when the turn of another big donation comes and the M.C. is about to mention it, he decides to leave as there is nothing else of his interest there. In consequence, when he leaves, he receives what he yearns for, the admiration and appreciation of the people, they gather there to at least touch his tunic, "as if touching him would heal them of an illness." the quote mentions. So, when you puncture this image in your mind, it is like a saint and his followers trying to be in touch with his divinity and purity and this is exactly the picture and the feeling Eugene wants to create, he wants to be a saint, a master, a colonizer and the rest are just subjects, followers, believers or colonized people. Eugene's actions and attitudes finally end up defining and positioning these people, workers and family as servitude

and slaves. Eugene is the one in charge of fixing this community surrounding him, and in this job, he succeeds.

The strong characteristic of fixity inside these characters is undeniable, there are too many factors in and out of them that lead them to their current position in life. Even though this fixation affects them and controls their attitudes and behaviors, there still exists the possibility for them to escape and break free from their master. The notion of fixity works at huge levels in “Purple Hibiscus”, but characters struggle to deconstruct that idea inside them, so as to become new human beings. Those struggles are the ones from which we can obtain enough information to understand how a character can move away from being a fixed slave to a free human.

‘Persons’ and ‘events’ exist only as a state of process, in a world of becoming which escapes fixity of bias or episteme, and which is emphatically not preliminary to the re-establishment of any fixed system. Destructive binaries are impossible to sustain, character escapes fixity both within and between texts, even the life and death of characters are not absolutes, and no text is ever finally written. Each new text, whether novel or commentary, both builds upon its predecessor and by a series of ‘paradoxical juxtapositions’ deconstructs the earlier work by recasting and re-distributing its elements. Ashcroft, B. Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (1989, p.152)

What these scholars mention is of incredible value for our examples to be analyzed. The postulation that it is impossible to maintain a fixed character is the one that we need to identify in Kambili and Jaja’s conduct. These authors state that not only people but also events are in constant evolution and progress. Life is a constant process of evolving from one stage to another one and as a conclusion, even though colonizers tried to impose on colonized their strategies to keep them fixed and trained; it is impossible to maintain that for a long period of time. After all, it is our nature to change, to mutate and to transform. It is difficult to consider a human being as a finished, complete and perfect masterpiece, we are always open to embrace new changes; actually, we need them to obtain better versions of ourselves and to encourage society to improve. Luckily, Jaja and Kambili get to discover this feeling of changing and the desperation to embrace a new lifestyle and thus, they start their journey into their liberation from the fixity Eugene causes.

This is a story of two teens who bear mistreatment and violence from their paternal figure, the figure that is supposed to protect them. This dad does not only expose them to horrible, traumatic and unforgivable moments but he also claims he is doing that for their own sake. The manipulation in his hands goes beyond anything, giving us the idea that he is completely pathologic. But there is a major moment in the story that helps this powerless and unhappy family to see the light, to understand things can be different. That moment is the one when they go to Nsukka and confront a distinct reality. That moment allows them to discover the idea that fixity can be battled, that they can fight against the life they do not want to live

anymore, that there is a second chance to rewrite their destiny, that they are not fixed and finished humans. And, sometimes what is different scares us, but in the end, it is exactly what we need in order to move away from the place we have always been; what is different is a booster for us to embrace evolution and transformation and destroy that fixity inside us.

In the following extract, Kambili becomes aware of the fact that Nsukka changed everything for the best.

“Will you replace the figurines?” I asked. I could smell the chalky deodorant under their arms. Her brown face, flawless but for the recent jagged scar on her forehead, was expressionless.

“*Kpa*,” she said. “I will not replace them.”

Maybe Mama had realized that she would not need the figurines anymore; that when Papa threw the missal at Jaja, it was not just the figurines that came tumbling down, it was everything. I was only now realizing it, only just letting myself think about it.

I lay in bed after Mama left and let my mind rake through the past, through the years when Jaja and Mama and I spoke more with our spirits than with our lips. Until Nsukka. Nsukka started it all; Aunty Ifeoma’s little garden next to the verandah of her flat in Nsukka began to lift the silence. Jaja’s defiance seemed to me now like Aunty Ifeoma’s experimental purple hibiscus: rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom from the one the crowds waving green leaves chanted at Government Square after the coup. A freedom to be, to do. (p.15-16)

In real life, the purple hibiscus does not exist but in the novel Chimamanda decides to mention them as a strong representation of freedom and rebirth, a completely new flower that finally gets to blossom after all adversity and that is what Kambili and Jaja are, they are the purple hibiscus inside this novel. In this extract, Kambili mentions that Nsukka is the turning point of the story, a breaking point from which nothing will be the same again. She says that Aunty Ifeoma’s garden arrives into their lives to break the silence, and that is because inside that garden there are beautiful and notable purple hibiscuses.

