MOTHERHOOD AND SOCIALIZATION IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS,* JAMAICA KINCAID'S *LUCY* AND TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE*

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other peoples' work has been used, acknowledgments have been made.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Mrs Alice Mtenje, my first teacher and the woman who still holds my hand as I walk through the path of womanhood. And to my “othermothers” who have always walked with me.

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ABSTRACT

The African Diaspora was born as a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade which saw millions of people of African origin displaced and dispossessed of their culture. Working in plantations under dehumanizing conditions, black people were forced to adapt to the New World and to adopt the values of the dominant society However, they were able to retain some aspects of their African culture.

This study examines the portrayal of African and Diasporic motherhood through a comparative analysis of mother-daughter relationships in three novels by African and Diasporic writers. In particular, the study is an examination of how women socialize their daughters into their cultural environments. The novels under study are Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus (2003), Jamaica Kincaid's Lucy (1990) and Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye (1970). The study argues that although black women in Africa and in the Diaspora were physically and culturally separated by the Middle Passage, and the latter group of women subjected to the horrors of slavery and imposition of the culture of the oppressor, the three authors portray that there are still similarities in black women's ways of mothering. Among others, these similarities include the roles played by mothers in passing on tradition as well as inculcating societal values to their daughters. These issues are analysed in the second chapter of this thesis.

In addition, the study argues that race also plays a role in socialization. Women of the black Diaspora exist in an environment which often has contempt for their skin colour and hence subjects them to racial prejudices. Black mothers have to prepare their daughters to face and resist such hostilities. Furthermore, African mothers and daughters, though not directly facing racism, experience the effects of colonialism which was imposed on them. These aspects are explored throughout the thesis.

Both groups of women have to contend with shaping their daughters` identities as females in a male-dominated society - a society which marginalizes them on the basis of their sex. The study further argues that the three authors also portray that gender has an influence on the way black mothers socialize their daughters and this aspect is examined in chapters three and four. Adichie, Kincaid and Morrison all portray some of the mothers as conforming to the patriarchal dictates by accepting their "inferiority" to men and consequently socialize their daughters to do the same.

Black Feminism has been employed as the main theoretical framework of the study to account for the experiences encountered by black women in the face of racism, sexism and classicism. Postcolonial theory has also been adopted as a lens through which to examine the historical and contemporary experiences of those women in the novels whose lives have been shaped by colonialism and its aftermath

CHAPTER ONE

MOTHERHOOD AND SOCIALIZATION: AN INTRODUCTION

This study sets out to examine the process of socialization and its implications for identity formation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* (1990) and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970). The term "socialization" is understood as "the process by which society's values and norms, including those pertaining to gender, are taught and learned."[1] According to Anthony Giddens it is through socialization that the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture in which he or she was born. As such, the study considers socialization as a critical means by which societies formulate and preserve their cultures and identities. It also looks at the manifestation of negative socialization through the passing on of societal values which disempower the agents as well as the recipients.

This study argues that although black women in Africa and in the Diaspora were physically and culturally separated by the Middle Passage and the latter group of women subjected to the horrors of slavery and imposition of the culture of the oppressor, the three authors portray that there are still survivals of the African way of "mothering" in the Diaspora. This is evident in the similarities of the roles played by mothers in passing on tradition as well as inculcating societal values in their daughters.

[1] Claire M. Renzetti and Daniel J. Curran, *Women, Men and Society: the Sociology of Gender,* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1989,p. 61.

The study further argues that race also plays a role in socialization. Women of the black Diaspora exist in an environment which often displays contempt for their skin colour and hence subjects them to racial prejudices. Black mothers, therefore, have to prepare their daughters to face such hostilities. On the other hand, African mothers and daughters, though not directly experiencing racism, face the effects of colonialism which was imposed on them. Furthermore, both groups of women have to contend with shaping their daughters' identities as females in male-dominated societies which marginalize them on the basis of their sex. This also has an influence on the way black mothers socialize their daughters.

According to Giddens there are several agents of socialization. Family is one of them and it is through family members, in particular mothers, that children learn particular values and morals of society in order for them to fit in. School and peers are also agents of socialization as it is also from them that human beings of any age learn values and certain codes of conduct.[2]

Adrienne Rich defines motherhood in two ways. Firstly, as "the *potential* relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the *institution*, which aims at ensuring that that potential—and all women—shall remain under male control."[3] Following the above distinction, motherhood studies may be

[2] Anthony Giddens, *Sociology,* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), p. 288.

[3] Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* qtd in Andrea O'Reilly (ed.), Twenty-first Century Motherhood: Experience, Identity, Policy, Agency cited @ http://cup.columbia.edu/book/978-0-231-14966-2/twentyfirst-century-motherhood/excerpt. Accessed on 26th April, 2012.

divided into three interrelated themes or categories of inquiry: motherhood as institution, motherhood as experience, and motherhood as identity or subjectivity. Within motherhood studies, the term motherhood is used to signify the patriarchal institution of motherhood, while mothering refers to women's lived experiences of childrearing as they both conform to and/or resist the patriarchal institution of motherhood and its oppressive ideology.[4] According to Andrea O'Reilly, mothering also refers to the agency of women in their role as mothers and is therefore regarded as having the potential for empowerment. This study examines mothering as an experience of childrearing and also as agency in their role as they socialize their daughters.

This thesis specifically analyses and compares mother-daughter relationships as portrayed in the three novels. It examines the similarities between the way African mothers socialize their daughters in *Purple Hibiscus* and how the black woman of the Diaspora does the same in *Lucy* and *The Bluest Eye*. The study interrogates mothering across the physical (or geographical) and cultural divide that has resulted from slavery. The study also considers how memory along with racial and gender consciousness influence the socialization process.

The physical and cultural divide of people of African origin gave rise to the formation of the black Diaspora. This divide, which was a result of slavery, can be traced

[4] Ibid.

back to the discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus in 1492.[5] Basing their arguments for the enslavement of black people on mythical conceptions of the African personality, Europeans looked to Africa for cheap labour to work under the scorching sun of the West Indies, the unfamiliar conditions of North America, and other parts of South America[6]. Black people endured the Middle Passage, that is, "the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean from Africa to the Americas aboard a slave-ship from 1540 to 1807."[7] They landed in the Americas only to be further dehumanized as they worked in plantations. The trauma of the Middle Passage has come to represent the cultural dispossession of the black Diaspora. However, scholars such as Edward Kamau Brathwaite argue that African culture was not entirely destroyed during this horrific voyage. "Not only did African culture cross and survive the traumatizing Middle Passage; it survived the New World by creatively adapting to the new environment."[8] Brathwaite argues that in the Caribbean and the Americas one can notice types of foods

[5] Femi Abodunrin, *Blackness: Culture, Ideology and Discourse* 2nd Edition, (Ibadan: Dokun Publishing House, 2008), p.3.

[6] Ibid.

[7] A. M. Macdonald,(ed) *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*, (Edinburgh: W&R Chambers Ltd, 1972), p.829. The first group of Africans were, however, brought to North America as indentured labourers who would become free if they worked satisfactorily for a stipulated number of years. But this system changed with the growing plantation economy of Virginia. See Henry Louis Gates Jr, etal (eds.), *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, New York: W.W. Norton &Company Inc, 1997, p.130.

[8] Leota S. Lawrence, "Women in Caribbean Literature: The African Presence", in *Phylon,(1960), Vol.44, No.1, (1st Qtr, 1983),* p.2.

and religions that can be traced back to Africa as evidence that African culture crossed the Atlantic.

Adding to the argument that African culture survived the Middle Passage, Gay Wilentz asserts that "whenever peoples with shared values, cultural traditions, and racial/ethnic identity are dispersed into hostile environments, there emerges simultaneously a culture which retains many of the residual traditions while attempting to cope with the alien-and most often dominant-society around them."[9] In order to raise their children in this hostile environment, slave mothers, therefore, had to remember their African foremothers' ways of mothering and they later passed it on to their offspring. As Venetria K. Patton explains, slave women "drew upon the practices of traditional matrifocal African societies and the labour demands of slave owners to reconstruct gender roles so that African-American women and Caribbean women were considered mothers, and thus women."[10] In other words, women in the black Diaspora also relied on cultural memory to raise their children. According to Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, cultural memory is "an 'act of transfer', an act in the present by which individuals and groups constitute their identities by recalling a shared past on the basis of common, and therefore often contested, norms, conventions, and practices."[11] These are actions which

[9]Gay Wilentz, "Toward a Diaspora Literature: Black Women Writers from Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States" in *College English*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Apr., 1992), p. 385.

[10] DoVeanna S. Fulton, A Review of Venetria K. Patton, "Women in Chains: The Legacy of Slavery in Black Women's Fiction" in *Legacy*, vol.17, no.2, 2000, p.231.

[11] Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith,, *Feminism and Cultural Memory: an Introduction,*cited at igrs.sas.ac.uk/cultural-memory/general-reading-list.html. Accessed on

demonstrate the cultural relationship between a group that was traumatically uprooted and the practices of the people of their place of origin.

Both the African-American and the Caribbean woman emerged from the atrocities of slavery as the dominant parent in single-headed households. This is peculiar to many black families in the Diaspora; one of the reasons can be traced back to the time of slavery:

> Because of the system of slavery in which the Negro male was systematically used as a stud and the Negro female used primarily for purposes of breeding or for the gratification of the white male, the only source of family continuity was through the female, the dependence of the child on its mother. This pattern, together with the continued post-slavery relegation of the Negro male to menial and subservient status, has made the female the dominant person in the Negro family[12].

Furthermore, the Caribbean woman is often perceived as "the mother and father of the race."[13] Afro-Caribbean families tend to have a *matrifocal* or *matricentric* structure.

[12] Kenneth B. Clark, "The Psychology of the Ghetto" in David M. Reimers, *Racism in the United States: An American Dilemma* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972) pp.81-2. Also see Emmanuel Mzomera Ngwira, *A Legacy of Slavery: The African American Family in Selected Novels by Toni Morrison,* Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Malawi, 2006, p.31.

[13] Leota S. Lawrence, *Op cit*, p.4.

Jacqueline Sharpe notes that, "To say that African Caribbean fathers and other men are fundamental to the socialization of children and to an understanding of African Caribbean family life is putting it mildly. That Caribbean men care for their family and provide for them economically has been demonstrated. . . however, their emotional availability and their social ties to children are unclear."[14] Within the Caribbean regional diversity of ethnicity, class, language and religion, there is an ideological unity of patriarchy, of female subordination and dependence. Yet there is a vibrant living tradition of female economic autonomy, of female headed households, and a family structure in which men are often marginal. So Caribbean gender relations are a double paradox: of patriarchy within a system of matrifocal and matrilocal families; and of domestic ideology co-existing with the economic independence of women.[15]

This pattern of matriarchy in the Afro-Caribbean family has been portrayed by some theorists, like Melville Herskovitz, as a cultural retention from Africa whereby in polygamous West African families, the mother is the visible head of the household since the man has many wives and children and each of the wives has to take turns in catering to him. Because each woman has her own compound where she lives with her children and the husband seldom spends time with the children, the children tend to get closer to their mother. This preponderance of the matriarchal family in the New World is, therefore, regarded as a result of a synthesis of an African cultural survival and the realities of slavery in the area.[16]

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[14] Jacqueline Sharpe cited @ http://family.jrank.org/pages/203/Caribbean-Families-Family-Structure.html. Also see Ken Lipenga Jr, *Divided to the Vein, United in Difference: Images of Women in the Caribbean Novel,* Unpublished MA thesis, University of Malawi, 2008, p.5.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Leota S. Lawrence, *Op cit,* p.4.