When the teen recalls her past, she mentions that they tend to speak with their spirits, that means they do not express themselves at all. They know they cannot do it freely, so in order to avoid problems or punishments they prefer to keep their feelings, emotions and thoughts for their own, they maintain those inside them and they decide to speak with their spirits, using their eyes and establishing eye contact to express themselves. However, after Nsukka breaks the silence, they start to speak with their lips and Jaja develops a level of defiance towards their master, Eugene, which makes Kambili compare that new behavior in Jaja with the new, savage and free purple hibiscus inside Ifeoma’s garden. Both share characteristics, they are a rare kind of freedom but at the end Kambili mentions that freedom is the one to be and to do. The freedom that will provide them a way out from those fixed roles inside Eugene’s world, a freedom that gives them tools to speak up and stand up for what they want to be and do. A freedom that will teach them how to make their way to a new lifestyle in which they can be,

do and say whatever they want to. They have the chance to escape from that fixed position of bondsman and this is all thanks to Nsukka, a different place that at the very beginning causes panic but that at the end was the exit that shows them an optional path to walk.

The purple hibiscus is an expression of a new way of life, something that before was totally impossible and unexpected but now it is something you are really thankful for. And that is exactly what happens with Kambili and Jaja's new version, it was something that we never expect to happen but once they change there is nothing better than what those changes can bring them. So, we can say that this purple hibiscus representation of freedom and rebirth is also a sign of the incompleteness of life. The chance of people to evolve and transform is always present as well as for new ways of life to appear, such as the purple hibiscus. Thanks to this rare flower, this distinct place and this strange, crazy family, Kambili and Jaja can be aware of the fact that their fixity is not absolute. They can see that it is impossible to maintain such a fixation through the passing of time and that the possibility to escape from that state is easier than they consider.

They know that they are human beings in progress and they take that responsibility on their hands, they are responsible for their lifestyle now, Eugene is no longer their master, they can finally say they find the way to combat their fixed roles and identities.

In the exact moment in which Jaja and Kambili see this significant flower for the first time, Jaja immediately realizes that it is something new, genuine and authentic.

Aunty Ifeoma stopped to pluck at some browned leaves in the garden as we walked to the car, muttering that the harmattan was killing her plants.

Amaka and Obiora groaned and said, "Not the garden now, Mom."

"That's a hibiscus, isn't it, Aunty?" Jaja asked, staring at a plant close to the barbed wire fencing. "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. My good friend Phillipa is a lecturer in botany. She did a lot of experimental work while she was here. Look, here's white ixora, but it doesn't bloom as fully as the red." (p.128)

Aunty Ifeoma mentions that for this flower to bloom, she needs the help and hard work of her friend Phillipa. She knows about botany, and in the same way, it takes Jaja and Kambili quite a lot of work and struggling in order to change their mindset and be able to see things from a different perspective. In the end we know they struggle hard in order to get to bloom as rare and free as the purple hibiscus. Even though the key concept undergoing this analysis is fixity, it is absurd not to mention a quite illuminating idea that will provide us valuable insight regarding the characters' struggles in this novel.

Inside postcolonialism, there is a concept called third place, which is intimately connected to hybridity. Bhabha's concept of hybridity is more connected to the idea of a never-ending

process of transformation, negotiation and evolution between colonizer and colonized cultures than to the idea of a mere mixture of two or more cultures. (Bhabha, 1994, p.36)

Therefore, and consequently, this third place is a metaphorical place, impossible to locate, that allows people to create new meaning and symbols of cultures. This place ensures that there is no primordial unity or fixity for culture and it provides opportunities to appropriate, translate and re-read cultural signs. (Bhabha, 1994, p.37)

Thus, we can argue that this third-place fights against fixity and the previous fixed cultural ideas or signs installed by the colonial forces who actually want to delimit colonized actions and thoughts. It is possible to find ambivalence and continuous negotiation inside the cultural borders of this concept, but that is useful for identities to feed and grow and give birth to hybridization as a wonderful phenomenon.

Going back to our analysis, we consider that the characters in *Purple Hibiscus*, such as Kambili and Jaja, are located throughout the novel inside this third place. It is undeniable to state that these two teens have experienced a long journey inside this new place, trying to rebuild their identities and fighting against their fixity as well. There is no better space for them to be placed than this one described by Bhabha. A place that is a mode of articulation which can be described as something productive and not a merely reflective space, this is a space that proposes new opportunities for fixities to be subverted and identities to be rewritten. Possibly, without this idea, it would have been even harder for them to survive Eugene's impositions and terms and escape from that horrendous reality to be able to construct a new one.

Conclusion

This analysis intends to answer the following research question: “In which ways are the concepts of fixity and identity portrayed in the novel *Purple Hibiscus*?”. Our first hypothesis sustains:

“There are passages in the novel *Purple Hibiscus* that lead us to identify how characters struggle with their identities.” and we can distinctly recognize that it has been proved since the characters, Jaja and Kambili, experience serious and several encounters in which they have to rethink who they really are and who they really want to be. This is so due to the fact that they find themselves involved in several issues that impulse them to resignify their identities in order to survive, they change in order to become stronger people and be able to defy the rules that seem irrational for them.