In most black communities in the Diaspora, motherhood is perceived as a source of empowerment for women and a necessity for the continuation of the community as opposed to the dominant group's view of motherhood as oppressive. Bell Hooks says:

> During the early stages of contemporary women's liberation feminist analysis of motherhood reflected the race and class bias of participants. Some white, middle-class, college-educated women argued that motherhood was the locus of women's oppression. Had black women voiced their views on motherhood, it would not have been named as a serious obstacle to our freedom as women. Racism, availability of jobs, lack of skills or education,…would have been at the top of our list- but not motherhood.[17]

The focus of black motherhood, in both practice and thought, is to preserve, protect, and more generally to empower black children to resist racist practices that seek to harm them and grow into adulthood whole and complete. Empowerment, according to Canadian theorists, Wanda Thomas Bernard and Candace Bernard, is "naming, analyzing and challenging oppression on an individual, collective and/or structural level. Empowerment, which occurs from the development of a critical consciousness, is gaining

[17] Bell Hooks qtd in Andrea O'Reilly, *A Politics of the Heart Toni Morrison* cited @www.andreaoreilly.org/morrisonreviewValdes.pdf, p.3. Accessed on 15 March 2009.

control, exercising choices and engaging in collective social action."[18] To fulfill the task of empowering children, mothers must hold power in African American societies and likewise mothering must be valued and supported. In turn, African American culture understanding the importance of mothering for individual and cultural well-being and empowerment, gives power to mothers and prominence to the work of empowering. Therefore, the African American tradition of motherhood centers upon the recognition that mothering, with its concern for the physical and psychological well-being and empowerment of black children, has cultural and political import, value and prominence and that motherhood, as a consequence, is a site of power for black women.[19]

Andrea O'Reilly further explains that the prosperity of the black community depends on the existence of a "motherline" through which black mothers can successfully transfer principles that are distinctively black. This term is borrowed from Naomi Lowinsky and it refers to "knowledge of an ancestral heritage that also emphasizes on the need for the continual passage of traditional black values from one generation to the next."[20]

Motherhood in African societies has a central importance. John S. Mbiti argues that motherhood is central to African philosophy and spirituality. Motherhood is a joyful and privileged state for the woman because in pregnancy, the woman is said to "glow and

[18]Andrea O' Reilly, Op.cit cited www.andreaoreilly.org/morrisonreviewValdes.pdf Accessed on 15 March 2009.

[19] Ibid, p.6.

[20] Ibid.

shine" and she receives special treatment especially from her husband and her mother-in-law.[21] No matter the skills, the desires and the talents of a woman, a woman's primary function in Africa is mostly perceived to be that of motherhood. Motherhood in Africa is seen as a God-given role and for this reason it is sacred. "Every woman is encouraged to marry and get children in order to express her womanhood to the full. The basis of marriage among Africans implies the transfer of a woman's fertility to the husband's family group."[22] Motherhood is so critical in most traditional societies in Africa that there is no worse misfortune for a woman than being childless. A barren woman is seen as incomplete, she is what Mbiti calls the "dead end of human life, not only for genealogical level but also for herself." Feminists in Africa, while conceding that motherhood may at times operate in an oppressive manner, have tried to read other meanings to motherhood, meanings that are empowering for women. Within these meanings, they agree that giving birth bestows a certain status on women –even mystical powers. For example, among the Yoruba people, motherhood is said to confer privileges that give credence to the very foundations of society and women's presumed roles in it and thus symbolize fertility, fecundity, and fruitfulness.[23] The Yoruba saying, "Iya ni wura, baba ni jigi" ("mother is gold, father is a mirror") goes a long way in showing the importance of motherhood in African society.

According to Ada Mere, it is women, as mothers, who most often fulfill the role of teacher and "teller of tales" with regard to oral transmission of customs and values from

[21] Remi Akujobi, "Motherhood in African Literature and Culture" http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol13/iss2/2, p.2. Accessed on 26th April, 2012.

[22] Ibid, p.3.
[23] Ibid.

one African family's generation to the next.[24] She observes that "women are the most primary and constant agents of child socialization. Furthermore, women, as agents of this education, are the mainstay of the oral tradition."[25] Mere's comment specifically refers to African societies. Nancy Tanner calls this a "matrifocal kinship system": "one in which the role of the mother is central in terms of cultural values . . . and affective ties."[26] Filomena Steady reinforces this view as she observes that "the woman . . . represents the ultimate value in [African] life, namely the continuation of the group."[27] Her role in continuing the group is not only cultural but physical as well. Carole Boyce Davies adds that "in many African societies, motherhood defines womanhood." [28] The role of mother not only brackets in the notion of what it is to be a woman, but dialectically branches out into a community role, with its strengths and limitations. It is important to note that the term "mother" in African communities is often expanded beyond the biological mother to co-mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and older sisters.[29] All these people are responsible for the socialization of children as emphasized by an Igbo proverb that says "the rearing of a child is not a job for one person nor is a child a child for only one person."[30]

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[24] Gay Wilentz, *Op cit*, p.386.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Filomena Chioma Steady (ed), *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, (Boston: Schenkman, 1981), p.32.

[28] Carole Boyce Davies cited in Gay Wilentz, *Op cit*, p.7

[29] Ibid.

[30]Kamene Okonjo,. "The Place of Decision-Making in the Rural Igbo Family." Unpublished paper, University of Nigeria, 1984 cited in Gay Wilentz *Op cit*, p.22.

Apart from memory or heritage, another factor that influences socialization is race. For centuries, the terms black and slave were synonymous and even after the abolishment of slavery, black skin was still abhorred. In an environment that is dominated by Whites and hostile to black people, black women in the Diaspora have to prepare their daughters for what they will face when they set out on their own. Janice Hale-Benson observes that "one of the challenges black families must face in socializing their children is to understand and assist their children to function within their peer group. In addition, black parents must also provide them with the skills and abilities they will need to succeed in the outside society."[31] Black women, therefore, have to "armour" or equip their daughters with a mechanism to survive in a racist environment. Gender also becomes a factor that influences socialization of black daughters by their mothers. Their being female automatically puts them in a vulnerable position since they are seen as inferior to men. Hale-Benson further notes that black girls and black boys are socialized differently. She argues that black boys are taught to be more macho and to move their bodies distinctively. On the other hand, black girls are socialized into a very strong motherhood orientation, although this does not preclude the general expectation that they will work outside the home.[32]

At this point, the chapter will now focus on the summary of debates on the three texts and how these debates can be related to the theme of socialization.

[31] Janice Hale-Benson qtd in Claire M. Renzetti and Daniel J. Curran, *Op cit*, p.72.

[32] Ibid.

Morrison's understanding of herself as a writer is summarized by the perception that, "first of all I must trust my own recollections. I must also depend on the recollections of others."[33] To paraphrase Kadiatu Kanneh, this practice of depending on the recollections of others is reminiscent of the way in which autobiographical slave narratives rewrite memory as a site for imagining the relationship between origins and identity. In other words, these narratives interrogate how their ancestral roots contribute to their identity. Andrea O'Reilly has also examined motherhood in Toni Morrison's entire body of work. Reading Morrison as a "maternal theorist", O'Reilly demonstrates that Morrison's beliefs about "motherwork" and "motherlove" are fundamental in understanding her perspective about black womanhood.[34] In other words, Morrison portrays her women as facing the challenge of being the best mothers possible both in and outside the home in the face of sexism and racism. According to O'Reilly, the challenge for Morrison's mothers is not how to combine motherhood and work, but rather how to best provide the motherwork (being a working mother who is there for her children), both in and outside the home, an aspect which is necessary for the empowerment of children. She further argues that despite their representations of an often violent, terribly fraught mother-child experience (infanticide in *Beloved* and *Sula*, severe neglect and outright abandonment in *The Bluest Eye*), Morrison's works demonstrate the crucial role of African American mothers as both "ship and safe harbor" to the survival of

[33] Kadiatu Kanneh, *African Identities: Race, Nation and Culture in Ethnography, Pan-Africanism and Black Literatures*, (London: Routledge, 1998), p.66.

[34] Andrea O'Reilly, *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart* cited @www.jstor.org/stable/40027040. Accessed on 15 March 2009.

the African American community as a whole.[35] However, O'Reilly studies Morrison's work as a whole but does not pay particular attention to the socialization process of mother/daughter relationships and the factors that influence the process in *The Bluest Eye*.

This thesis differs from these previous studies by examining closely the mother and daughter relationships in the novel. It analyzes how mothers socialize their daughters into their environment with regard to memory, race, and gender.

Katherine Suggs and Rey Chow argue that Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*, like its protagonist of the same name, "refuses to participate in now-familiar postcolonial plots of cultural reconnection and return."[36] According to Suggs and Chow, *Lucy* reads like "a pitched battle against the assumptions that shape many of the oppositional narratives of exile and displacement that have become central to both postcolonial and Caribbean literary canons."[37] The assumption is that the alienating experience of "exile" leads to the celebrations of "return." However, this assumption is not true in Lucy's case because even though she is nostalgic about home, she makes up her mind never to return to the stifling island that was once her home.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Katherine Suggs and Rey Chow, "I Would Rather Be Dead": Nostalgia and Narrative in Jamaica Kincaid's Lucy in *Narrative*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (May, 2002), p.157.

[37] Ibid.

Unlike the other studies on *Lucy*, this thesis critically investigates the influence of the mother-daughter dyad in shaping a female identity in a male-dominated society. Furthermore, in its exploration of the phenomenon of female bonding, the study further examines how Lucy moves past the confines of her culture by revising and rejecting the values inculcated into her by her mother. Unlike other women in the novel, Lucy asserts her independence by being in charge of her sexuality and her destiny in a journey of self discovery. Moreover, mothering in *Lucy* shares similar traits with that of African women: this gives evidence that some aspects of African culture survived in the Diaspora.

Most critics of Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* have focused on the political instability of post-independent Nigeria. They have argued that the chaos and the despotism portrayed by the character Eugene Achike, through his religious fanaticism, is a microcosm of the political situation of contemporary Nigeria. For example, Anthony C. Oha argues that the protagonist Kambili is a new voice crying out to be heard because of the torture and anguish in the impediments of governance and civilization around her. "One needs to observe… how this naïve character reveals in somewhat innocent 'silence', the painful realities in her society… she exposes several military oddities with the eyes of an innocent observer."[38]

As an African novel consisting of African people who have not experienced the trauma of dislocation, *Purple Hibiscus* will provide insight into the intricacies of African

[38] Anthony C. Oha, "Beyond the Odds of the Red Hibiscus: A Critical Reading of Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" *The Journal of Pan African Studies,* vol.1, no.9, August 2007, p.200.

motherhood and mothering. The two Diasporic novels will, therefore, be compared to *Purple Hibiscus*. The fact that *Purple Hibiscus* is set in West Africa and written by a West African is important to this study because most slaves were uprooted from Africa's west coast.[39]

In her introductory remarks to *Women of Colour: Mother- Daughter Relationships in 20th-Century Literature*, a collection of essays, Elizabeth Brown-Guillory also analyzes mother-daughter dyad experiences. The essays examine "the myth and reality surrounding mother-daughter relationships, underscoring the tensions and conflicts which naturally occur as mothers and daughters attempt to communicate with each other."[40] Brown-Guillory argues that research suggests that this mother-daughter duo experiences a love/hate relationship, often because the mother tries painstakingly to transmit knowledge about how to survive in a racist, sexist and classist world while the daughter rejects her mother's experiences as invalid in changing social times.[41] Brown-Guillory and Lucille P. Fultz observe that before a woman can be a good mother, she first has to be a good daughter, one who loves herself and who nurtures others and it is from there that daughters learn mothering skills from their mothers, biological or surrogate.[42] This concept of being a good daughter first before you become a good mother is validated by Marianne Hirsch:

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[39] Also see Gay Wiletnz, *Op cit*, on the preference of Anglophone West Africa.

[40] Elizabeth Brown- Guillory (ed.) *Women of Colour: Mother- Daughter Relationships in 20th-Century Literature*, (Austin: University of Texas, 1996), p.2.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid, p.3.

> There can be no systematic and theoretical study of women in patriarchal culture, there can be no theory of women's oppression, that does not take into account woman's *role as a mother of daughters and as a daughter of mothers*, that does not study female identity in relation to previous and subsequent generations of women, and that does not study that relationship in the wider context in which it takes place: the emotional, political, economic, and symbolic structures of family and society.[43]

It is mothers who shape the female child's identity, who teach her the gender roles assigned to her, and who pass on mothering skills that the female child will later use. The result of this socialization can lead to the younger women being good daughters of mothers or it can be quite a strenuous relationship whereby the younger women try to break free from their mothers' values.

Gay Wilentz examines how influential mothers are in the oral transmission of culture to their offspring. In particular, she observes how African tales such as the Anansi stories survived the Middle Passage. Wilentz sees African women, African American and Caribbean mothers as cultural and literary mothers who have passed on the traditions and customs of their heritage to generations of children. She further asserts: "Through the stories and morals encoded in the culture's orature, present-day writers have focused on

[43] Marianne Hirsch, "Mothers and Daughters" cited in Elizabeth Brown- Guillory (ed.), *Op cit*, p.3.

what was maintained of their cultures in spite of physical separation, outright persecution, and imposition of the dominant culture."[44]

While Wilentz's study focuses on black mothers passing on traditions to their children through storytelling and the continuation of this practice by present day writers, this study carefully examines the socialization of daughters by their mothers and some factors that influence the process. The study focuses on the commonalities of mothering shared by black women. It focuses on socialization which is influenced by the cultural bond that exists amongst black women. It also focuses on core factors of race and gender which impinge on the experiences of women by relegating them to the peripheral.

The commonality between African women and those in the Diaspora has also been echoed by Alice Walker in *The Colour Purple*:

> We are not white. We are not Europeans. We are black like the Africans themselves.... We and the Africans will be working for a common goal: the uplift of black people everywhere.

The quotation above serves as the premise behind Alice Walker's coinage of Womanism, a type of feminism which theorizes the experiences of black women which were excluded by mainstream feminism. There are various definitions of feminism. Maggie Humm defines feminism as a belief in sexual equality combined with a commitment to transform

[44] Gay Wilentz, *Op cit*, p.385.

society.[45] J.A. Cuddon further defines feminism as "an attempt to describe and interpret (or reinterpret) women's experiences as depicted in various kinds of literature."[46] Underlying this exclusion was "the assumption of the universality of women's subordination and its corollary, the possibility of a global sisterhood which could challenge patriarchal power and dominance."[47] Mainstream feminism assumed that sexism was the only factor which contributed to the oppression of all women. This exclusionary practice of other women's experiences, therefore, led to the rise of divergent views within mainstream feminism. These divergent views offered different explanations of women's subordination.

Black Feminist theory is one of such divergent views. As a theory, it is distinguished by its focus on the black female experience with writings detailing racial issues, classist issues and sexist issues. Bell Hooks argues that "Racism abounds in the writings of white feminists; reinforcing white supremacy and negating the possibility that women will bond politically across ethnic and racial boundaries."[48] To Black Feminist writers, racial and classist oppression are inseparable from sexist oppression. Many of them even portray racial and classist oppression as having precedence over sexist oppression since they believe that the emancipation of black women folk cannot be

[45] Maggie Humm, (ed). Feminisms : A Reader. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992, p.1.

[46] J.A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* 3rd edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, p.338.

[47] Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen , "Issues of Difference in Contemporary Caribbean Feminism" in *Feminist Review*, no.59, Summer 1998, p.75.

[48] hooks, bell. 'Black Feminism: Historical Perspective' in *Call and Response: The Riverside Anthology of African American Literary Tradition*. Liggings Hills et al. (eds). Boston: Hughton Miffling Company 1998.

achieved apart from the emancipation of the whole race. Unlike Feminism, which is mainly a separatist ideology, Black Feminism believes in partnership with their men folk. Barbara Smith further adds: "a Black feminist approach to literature that embodies the realization of the politics of sex as well as the politics of race and class are crucially interlocking factors in the works of black women writers."[49]

In the Caribbean, there is a brand of Black Feminism namely, Caribbean Feminism. This type of feminism not only deals with sexism but also key issues such as "structured race and class inequalities, their alleviation by state intervention, and the continuing existence of colonial economic and political forces which perpetuate these social structures."[50] African women, on the other hand, feeling excluded by mainstream feminism as well as Black Feminism, have also come up with a divergent theory namely African Womanism. Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi defines African Womanism as below:

> Womanism is black centred; it is accommodationist. It believes in the freedom and independence of women like feminism; unlike radical feminism, it wants meaningful union between black women and black

[49] Deborah E. McDowell, "New Directions For Black Feminist Criticism" in *Black American Literature Forum*, Vol.14, no.4, 1980, p.154.

[50] Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen, *Op cit*, p.79.

> men and black children and will see to it that men begin to change from their sexist stand.[51]

According to Ogunyemi, the need to define African Womanism is "necessitated by African women's inclusive, mother-centered ideology with its focus on caring – familial, communal, national and international."[52] To her, it is a viewpoint serving as the rallying-point of the women of African ancestry in their struggle to effectively assert their humanity in the face of the malevolent attitude of the menfolk towards their self-fulfilment in life.[53] However, it does not emasculate the self-pride of men; rather it lures them into accepting to live harmoniously with them by abandoning their self-perception as superior partners in the collective struggle of the race for a better society.[54]

This study adopts Black feminism as its main theoretical framework since both Caribbean and African Womanism's viewpoints are essentially forms or variants of Black feminism. However, where applicable, especially in the analysis of *Purple Hibiscus*, the African text, African Womanism is used interchangeably with Black Feminism. The theory, with reference to the different approaches, is relevant to the study

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[51] Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, *Africa Wo/Man Palava: The Nigerian Novel By Women*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.114.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Chidi T. Maduka, "Feminism, Womanism and Motherism in African Literary Discourse", in Chidi T. Maduka and Denis Ekpo, eds. *Compass: Essays in Honour of Willfried F. Feuser*. Port Harcourt, 2005 p.13.

[54] Ibid.

because the different approaches all encompass motherhood as an important component of black womanhood. This emphasis is shown from Caribbean feminist historiography, which draws from sociological concepts in relation to the African slave woman such as matrifocality, the African-American view of motherhood as an empowering experience "that is fundamental to the survival of the black and more especially, the African-American community"[55] and finally the African view that having children is a very important aspect of womanhood.

The study employs postcolonial theory as another theoretical perspective to cater for the analysis of the lives of the women whose lives have been shaped by colonialism and whose perception of blackness has been distorted by racist colonial discourse. Postcolonial theory formulates its critique around the social histories, cultural differences and political discrimination that are practiced and normalized by colonial and imperial machineries. According to Robert J. Young, postcolonial theory is concerned with the history of colonialism "only to the extent that history has determined the configurations and power structures of the present."[56] Postcolonial critique also recognizes anti-colonial movements as the source and inspiration of its politics. It can then be defined as a discourse which broadly marks the historical facts of decolonization and it allows people

[55] Andrea O'Reilly, *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart* cited@www.jstor.org/stable/40027040. Accessed on 15 March 2009.

[56] Robert J. Young qtd in Lazare S Rukundwa , "Justice and righteousness in the Matthean theology and its relevance to theBanyamulenge community: A postcolonial reading", Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pretoria, 2008, p. 174.

emerging from socio-political and economic domination to reclaim their sovereignty; it gives them a negotiating space for equity and identity.[57]

The two theoretical standpoints, Black Feminism and Postcolonial theory, are important to the study because they both look at power relations between different groups, between the colonizer and the colonized who is perceived as the "other" in the case of post-colonialism and between men and women where the latter is relegated to the position of the "other."

The next chapter explores and analyses mother-daughter relationships with regard to the environment in which the daughters are raised. It also examines and analyses how memory influences the process of socialization of black daughters as portrayed in the novels. Chapter three analyses the presentation of how black women as mothers or co-mothers initiate their daughters into womanhood in the three novels. Womanhood in this chapter refers to the biological definition and the socially-constructed definition of womanhood. The fourth chapter assesses the depiction of how patriarchy influences the socialization process by taking into consideration issues of race and gender. The final chapter summarizes the major arguments of this study, and suggests further directions of study.

[57]Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

MOTHERING AND CULTURAL MEMORY

Traditionally, motherhood has a central importance in the life of the African woman because it gives fulfillment and respect to women .[58] In the African Diaspora setting, it is of equal importance for most black women as motherhood is perceived to be a source of empowerment[59]. This perception is, however, contrary to a view in white feminism "that insists that mothering is a politically neutral endeavor taken up by women whose identities should be subsumed beneath the title of 'mother'."[60] However, in some cases, (in traditional African societies for example), motherhood has become a site for the oppression of women whereby women's humanity has been undermined due to their inability to have children or their inability to produce the desired sex of a child (male). Nevertheless, women are the most primary and constant agents of child socialization as they are the ones who usually provide care for the child from birth till adulthood.[61] This chapter examines the similarities in the ways of mothering between African women, who have an intact metaphysical cosmos and pre-colonial heritage which can be reconstructed and harmonized with postcolonial reality, and women of the black Diaspora, who have no intact culture from which to reconstruct their heritage.[62] Although black people's

[58] Syed Begum, "Against all Odds: African Womanhood in Postcolonial African Women Writing" in *Marang,* Vol.16, 2006, p. 114.