Different scenes in the novel offer us the opportunity to observe the struggles they suffer and the way in which their identities have been manipulated and modeled according to their father’s will. The level in which these two teenagers fight against Eugene’s desires in order to build their own new identity is openly seen and easily identified throughout the chapters. From the very moment they step into Ifeoma’s house, they decipher there is more than only one single way of living life and it does not have to be a painful and submissive one, on the contrary, they realize they want to embrace a life full of enjoyment and laughter.

“Speaking with our spirits” and “The pieces of God” are two of the chapters that we analyze to prove this hypothesis. As a result, after the analysis done in chapter 3, we can assume that the concept of identity is portrayed in the novel through different passages and moments that guide us to recognize how characters need to rebuild their identities. When they realize that the conflicts they experience at home are not the ones other people suffer in their everyday life, they get a starting point, a trigger that encourages them to leave their comfort zone and take the necessary risks to change and improve.

On the one hand, Jaja is willing to embrace new traditions and habits in order to change and create a new identity, a different and totally opposed to the one built and imposed by his father, Eugene.

Kambili, on the other hand, struggles harder than Jaja to change and step out from the rules established at home. Besides, the feeling of guilt she has prevents her changes from taking place. However, she is able to change for the better and to design a new mindset so that she is capable of confronting life in a different way and thus, changing what she considers is not healthy in her life.

Our second hypothesis proposes:

“Eugene’s character reflects how the concept of fixity works”. It can be said that Eugene’s character is a really controversial and tricky one and takes time to understand what really goes on in his mind. However, after our analysis, we got to the conclusion that the concept of fixity is openly represented by Eugene in *The Purple Hibiscus*. He is not only a man that

denies his past identity, traditions and beliefs, but he is also a man that pretends to show a completely opposite version.

He creates a persona to interact with the rest of the world. The power, manipulation, violence and oppression he commits over the people who surround him, give him the possibility to be fixed in the place he desires. He does not want to move from that place, it is a safe one in which he can follow all the stereotypes of a white, English and aristocratic man. In fact, that is what he yearns for, to be fixed inside an identity that portrays the figure of a powerful, white English man. There is no other place in which he wants to be and no other labels in which he wants to be put.

People around Eugene treat him the way he pretends and as soon as something antagonistic to the idea of being a white educated man appears, he feels completely threatened and experiences strong emotions such as wrath. The fact that he rejects his pagan father, for example, shows us that he is such a fixed character that he cannot even have contact with a person that does not share the same lifestyle as him.

He has an extremely fixed role in life and his purpose in connection to his family is to transmit, actually to impose, that fixed identity to them. The moment in which a member of his family attempts to judge or defy the way in which he lives and his static identity, a feeling of violent anger arises inside him, and he cannot control that. These emotions can be identified the moment in which he punishes their kids and wife in the most painful and cruel way without even caring about killing them.

He is afraid of realizing that he is not what he professes to be. So, by identifying these issues connected to Eugene, it is undeniable to state that the analysis leads us to understand how the concept of fixity works inside a character. Eugene proposes excellent and rich examples for us to analyze in different moments and scenes and there is no doubt that he is totally affected by fixity.

Limitations

Even though our hypotheses are proved correct, there are some limitations regarding this analysis. Postcolonial theory is such a wide perspective and it is full of rich concepts to analyze and bring into discussion. In this research we concentrated on fixity and identity, however, there are some others which deserve to be analyzed, such as: ambivalence, hybridity, third place and mimicry.

Another limitation we find and need to mention, is the fact that we can only focus on certain chapters in *The Purple Hibiscus*. From beginning to end, the novel offers the opportunity to carry out a deep analysis regarding any of the postcolonial concepts, and we are sure there are more examples and excerpts to consider in order to analyze fixity and identity concepts.

Any of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's works deal with controversial issues that arise interest such as topics for further research.

As we need to narrow down the scope, we select Chimamanda's novel to analyze. Yet, she is not the only post colonialist author to take into account for future analysis. There are more that we cannot include in this analysis but that are great authors who offer considerable works to enlarge this research. Some of them are: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, V.S. Naipaul, and Chinua Achebe, among others.

Implications

This research pretends to be a contribution inside the academic field, as it is considered one that proposes the reflection and analysis of postcolonial texts and representative authors such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It not only fosters students to debate about postcolonial ideas but also to refresh and build an opinion regarding the impact that this approach provides to literature. We should not see the history of colonies and colonization as something isolated, lost and disconnected from current times, but as something that is still present nowadays and would be useful to interpret works, reality and life from a different perspective.

We consider it would offer substantial opportunities, for students at university or at teaching training colleges, to embrace new concepts and enlarge their knowledge in order to be able to transmit, share and work with their future students the importance of being aware of concepts such as colonizer, colonized, stereotypes and identity, among others.

So, this study pretends not only to share our fascination for Postcolonial productions and its authors but also to encourage and inspire teachers of English to be curious, and investigate in order to "read beyond the lines".

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