[59] Andrea O' Reilly, *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart* cited @www.jstor.org/stable/40027040. Accessed on 15 March 2009.

[60] Ibid

[61] Gay Wilentz, "Toward a Diaspora Literature: Black Women Writers from Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States" in *College English*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Apr., 1992), p. 387.

[62] Femi Abodunrin, *Blackness, Culture, Ideology and Discourse*, (Ibadan: Dokun Publishing House, 2008), p.xii.

perception in Africa was distorted by colonialism, there was still a world view with all its cultural beliefs intact and which could still be referred to and reconstructed. However, people of the African Diaspora, who had been uprooted and displaced to serve into a hostile world, had no intact culture to fall back on or reconstruct. They, therefore, had to rely on imagination and memory.

Purple Hibiscus is the narration of fifteen-year-old Kambili Achike who, together with her mother, Beatrice and brother, Jaja, is a victim of domestic abuse at the hands of Eugene, her religious fundamentalist father. In the novel, Adichie presents a very strong bonding between mothers and daughters. Kambili and Jaja are closer to their mother than to their father; their father rules the household with an iron fist. For example, when Jaja refuses to eat the holy Eucharist, which is a law in their house, Eugene flings his leather missal at him. He even forbids his children to eat at their "heathen" grandfather's house. Eugene's extreme beliefs in how the family should behave leave the members of the household fearful and only able to speak "with their spirits than with their lips" (p.16). By this, the narrator means that the members of the family cannot voice out their feelings. The household is afraid of disobeying the tyrannical Eugene, who single-handedly makes decisions in practically every sphere of his family's life, including what the family should pray for. However, it is Beatrice who spends most of the time with the children. Beatrice, with her quiet and gentle nature, is the one who provides a safe haven to the children from their strict and abusive father. Beatrice has been so divested of any authority and sense of self-assertion that she appears to her own daughter as passive. Kambili says of her mother, who even does her teenage children's chores instead of leaving them to do

their own work: "…there was so much that she did not mind" (p.19). Kambili means that years of abuse have left her mother passive and inured. She yearns to protect her children from domestic abuse but she is powerless to do so. The only way she can do that is by sheltering them and doing their chores even though they are old enough to do their own chores. Beatrice is so attached to her children that she even packs their clothes when they are on a trip. This closeness therefore gives her the opportunity to socialize them, in particular Kambili into society. "Every Sunday before lunch, in between telling Sisi to put a little more palm oil in the soup, a little less curry in the coconut rice and while Papa took his siesta, mother and daughter would bond over plaiting Kambili's hair."[63] Unconsciously, Beatrice finds herself teaching Kambili how to prepare various dishes through the instructions that she passes on to the cook.

This closeness between mother and daughter enables Beatrice to socialize Kambili by teaching her certain values that are held closely by their culture. For example, she teaches Kambili how African societies put value on women by their ability to have children in particular sons. She discloses:

> The members of our *umunna* even sent people to your father to urge him to have children with someone else. So many people had willing daughters, and many of them were university graduates, too. They might have borne many sons and taken over our home and driven us out…But your father stayed with me, with us. (p.20)

[63] Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), p.19. All page references are from this edition and shall be included notes.

Beatrice's inability to have more children (especially sons) for Eugene is cause for his relatives to start encouraging Eugene to look for another wife. They undermine Beatrice's worth and position as a wife, thus causing her to be insecure and to overlook her husband's numerous faults when he decides against his relatives' advice of taking a second wife. Eugene's Christian beliefs prohibit him from having more than one wife but do not stop him from physically abusing his wife. Beatrice has also internalized traditional values that put emphasis on children, especially sons. She lauds the values of the patriarchy that oppresses her. This is evidenced when she puts emphasis on other women bearing sons and not daughters for her husband showing that, in this society, sons are more important than daughters. Beatrice observes that other women, who were university graduates, might have performed the role of bearing sons for Eugene even better than her since she only produced one son. She, therefore, feels inferior to these women. This is a negative societal value which Beatrice has internalized and unconsciously tries to impart unto Kambili. Syed Begum observes that while women consider motherhood as a desirable condition, culturally its non-fulfillment disempowers them, in some cases, reducing them to accepting a socially non-productive status.[64] Because motherhood is traditionally viewed with much importance, failure to achieve such an important task brings shame, dissatisfaction and inadequacy to the women who fail to do so. This theme of valuing children in African societies has already been portrayed by Adichie's literary foremothers, Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta in their novels *Efuru* and *The Joys of Motherhood*, respectively. Nwapa's Efuru is abandoned when she fails to conceive and Nnu Ego's husband in *The Joys of Motherhood* marries a

[64] Syed Hajira Begum, *Op cit*, p.114.

second wife and turns Nnu Ego into a farmhand when she too fails to conceive. Like Beatrice, these women's worth is undermined: they are reduced to the status of non-entities because of their failure to have children. In most African cultures, when women fail to achieve conception in a space where the ability to produce children is valued, there has to be an explanation. "They even said somebody had tied up my womb with *ogwu*. Mama shook her head and smiled, the indulgent smile that stretched across her face when she talked about people who believed in oracles…"(p.20) Beatrice, whose Christianity does not allow her to indulge in "pagan beliefs", is, however, aware that some African people are superstitious and she informs her daughter that some of them associate some of these superstitions with barrenness.

The closeness between mother and daughter also gives Beatrice the opportunity to socialize Kambili in the dynamics of relationships in the Ibo culture. Kambili is aghast when she first hears her father's sister, Aunty Ifeoma, call her mother "*nwunye m*" which means "my wife" in Ibo. When Kambili inquires from her father why her aunt calls another woman her wife, Eugene, who has adopted the colonial mentality that African traditions are pagan, dismisses it as "the remnants of ungodly traditions". Beatrice defies Eugene's orders that the family should not follow indigenous traditions by explaining to Kambili in private that "I am her wife, too, because I am your father's wife. It shows that she accepts me" (p.73). Obviously Eugene does not want this 'ungodly' tradition to be passed on to his Christian children. However, Beatrice sees the importance of socializing her daughter in the ways of their culture. She knows that her daughter might someday get married to somebody within their culture and therefore she has to know the dynamics

with regard to relationships and marriages. In explaining why Aunty Ifeoma calls her my wife, she teaches Kambili that because of the communal nature of their culture, it was the family and not the man alone that married a wife. In other words, Beatrice informs Kambili that marriage is not just the union of two people but also of two families. This kind of socialization between mother and daughter emphasizes the assertion that it is women who are responsible for the passing on of cultural values and traditions from one generation to another.

Unconsciously, Beatrice passes on to Kambili her reserved, timid and insecure attributes, which have been brought about by years of abuse. Like her mother, Kambili does not say much. She often stutters or coughs when she is expected to speak. In the company of people, she does not speak at all. Since the only person whom she can look up to for guidance is voiceless and powerless, Kambili has nobody to teach her how to stand up for herself or speak out against anything. Their silent household does not give room for opinions or dissenting views from those of Eugene. Through Aunt Ifeoma, Adichie portrays a different type of environment from the one Kambili and her brother are socialized. In contrast to the silent and brutally strict household of the Achike's, Ifeoma has a liberal way of raising her children. In Ifeoma's household, there is freedom and room for growth through the interaction of ideas and opinions. "Laughter always rang out in Aunty Ifeoma's house, no matter where the laughter came from, it bounced around all the walls, all the rooms. Arguments rose quickly and fell just as quickly"(p.140). Kambili realizes that her aunt, Ifeoma, is the type of mother who challenges her children by setting "higher and higher jumps" for them in the way she

talks to them, in what she expects of them. She has faith in them by believing they will "scale the rod" which means they will achieve their goals and as a result they always do. This is unlike Kambili and Jaja "who did not scale the rod because they believed they could but because they were terrified that they couldn't" (p.226).

Adichie portrays Ifeoma as a character who is independent-minded and resolute contrasting with Beatrice's reserved and passive character. A widow, Ifeoma is self-sufficient and fearless. Kambili describes her as follows:

> Aunty Ifeoma was as tall as Papa, with a well-proportioned body. She walked fast, like one who knew just where she was going and what she going to do there. And she spoke the way she walked, as if to get as many words out of her mouth as she could in the shortest time. (p.71)

Ifeoma socializes her daughter to be assertive and independent like her. In the same way that Beatrice's lack of confidence and passivity is taught to her daughter, Ifeoma's feisty, independent disposition is passed on to Amaka, her fifteen-year-old culturally conscious daughter. Amaka is "a thinner teenage copy of her mother…walked and talked even faster and with more purpose than Aunty Ifeoma did"(p.78). Amaka is motivated by Ifeoma and regards her as a role model. She shows her admiration for her mother by sometimes dressing like her and putting on the same makeup as her. She also usually proudly talks about her mother's courage. Amaka's admiration of her mother exemplifies Alice Walker's womanist manifest in *In Search of Our Mothers Gardens*, which argues that young women, as daughters, should draw strength and courage from their mother's

heritage as well as imitate their brave actions to define their life.[65] Because of the secure environment in which Ifeoma raises her children, Amaka tends to adopt some of her characteristics and emulate her but at the same time coming out as her own person. Ifeoma equips her daughter with a questioning mind. Amaka is depicted as having quizzical eyes: "eyes that asked many questions and did not accept many answers" (p.78). On the other hand, Kambili, who was never taught to question things but to accept them as they are, is shocked at the differences between Amaka and herself: "It was so unlikely that we were the same age, fifteen. She seemed so much older, or maybe it was her striking resemblance with Aunty Ifeoma or the way she seemed to stare me right in the eyes"(p.79). Amaka's inquisitive mind is a result of Ifeoma giving her children the freedom to express themselves while maintaining respect. Amaka also sees the fearlessness and the outspokenness of her mother and she gets courage from it. Thus, despite being in the midst of brothers, who obviously would be valued more in society, Amaka knows her worth and is not afraid to speak for herself. She even plans to be an activist. Ifeoma tells Kambili and Jaja: "…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" (p.130). On the other hand, Kambili, who is mechanical in whatever she does, can never dream of protesting or standing up for herself unless she is told to do so by her father. She even wonders how Amaka does it: "how she opened her mouth and had words flow easily out" (p.99). Kambili's own voice is silenced by a fear that runs deep and therefore she is amazed by her cousin's boldness.

[65] Alice Walker qtd in Shalini Nadaswaran *Rethinking Family Relationships in Third Generation Nigerian Women's Fiction* cited @ http://www.revue-relief.org. Accessed on 12th March, 2012.

Adichie's depiction of the mother-daughter relationship between Ifeoma and Amaka also shows that it is women who are responsible for the passing on of values and morals from one generation to another. For example, even though Ifeoma lets her daughter speak her mind, she teaches her to have respect for other people, often chiding her for the snide comments she makes about Kambili.

> "Amaka, you are free to have your opinions, but you must treat your cousin with respect. Do you understand that?" Aunty Ifeoma replied in English, her voice firm.
> "I was just asking a question." "Showing respect is not calling your cousin a sheep."
> " She behaves funny. Even Jaja is strange. Something is not right with them."(p.142)

Ifeoma is a flexible parent. By telling Amaka not to call her cousin names, she, however, proves to be a disciplinarian who intends to inculcate into her daughter values that will enable her to respect other people. She even resorts to corporal punishment if it will teach her children to have proper manners. Amaka explains, "I always got the stick on my palm…and Obiora got his on his buttocks…Afterward we would talk about it for hours. I hated that. Just give me the lashes and let me out. But no, she explained why you have been flogged, what she expected you to do not to get flogged again..." (p.245). Unlike the Achike household where the children are always brutally punished for failing to follow their father's instructions, Ifeoma punishes her children with love for them. She punishes them with the aim of educating them on what is wrong and what is right

and not instilling fear in them. Explaining to her children why she flogged them is Ifeoma's way of socializing them, of making sure that they understand the values that she is trying to impart to them.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie presents motherhood as being collaborative or communal in the way that Ifeoma takes up the role of mothering Kambili from Beatrice when she (Kambili) comes to live with her in Nsukka. According to Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, mothering in African societies is collaborative rather than individualized as in Western cultures.[66] The term "mother", therefore, is not reserved for the woman who gives birth to the child but is often expanded to co-mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and older sisters.[67] As Herbert J. Foster observes on patterns of African families:

> The major functions of the African extended family were socialization, social control, and social security…these functions were carried out not by the conjugal unit in isolation but in cooperation with the kinship network of the larger extended family…it served as the society's basic

[66] Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, *Africa Wo/man Palava:The Nigerian Novel by Women,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), p.113.

[67] In this instance, co-mother will refer to women (relatives) who take over the raising of children and fulfill all the roles of a mother.

> socialization facility, educating the young in both the skills and values of the society.[68]

Patricia Hill Collins further explains that mothering in (West) Africa is not a privatized nurturing "occupation" reserved for biological mother, and the economic support of children was not exclusive responsibility of men.[69] Aunty Ifeoma is, therefore, the one who performs one of the major functions of the African extended family by being instrumental in teaching Kambili values. Kambili describes her this way:

> When she barged into the dining room upstairs, I imagined a proud ancient forebear, walking miles to fetch water in homemade clay pots, nursing babies until they walked and talked, fighting wars with machetes sharpened on sun-warmed stone. She filled a room. (p.80)

Kambili admires her aunt's feistiness, courage, strength, and resourcefulness in the way she single-handedly manages to feed and take care of her family with meagre resources. She sees Ifeoma as the prototype of a mother as she remembers the proud ancient mothers of Africa whom she compares to her aunt.

Ifeoma as a 'co-mother' confirms that in African societies, it is the woman's duty to teach and reinforce cultural values and customs upon the younger generation. She

[68]Herbert J. Foster, "African Patterns in the Afro-American Family" in *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol.14, No.2, 1983, p.216.

[69] Patricia Hill Collins, *Op. cit*, p.45.

teaches Kambili to cook and to stand up for herself. For example, when she asks Kambili to prepare orah leaves, Kambili expresses ignorance on the preparation of the leaves. Ifeoma instructs Amaka to do it but Amaka bursts into anger, accusing Kambili of being spoilt because of her family's wealth. And like the voiceless person that Kambili is, she does not answer back. Ifeoma pushes Kambili to stand up for herself: "Aunty Ifeoma's eyes hardened. She was not looking at Amaka, she was looking at me. "*O ginidi*, Kambili, have you no mouth? Talk back to her!" (p.170). Ifeoma realizes that being assertive or standing up for oneself was never a quality that Beatrice or her husband taught Kambili considering the environment in which she was raised. She, therefore, functions as a mother by teaching her to defend herself. By telling Kambili to talk back at Amaka, she socializes her niece to be assertive and empowers her to develop a sense of voice and to learn the strength that lies within articulation.

Ifeoma is also portrayed by Adichie as teaching her niece to accommodate and respect dissenting views with regard to religion. Having been raised in a strict Catholic household, Kambili is intolerant to indigenous religions. She grows up believing what her father tells her, that Catholicism is the only faith that is accepted by God and that will bring salvation to mankind. She informs Ifeoma that she does not go to their "pagan" grandfather's house after their initial greeting because of his traditional beliefs. " 'Your Papa-Nnukwu is not a pagan, Kambili, he is a traditionalist,' Aunty Ifeoma said. I stared at her. Pagan, traditionalist, what did it matter? He was not Catholic, that was all; he was not of the faith" (p. 81). Kambili has been so indoctrinated by her father's beliefs that she can not even reason or think for herself. All she can do is please Eugene and regurgitate

what he tells her. Eugene's Catholicism "amounts to a devotion to a western colonial order that he has concluded to be far superior to the traditional belief system of his family."[70] He is determined that his wife and children will adhere to Catholic ideas and teachings. He even uses his immense wealth and power to repress those in his family who hold on to traditional values, for example his father, Papa-Nnukwu, who still believes in his traditional god. Adichie portrays Eugene as a typical colonial product, brainwashed and blinded by western religion.

The portrayal of Eugene is reminiscent of the character of Joshua in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between*. Joshua is also so brainwashed by western religion and its supposed superiority that he detests everything indigenous and tries to coerce his family members into thinking the same way he does. These characters' thinking can be explained historically. At the advent of colonialism, a child who entered Christian mission schools was expected to cut ties with the religious and ritualistic structure of his now "pagan" family.[71] He had to assume a Christian name (meaning a European name) upon his baptism. After that he would begin his moral instruction in Christian ethics and theology in the form of catechism, the introduction of rules and regulations that would now govern his home life.[72] At all costs, he had to avoid drumming sessions, household ceremonies and the public festivals of his ancestors.

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[70]Kwame Dawes, A Review of Purple Hibiscus http://www.kzoo.edu/fye/Dawes_USC_book_review.pdf. Accessed on 27 Oct 2008.

[71] Kofi Awoonor, *The Breast of the Earth: A Survey of the History, Culture and Literature of Africa South of the Sahara*, (New York: Anchor Press, 1976), p. 24.

[72]Ibid.

Educated by Catholic missionaries, Eugene internalizes the colonialist view that traditional religions are pagan. To him, all cultural practices are an abomination and anyone who practices these "pagan" ways is not worth his attention. Instead, Eugene worships Father Benedict, the white Catholic priest of the parish he attends. Eugene believes and follows his every word because Father Benedict is white. He takes his children through the same path by enrolling them in Catholic schools. He teaches and imposes his own interpretations of the Bible and church doctrines on them and controls them through these teachings. His sister, Ifeoma, on the other hand, was also educated by Catholic missionaries and is Catholic but she has not internalized the western-derived views that abhor traditional religions. Her family is very close to their grandfather and takes care of him whenever he is sick, while Eugene alienates his father and deprives his children of a relationship with their grandfather. Ifeoma lets her children connect with the old man and allows him to tell them folktales. As a result of Ifeoma allowing her children to interact with their grandfather, Amaka becomes very close to her grandfather and despite her Catholic faith, she accommodates his religious views.

After seeing the effect of how Eugene has used religion to brainwash his daughter, Ifeoma takes it upon herself to change her niece's thinking, to expose her to other traditions that would open her mind. She, therefore, defies her brother's orders of not exposing his children to "ungodly" things by teaching them of their culture when she takes them to see the *mmuo*, a masquerade which Eugene dismisses as pagan. Ifeoma passes on cultural values to Kambili by making her understand the concept of religion

from a different perspective from that of her father. She teaches Kambili that "sometimes what was different was just as good as what was familiar, that when Papa-Nnukwu did his *itu-nzu*, his declaration of innocence, in the morning, it was the same as our saying the rosary" (p.166). In further socializing her niece to appreciate what was different from what she knew, she wakes up Kambili at dawn and instructs her to go and secretly watch her Papa-Nnukwu as he talked to the gods or the ancestors. From this observation, Kambili learns that Papa-Nnukwu prays to a god and thanks him in the way that Catholics pray. She also notices that the sincerity and the love that Papa-Nnukwu has when he is praying for his family is no different from that of Catholics when they are praying to their Christian God. Kambili begins to understand her grandfather and even contemplates accommodating religious views that are not the same as hers.

Kincaid's *Lucy*[73] also portrays the role of a mother in the Caribbean as being similar to that of mothers in *Purple Hibiscus*. West Indian mothers' roles over their children tend to be similar to those of their African counterparts. This similarity is derived from the fact that the Caribbean situation of predominantly female headed households is a result of a synthesis of an African cultural survival and the realities of slavery whereby the black man's function of fatherhood was limited to fertilizing the female.[74] *Lucy* is a novel about a young black West Indian woman who migrates to the United States of America to work as an *au pair* (nanny) for a white family. Lucy's

[73] Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy*, (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1990). All page references are from this edition and shall be included as notes.

[74] See Leota S. Lawrence, *Op cit*, p.4.

mother emerges as the dominant parent in Lucy's life since her father is impotent as an authority figure in her life. Lucy's mother spends a lot of time with Lucy and instills societal values into her. Lucy is raised in a strict family. She says "…even to think such words (bad words) in their presence I would have been scolded severely" (p.13). Lucy's parents inculcate morals into their daughter that sink so deep that she is not even supposed to think bad things. Moreover, the parents are so strict in their upbringing of Lucy that they instill fear into her so that she can not even dare think such bad thoughts. This strict upbringing is reminiscent of Kambili and her brother's in *Purple Hibiscus*. Although while in the United States of America, Lucy tries to avoid thinking about her mother and her West Indian past, thoughts of her mother still haunt her. This emphasizes how significant Lucy's mother is in her life and the dominant role that she takes in the primary socialization of Lucy. Studies on Caribbean families have mostly described Caribbean families as matrifocal. Miriam Johnston in *Strong Mothers, Weak Wives* explain more about matrifocal cultures:

> Matrifocality does not just refer to domestic maternal dominance so much as it does to the relative cultural prestige of the image of mother, a role that is culturally elaborated and valued. Mothers are also structurally central in that mother a status has some degree over kin unit's economic resources and is critically involved in kin-related decision making processes…It is not the absence of males (males maybe quite present) but the centrality of women as mothers that make a society matrifocal.[75]

[75]Miriam Johnston, "Strong Mothers, Weak Wives" qtd in Andrea O'Reilly, A Politics of the Heart cited *@www.andreaoreilly.org/morrisonreviewValdes.pdf.*

Lucy compares her boss, Mariah, to her mother. “The times I loved Mariah it was because she reminded me of my mother. The times that I did not love Mariah it was because she reminded me of my mother” (p.58). Her mother is the person who mostly comes to memory whenever Mariah says or does anything.

As a result of the strict environment in which Lucy is raised, her relationship with her mother is strenuous. She feels like her mothering antics are there to make her into a carbon copy of her. “I had come to feel that my mother’s love for me was designed solely to make me into an echo of her; and I didn’t know why, but I felt that I would rather be dead than become just an echo of someone” (p.36). As a young woman growing up in the Caribbean Islands and trying to make sense of her identity, Lucy feels smothered by her mother. Her mother tries to limit Lucy’s capabilities by trying to socialize her into a miniature version of herself. Lucy realizes that, although there is a need for her to align herself with her mother to learn from her, she, nevertheless, needs to separate herself from her if she wants to be her own person, capable of making her own decisions and living her own life. Despite their strenuous relationship, Lucy’s mother validates the African mother’s role of passing on values to the younger generation. “It was my mother who had told me that I should never take a man’s side over a woman’s; by that she meant I should never have feelings of possession for another woman’s husband” (p.48). Lucy learns from her mother how to value the concept of sisterhood, regardless of race or age, to support each other as women. In other words, Lucy’s mother teaches her to be respectful of other women’s husbands by not allowing herself to be a mistress. This value

which Lucy inherits from her mother is a result of her mother's experience with women who tried to kill her because they had loved Lucy's father and he did not love them back. Regardless of her estranged relationship with her mother, Lucy takes this value with her to America and continuously recalls her throughout the novel. Lucy's constant memories of her mother show how influential her mother is in shaping her identity.

Lucy is partly an auto-biographical account of Jamaica Kincaid's early life. In one interview, Kincaid describes her own estranged relationship with her mother in this way: "What distinguished my life from my brother's is that my mother didn't like me. When I became a woman, I seemed to repel her, I had to learn to fend for myself. I found a way to rescue myself."[76] Lucy also rescues herself from her mother by going to America where she even refuses to answer her mother's letters. Lucy's relationship with her mother is complex in the sense that although Lucy acknowledges the positive influence that her mother has on her, she also resists some of her mother's ideas. She views her mother as somebody selfish who thinks her wishes were much more important than her daughter's needs, a characteristic which makes Lucy believe that it made Mariah much more superior to her mother. However, Lucy remembers tender moments with her mother when she was younger and closer to her. Her mother would sit her on her lap and embrace her. She also remembers when she was at an age when she could still touch her mother with ease and "caress a large scar she had on the right side of her face, at the place where her temple and her hairline met" (p.54). Lucy's mother uses stories of her past to teach her daughter morals and values. For example, it is through her narration of how she got the scar on the right side of her face that she teaches Lucy the dangers of

[76] Jamaica Kincaid Hates Happy Endings, An interview cited @www.motherjones.com

walking through places where a lot of trees grow. As a young girl while growing up in the country, Lucy's mother had to walk a long distance to school which needed her to pass through a rain forest and to cross two small rivers. It was during one of these journeys to school that she threw a stick at a monkey and it caught the stick and threw it right back in her face causing her to almost bleed to death. Lucy says: "That was just one of the many stories I knew about walking through places where trees live, and none of them had a happy outcome" (p.55).

Lucy's mother's protective instincts towards her daughter urge her to use stories of her past to caution her daughter to be aware of her surroundings and to avoid walking in secluded areas. As a result, a grown-up Lucy develops a defense mechanism that she uses every time she walks with other people in the woods. "And so as soon as we started our walk through the woods I would strike up a conversation…Eventually I got so used to being afraid to walk through the woods that I would do so by myself…" (p. 55). This aspect of using story telling to teach morals can be regarded as a survival of African culture in the New World. In African culture, it is women who most often fulfill the role of story teller in order to orally transmit customs and values from one family generation to the next.[77]

Lucy's mother also passes on cultural traditions to her daughter by introducing her to ways of warding off evil spirits. When an acquaintance from Lucy's past comes to tell her that her father had passed away and to give her another letter from her mother, she leaves behind the "smell of clove, lime and rose oil", and from this Lucy immediately

[77] Gay Wilentz, *Op cit*, p.7.

remembers her mother and almost dies of homesickness. “My mother used to bathe me in water in which the leaves and flowers of these plants had been boiled; this bath was to protect me from evil spirits sent to me by some of the women who had loved my father and whom my father had not loved in return” (p.124). This belief in evil spirits and methods that would drive away evil spirits is one of the beliefs that survived and crossed the Middle Passage into the Caribbean. Lucy’s mother, in an act of cultural memory, remembers her African ancestors’ ways and passes them on to her daughter. Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith in *Feminism and Cultural Memory* argue that acts of cultural memory “emerge out of a complex dynamic between past and present…history and myth, trauma and nostalgia.”[78] According to Hirsch and Smith, cultural memory is the product of fragmentary personal and collective experiences articulated through technologies and media that shape even as they transmit memory. West Indians of African descent, who are a product of a long history of enslavement, still find themselves practicing cultural acts of their ancestors that survived the Middle Passage and adapted themselves into the New World. Some of the acts include belief in spirits and their ability to affect human beings lives but also remedies provided by spirit practitioners such as obeahs who prevent the effects of evil spirits. For example, in *Lucy*, Lucy’s mother goes to an Obeah every Friday who gives her remedies to prevent her from getting killed by jealous women.

Myal, by Erna Brodber, is another Caribbean novel which demonstrates survivals of African religious practices as being acts of cultural memory. It depicts fifteen-year-old

[78] Marianne Hirsch, “Mothers and Daughters” cited in Elizabeth Brown- Guillory (ed.), *Op cit*, p.3.

Anita who is being raped by Mass Levi, a senior and respected member of society. He attempts to gain back his sexual virility by raping this young girl through the evil practices of Obeah. However, Anita is saved from this man by being exorcised in a religious ritual called myalism which is used as a counteraction of Obeah. The African perception of the universe is one that contains both visible and invisible worlds. This cosmos is spirit filled, with a supreme spiritual being, a number of lesser spirits, human beings and nature. Although not visible, there are spirits pervading the universe.

> There is the strong belief that the spirit world is one of power, hence to succeed in life, it is necessary sometimes to make appeals to those in the positions of privilege. Spirit possession is one way whereby the follower of African traditional religion acquires positions of power. It is a means through which the individual, under the guise of a spirit, derives inner strength to perform remarkable feats that could not be performed under normal circumstances.[79]

Belief in spirits is, therefore, one of the practices commonly found in the Caribbean. It is a practice which survived the Middle Passage and which was also used as an act of resistance against the white masters' culture. Even after the abolition of slavery, descendants of slaves in the Caribbean kept this practice alive and it is still evident up to date. Thus Kincaid portrays Lucy's mother as retaining and practicing this African cultural belief in spirits and passing it on to her daughter.

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[79]George Mulrain, African Religiosity in the Diaspora: the Caribbean Experience, cited@www.afrikaworld.net/afrel/mulrain.html. Accessed on 17 July 2009.

Kincaid also depicts communal/collaborative mothering in *Lucy* just like Adichie does in *Purple Hibiscus*. Communal mothering is a good practice in the sense that it offers any form of assistance to mothers who, for some reason, can not perform certain things on their own. Following the African saying that it takes a whole village to raise a child, Lucy's mother often leaves a young Lucy in the care of a young woman called Maude Quick, who also happens to be her goddaughter. "My mother used to place me in her care from time to time, hoping I suppose, that some of her good example would rub off on me" (p.111). Maude Quick is perceived as a young woman with admirable values and morals. Lucy's mother, therefore, places Lucy in Maude's hands with the hope that she will socialize Lucy and teach her values which had made her turn into such an admirable girl. Hence, during these sessions, Maude takes on a mothering role.

> If I did anything she considered bad, she would threaten me with senna tea, a purgative that caused bad stomach gripes; or she would threaten to put me in a barrel and shut the lid tight and forget about me. When I did things that pleased her, she would bathe me and comb my hair and dress me up in her old clothes…(p.111)

Maude mothers and teaches Lucy values that she thinks are good by punishing her if she fails to abide by her "morals". She also rewards Lucy whenever she behaves according to her standards. This is an example of communal mothering and it is an aspect which is drawn from Africa. This concept of communal mothering is an act of memory by the African Diaspora in the Caribbean. It is depicted in *Lucy* as a trait which survived the

Middle Passage and crossed over into the New World. Taking care of a child in the Caribbean is not only left to the biological mother. This communal mothering is also portrayed in *Myal* where Miss Amy, the wife of the village school teacher, takes Anita into her home when the young girl is being demonized by Mass Levi's Obeah practices. Seeing Anita as the daughter she never had, Miss Amy teaches Anita how to sew, cook and perform other domestic duties that Anita's mother never had any time for. This also shows that mothering in the Caribbean is a shared responsibility by the entire community.

The Bluest Eye[80] also portrays similar mothering roles to those in *Lucy* and *Purple Hibiscus*. The novel is about a young black girl called Pecola who longs for blue eyes. Because she is discriminated against by the white society as well as her own black people due to the darkness of her skin, she believes that having blue eyes will make her acceptable. Morrison depicts mothers in the novel as predominant in the socialization of their daughters. Similar to the Caribbean situation, where the father is usually absent or impotent as an authority figure, Morrison portrays the fathers in the novel as insignificant in the lives of their children, as they leave the duty of raising children to the women in the novel. The narrator only mentions her father on few occasions. This demonstrates his lack of presence in his children's lives. Although Mrs. MacTeer is not the breadwinner of the family, she is the one who is instrumental in the socialization of her daughters. Herbert J. Foster observes about black women in the New World: "…Black wives and

[80] Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Group, 1970). All page references are from this edition and shall be included as notes.

mothers often play a predominant role in the performance of instrumental functions."[81] In this case, the instrumental function is that of socializing and psychologically preparing their children to function in the outside world. Melville Herskovitz has defined this role of New World black women as an African survival:

> The role of women in focusing the sentiment that gives the family unit its psychological coherence, or their place in maintaining the economic stability essential to survival, correspond closely to similar facets of West African social structure.[82]

Similar to the role performed by African women, Mrs. MacTeer also equips her daughters with survival skills in the outside world. For example, when Claudia starts coughing after a trip from collecting coal, her mother chides her for not remembering her instructions to cover her head in such circumstances. "Great Jesus. Get on in that bed. How many times do I have to tell you to wear something on your head? You must be the biggest fool in this town. Frieda? Get some rags and stuff that window" (p.10). Even though she seems harsh, Mrs. MacTeer takes care of Claudia by rubbing Vicks on her chest with her large and rough hands. When Claudia throws up, Mrs. MacTeer rebukes her for throwing up on the bed and not having enough sense to hold her head out of the bed.

[81] Herbert J. Foster, *Op cit*, p.118.

[82] Ibid.

> My mother's anger humiliates me; her words chafe my cheeks, and am crying. I do not know that she is not angry at me, but at my sickness. I believe she despises my weakness for letting the sickness, "take holt." By and by I will not get sick; I will refuse to. (p.12)

Mrs. MacTeer's criticism of Claudia is her method of teaching her daughter to be strong and not to let the sickness get the best of her. Mrs. MacTeer knows that resilience is necessary to survive in a racist and harsh environment like the one in which they are living. Being strong and resilient, therefore, starts with fighting small setbacks like a cold. It is, therefore, her role as a mother to psychologically prepare her daughter for the realities of the world. She does this by instilling in her a spirit of resilience.

Like Lucy's mother, Mrs. MacTeer is very strict. Her relationship with her daughters is governed by their fear of her. "We didn't initiate talk with grown-ups; we answered their questions" (p.23). The relationship between Mrs. MacTeer and her daughters is clearly that of adult and child, where there is a hierarchy of authority and hence the child should always obey the adult and know her place in the hierarchy. Neither Claudia nor Frieda can disobey their mother. Their mother is not openly affectionate which makes it hard for her daughters to approach her, to ask any questions or to ask for guidance. Her manner prevents her daughters from getting close to her. Claudia further observes of her mother's attitude when she is upset with something, "My mother's fussing soliloquies always irritated and depressed us. They were interminable, insulting and although indirect…extremely painful in their thrust" (p.24), after which she would burst into a blues song and sing for the rest of the day. The blues are a means to

gather and to transmute the pains of daily existence in a racist, classist, and sexist world. Gloria Wade-Gayles observes that "mothers in black women's fictions are strong and devoted . . . But they are rarely affectionate."[83] As a result of "the interconnectedness of race, class and gender, the axis on which power and influence turn" and because most African American mothers have little time to spend with their daughters due to their working outside the house to provide for their family, African-American daughters discover early on that, instead of affection and demonstrative affection, they must frequently settle for physical care and affection."[84] Mrs. MacTeer, however, does love her daughters and she shows her love by focusing on teaching her children how to be strong and how to fend for themselves. Black Feminist theorist, Patricia Hill Collins, argues that children learn at home how to identify and challenge racist practices. "Racial ethnic women's motherwork reflect the tensions inherent in trying to foster a racial identity in children within a society that denigrates people of colour. Children must first be taught to survive in systems that oppress them."[85] For Mrs. MacTeer, being explicitly affectionate, therefore, takes a secondary role as that will not teach the children survival mechanisms.

Just as Ifeoma does with her daughter in *Purple Hibiscus*, Mrs. MacTeer teaches her daughters to be respectful to people who are less privileged. When Pecola is placed in their home by the county after Pecola's father, Cholly Breedlove, burns down the house, Mrs. MacTeer tells Claudia and Frieda not to fight and to be nice to her for she had been

[83] Gloria Wade-Gayle qtd in Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, (London: Routledge, 1991), p.84.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.

put ‘outdoors.’ Claudia emphasizes Pecola’s pathetic situation of having nowhere to live by arguing that:

> Outdoors we knew was the real terror of life. The threat of being put outdoors surfaced frequently in those days…There is a difference between being put out and being put outdoors. If you are put out, you go somewhere else; if you are outdoors, there is no place to go. The distinction was subtle but final. Outdoors was the end of something, an irrevocable, physical fact, defining and complementing our metaphysical condition… (p.17)

Thus Mrs. MacTeer teaches her daughters that although Pecola is in a less privileged position, that was not reason to look down on her or make fun of her. They had to be sympathetic towards her for not having a place to live because being “put outdoors” was a fearful fact of life that could happen to anyone especially considering the socio-economic positions of most black people.

Another mother portrayed in *The Bluest Eye,* who passes on societal values to her daughter, though negatively, is Pecola’s mother, Pauline Breedlove. It is important to note that, in the process of socialization, some of the values transferred from mother to daughter can be negative and therefore function as a negative influence in the daughter’s lives. Pecola’s relationship with her mother is relatively different from that of Mrs. MacTeer and her daughters. It is different in the sense that although Mrs. MacTeer is not openly affectionate, her protective and nurturing actions towards her daughters reveal her

love for her children. Pauline, on the other hand, is indifferent towards her daughter. She does not show any affection towards her daughter, and she is constantly angry. She has low self-esteem and one of the contributing factors is her foot defect. Pauline internalizes the racial hatred upon her race and she passes this on to her daughter. Feeling isolated when she first moved to the north, Pauline found solace in cinematic movies. However, these movies perpetuate the negative stereotypes of the black race, hammering into her head the racist images that black is ugly. As she herself confesses, "she was never able, after her education in the movies, to look at a face and assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty, and the scale was one she absorbed in full from the silver screen" (p.122). Through the movies and other images, Pauline internalizes the contempt for her blackness and the white standards of beauty. Hating herself because of her blackness, she passes these feelings of contempt for her race to her daughter the moment she is born. When she gives birth to Pecola she immediately describes her as a "black ball of hair" and from that moment on she taints her with the feeling of ugliness. She describes Pecola further: "But I knowed she was ugly. Head full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly" (p.134). At the point of giving birth, Pauline brands her daughter as ugly. Through socialization, Pauline teaches her daughter that she is ugly because she is black. Pauline does not encourage Pecola to think otherwise because this self-hatred is deeply ingrained in her mind. Pauline's self-hatred prompts her to distance herself from her family. This distance leaves Pecola vulnerable with nobody to teach her survival mechanisms in this harsh environment. This is in contrast to the role that Mrs. MacTeer takes in her daughters' lives. While Mrs. MacTeer teaches her daughters survival skills in

a harsh society, Pauline, like Beatrice, teaches her daughter to internalize feelings of inferiority.

Furthermore, the household in which Pecola grows up is not conducive for the upbringing of children. Cholly and Pauline constantly fight each other and their children are forced to watch in horror. “There was a difference in the reaction of the children to these battles. Sammy cursed for a while…Pecola, on the other hand, restricted by youth and sex, experimented with methods of endurance” (p.43). Pecola is in a vulnerable position because she is young and belongs to a sex which is seen as inferior. She is disadvantaged and therefore can not defend herself from the hardships that she faces. Unlike her brother who is at an advantage because of his sex, Pecola can only endure her parents’ fights and other adversities. On the other hand, Sammy develops a tough exterior as a defense mechanism. Pecola believes that acquiring blue eyes will make her acceptable to her own race as well as to the dominant race. “Maybe they’d say, “why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn’t do bad things in front of those pretty eyes”(p.46). Pecola observes the privileges attached to being white and she longs for these privileges. She believes in the power and value of blue eyes so much that she even believes that her parents will stop fighting when she has blue eyes. They will simply have to look at her and be mesmerized by her beauty. Her beauty will therefore cause them to be ashamed of themselves for fighting in front of her.

Pecola, her family and her friends represent blackness which "symbolizes" disorder, ugliness and the kind of life Pauline abhors and wants to escape.

> Pauline kept this order, this beauty, for herself, a private world, and never introduced it into her storefront, or to her children. Them she bent towards respectability, and in so doing taught them fear; fear of being clumsy, fear of being like their father, fear of not being loved by God, fear of madness like Cholly mother's. Into her son she beat a loud desire to run away, and into her daughter she beat a fear of growing up, fear of other people, fear of life. (p.128)

Pauline believes that her association with the white family that she works for somehow makes her better than the rest of her family members. Unlike her "ugly" family members, she has been accepted into the white world of order even though these same white people abuse and degrade her. She does not want to share this perfect little world that she has created for herself with the rest of her family members. In trying to socialize her children by teaching them respect for other people, she instills in them a fear of not being good enough. Pauline's own lack of self-worth, which results from her limp and her failure to be accepted by fellow Blacks, is transferred to her daughter. As a result, Pecola is socialized to believe that she is not worthy of anybody's love. Pecola is socialized to be an unconfident little girl who does not know how to survive in such a racist society. She does not have any social and survival skills because her mother never taught her any. Instead her mother instills in her a fear of people and a fear of life.

The distance between mother and daughter is shown when Pecola cannot bring herself to call her own mother anything else but Mrs. Breedlove. While her own daughter calls her Mrs. Breedlove, Pauline prefers to be called Polly by the white child of whom she takes care. This shows the closeness that Pauline has allowed herself to be with this child. It also depicts the internalization of inferiority by Pauline who allows this child to degrade her by addressing her by her first name as if they are age mates. Pauline exemplifies the mammy image- the faithful, obedient domestic servant. According to Hill-Collins, this is one of the controlling images of black women by Whites to justify their oppression and the image goes back to the time of slavery. Mammy was both the perfect mother and the perfect slave: whites saw her as a "passive nurturer, a mother figure who gave all without expectation of return, who not only acknowledged her inferiority to Whites but who loved them."[86] By letting this white child grow close to her at the expense of her relationship with her daughter, Pauline unconsciously socializes her daughter to accept her position of inferiority to white people. It teaches Pecola that white people are better than Blacks since this can be confirmed by her own mother who would rather love a white child than her. Pauline's lack of affection for her daughter goes to the extent that when a pan tilts under Pecola's fingers and burns her, Pauline knocks her to the floor with the back of her hand. When the white girl starts crying, Pauline rushes to comfort her and harshly dismisses Pecola and her friends. Pauline has internalized the mammy image. Only by accepting this subordinate role to white children could she, as a poor black woman, see a positive place for herself.[87]

[86] Bell Hooks qtd in Dorothy E. Roberts, "Racism and Patriarchy in the Meaning of Motherhood," *Journal of Gender and the Law*, Vol.1, No.1, 1993, p.12.

[87] Patricia Hill Collins, *Op cit*, p.83.

Pauline's inability or unwillingness to express affection towards her daughter is further entrenched by her constantly being away from home to provide for her family since her husband Cholly is useless as a provider.

> When Sammy and Pecola were still young Pauline had to go back to work. She was older now, with no time for dreams and movies. It was time to put all the pieces together, make coherence where before there had been none…She took on the full responsibility and recognition of breadwinner…(p.126)

Pauline's working away from home keeps her busy and leaves her with no time to spend with her family. The distance between them widens as a result. It also means letting go of all the dreams that she had wanted to achieve for herself and her family and embracing the reality of her life as a black woman. Her family symbolizes the mayhem that characterizes her life. It represents all the aspects that bring hatred on her as a black person and therefore she distances herself from this disorder. Pauline abandons her role as mother to her children in favour of her job. The job gives her the semblance of order that lacks in her life. "More and more she neglected her house, her children, her man- they were like afterthoughts one has just before sleep…" (p.127). Pauline's provision for her children is only financial. The children find emotional comfort elsewhere because their mother is not there for them as she is always out at work. Wade-Gayle further suggests that black women have an approach to mothering that is influenced by their socio-economic standing in their society. Most black women live in under privileged

situations and therefore have to work full time in order to provide for their families. For most of these women, providing for their families means working away from home and as a result distance is created between them and their children. Hill-Collins observes that "for far too many black mothers, the demands of providing for children are so demanding that affection often must wait until the basic needs of physical survival are satisfied."[88] The basic needs, in this case, mean a roof on top of their heads, food on the table and clothes on their backs. According to these women, working to provide these basic needs is an expression of love for their families. Pauline Breedlove falls into this category of women who demonstrates their love for their children by providing financially for them.

As with the two other novels, Morrison also depicts communal mothering in *The Bluest Eye*. As an "othermother", Mrs. MacTeer treats Pecola like her own daughter by teaching her how to handle becoming a woman when she starts her first menstruation period. Hill-Collins defines "othermothers" as "women who assist blood mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities…Grandmothers, sisters, aunts, cousins and significant others, act as other mothers by taking on child-care responsibilities for one another's children."[89] She further argues that this West African cultural practice, which was retained by enslaved African Americans, gave rise to a distinct tradition of motherhood in the custom of othermothering and community mothering was emphasized and elaborated. Pecola is scared when she sees blood oozing down her legs while playing with Frieda and

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[88]Patricia Hill Collins qtd in KaaVonia Hinton-Johnson, "African American Mothers & Daughters: Socialization, Distance, and Conflict" @http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/v31n3/hintonjohnson.html. Accessed on 28 Oct 2008.

[89] Patricia Hill Collins, *Op cit*, p.119.

Claudia. Frieda recognizes the blood as menstruation and with authority and efficiency she finds a napkin and fastens it to Pecola's dress. However, a nosy neighbour tells Mrs. MacTeer that her daughters are "playing nasty" and an angry Mrs. MacTeer whips her children and even threatens to whip Pecola *"Child of mine or not"* (p.31) (Emphasis added). In whipping her daughters and threatening to discipline Pecola for "playing immoral games", Mrs. MacTeer does not discriminate against Pecola because she is not her daughter. As a mother, she intends to instill morals and values in all of them regardless of where they come from. When Mrs. MacTeer realizes what is going on, she takes over the role of mother by assuring Pecola and advising her on what to do.

> Mama led us to the bathroom. She prodded Pecola inside, and taking the underwear from me, told us to stay out.. We could hear water running into the bathtub. "You think she is going to drown her?"
> "Oh, Claudia. You are so dumb. She is just going to wash her clothes and all."…The water gushed, and over its gushing we could hear the music of my mother's laughter. (p.32)

In the absence of Pecola's mother, Mrs. MacTeer knows that the job of explaining to Pecola the changes of her body has been left to her. In addition to explaining the significance of the changes of her body, Mrs. MacTeer explains and teaches Pecola the necessity of personal hygiene when menstruating. She, therefore, runs bath water for her in the bathtub and washes her soiled clothes for her. The care and guidance that Mrs. MacTeer gives Pecola emphasizes the African role of mothering as not only being limited to biological mothers but also applying to other women. Hence, this communal

aspect of mothering has been retained in African American culture.

In conclusion, this chapter has argued that in the three novels, African women and black women in the Diaspora share similarities in the way they mother their daughters and socialize them into their environment. These similarities are there in spite of the cultural and physical divide that resulted from slavery. In Africa, the teaching and passing on of cultural values is traditionally a woman's domain. For example, as portrayed by Beatrice Achike in *Purple Hibiscus*, African mothers are instrumental in the passing on of traditions and cultural values to their daughters. She teaches her daughter Kambili the dynamics of relationships in their Igbo culture. Thus, she explains to her daughter that her sister-in -law, Ifeoma calls her "my wife" because it shows that she accepts her into the family. The study has also observed that in the Diaspora, teaching and passing on cultural values to daughters is also a woman's domain. This aspect emphasizes the cultural bond that exists between African women and women of the black Diaspora. Through acts of memory, black women "look back" to their ancestors' ways of mothering. One notices this similarity, for example, in *Lucy* where Lucy's mother plays a dominant role in inculcating values into Lucy although she tries to reject them in order to form her own identity.

The study has also observed the manifestation of negative socialization of daughters by their mothers. Through their own internalization of negative societal values, mothers are also responsible for transferring to their daughters societal values that are destructive for them and their daughters. For example, in *The Bluest Eye*, Pauline

Breedlove, who has internalized feelings of hatred for her race, socializes her daughter Pecola to detest her black skin and think of herself as ugly.

The study has also observed that all the three novels portray communal mothering. The study has argued that another similarity that women in Africa and those in the Diaspora share is the communal aspect of mothering. Communalism is part of African culture. In Africa, mothering a child is not limited to the biological mother but also applies to aunts, grandmothers, cousins etc. As evident in *Purple Hibiscus*, Ifeoma raises Kambili like her own daughter when she comes to stay with her. This communal aspect of mothering survived the Middle Passage and has been retained in the Diaspora. Black women in the Diaspora assist blood mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities. The communal aspect of mothering is seen in *Lucy* when Lucy's mother puts her into the care of a young woman called Maude Quick, with the hope that she will socialize Lucy into a well mannered and admirable girl. In *The Bluest Eye*, the communal aspect of mothering is also portrayed when Mrs. MacTeer takes Pecola into her home and gives her the appropriate care and attention when she comes of age. In addition to that, the motherly care that the three prostitutes show Pecola, when everybody (including her own mother) despises her, is an example of the communal aspect of mothering which survived in the Diaspora. As portrayed by the three authors, there is a cultural bond of mothering that is shared by black women in Africa and those in the Diaspora.

CHAPTER THREE

INITIATION INTO WOMANHOOD

One is not born but rather becomes a woman.

Simone de Beauvoir *(The Second Sex)*

Gender is the "stated roles that are ascribed to men and women based on what is perceived to be their sex in society; it is a culturally shaped group of attributes and behaviours given to the female or to the male."[90] Children as young as two years old are aware of their gender and already adhere to gender stereotypes and roles.[91] They are presented with gender messages very early in their lives and they are socialized into the values and roles attached to their sex. As S.L. Bem observes, "nearly all societies teach the developing child two crucial things about gender: first…they teach the substantive network of sex-related associations that can come to serve as cognitive schema; second, they teach that the dichotomy between male and female has intensive and extensive relevance to virtually every domain of human experience." In other words, there are clear cut and appropriate roles designed by society for males and females. Sex (the state of being male or female) is biological and therefore natural. On the other hand, as de Beauvoir argues in the quote above, gender is socially constructed and both males and females perform gender roles which are not innate in them but rather learnt through the

[90] Maggie Humm qtd in Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, "Indigenous and Contemporary Gender Concepts and Issues in Africa", *CBAAC Occasional Monograph,* Vol11, 2010, p.12.

[91] G. Cowan and C.D. Hoffman, "Gender Stereotyping in Young Children: Evidence to Support a Concept Learning Approach," *Sex Roles*, vol.14, 1986, pp.451-481.

process of socialization.[92] Judith Butler observes that phenomenological theories of human embodiment have also been concerned to "distinguish between the various physiological and biological causalities that structure bodily existence and the meanings that embodied existence assumes in the context of lived experience."[93] This means that being male or female comes with an expectance to perform certain rituals or acts in order to be classified as male or female. In other words, gender appears to be largely socially-constructed. This paper takes the position that women as mothers, co-mothers or othermothers initiate their daughters into womanhood. While the previous chapter examined how mothers pass on societal values to their daughters and how African survivals permeate the lives of black women in the Diaspora, this chapter explores how black women guide their daughters through the first stages of womanhood and how they mould them to fit into the socially constructed definition of womanhood.

As Lloyd Brown argues, "the experience, identity, and role of a woman are all distinguishable from a man's, in culturally definable terms."[94] This observation by Brown demonstrates that in every culture, women and men are socialized according to certain values that are specific for the genders. For example, it would be awkward to see a man dressed as a woman and performing the "appropriate" roles of women and vice versa. A woman's place in society has often been at the periphery, often degraded to the role of

[92] de Beauvoir argues that woman and by extension any gender is an historical situation rather than a natural fact. Also see Judith Butler, "Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in Phemenology and Feminist theory", *Theatre Journal,* Vol. 40, No.4, Dec 1998, pp. 519-531.

[93] Ibid, p.522.

[94] Lloyd Brown, *Women Writers in Black Africa,* (Westport: Greenwood, 1981), p.5**.**

just a child bearer or relegated to the private sphere. As Lucille P. Fultz argues, "this putatively 'normative' sphere is the site where mother and daughter encounter each other as gendered subjects. It is here that the black mother in her role as nurturer and enabler prepares the daughter, through example and precept, for her role as woman and mother."[95] As they are growing up, young women learn from their mothers and other female members in their society what it means to be a woman.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Beatrice initiates Kambili into womanhood by first confiding in her that she is going to have a baby.

> "*Nne* you are going to have a brother or sister."I stared. She was sitting on my bed, knees close together. "You are going to have a baby?"
> "Yes." She smiled still running her hand over my skirt.
> "When?"
> "In October. I went to Park Lane yesterday to see my doctor." (p.20)

Beatrice views their ability to bear children as a bond that exists between her and her daughter. By letting Kambili know about her pregnancy first before telling the male members of the family, Beatrice prepares her daughter for her role as woman and mother. Beatrice knows that anything to do with womanhood, her daughter will have to

[95] Lucille P. Fultz, "To Make Herself: Mother-Daughter Conflicts in Toni Morrison's Sula and Tar Baby" in Elizabeth Brown-Guillory, (ed.), *Women of Colour: Mother-Daughter Relationships in 20th-Century Literature*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), p.229.

learn from her. She is aware that Kambili is mature and that some day she could become a mother to a daughter. She, therefore, has to include Kambili and make her aware of the experiences that affect her body as a woman. Beatrice thus validates Fultz assertion that a black mother as nurturer and enabler prepares the daughter, through example and precept, for her role as woman and mother. Beatrice further reveals to her daughter about the many miscarriages that she had since Kambili's birth and how villagers started insinuating that witchcraft was responsible for her miscarriages. In this regard, Beatrice teaches Kambili the gynecological hardships that women face and the sociological explanations that some traditional parts of the African community attempt to give when a woman is failing to conceive.

As a mother, Kambili's aunt, Ifeoma also initiates her daughter and niece into womanhood. Ifeoma can be regarded as a womanist. A womanist is somebody "who acts within the dictates of cultural values to permeate their own beliefs about love, relationships and the essence of human values."[96] Although Ifeoma is independent minded and believes that a woman does not need a man by her side in order for her life to have meaning, she still understands the cultural connotations of what it means to be an African woman. While maintaining her belief in the autonomy of women, Ifeoma accepts some of the gender roles assigned to African women and the values accorded to them. She socializes her daughter and her niece into these roles:

[96] Anthony C. Oha, "Beyond the Odds of the Red Hibiscus: A Critical Reading of Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" in *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.1. no.9, August 2009, p.8.

> Back in the flat, I joined Aunty Ifeoma and Amaka in the kitchen while Jaja went off with Obiora to play football with the children from the flats upstairs. Aunty Ifeoma got one of the huge yams we had brought from home. Amaka spread newspaper sheets on the floor to slice the tuber…(p.134)

Although the boys occasionally help out with the cleaning of plates, the roles that are traditionally assigned to women such as cooking and managing the house are done by the women in the house. While the boys go outside to play football, a game that is associated with masculinity, the women go into the kitchen. It is the private sphere that has traditionally been allocated to women. It is clear that from a young age, Ifeoma socializes her children according to their gender roles in society. That is why the boys go and perform activities that are traditionally associated with masculinity and the girls perform tasks that are regarded as feminine. Traditionally, one of the tasks associated with African womanhood is the ability to prepare traditional dishes. Hence, one of the feminine tasks that Ifeoma teaches Kambili is preparing yams. Unfortunately, Kambili never learnt how to peel yams because she has servants who do all the cooking back home. She is scolded by Amaka who has obviously been taught by her mother how to prepare yam, a traditional food in their culture. "You are wasting yam, Kambili," Amaka snapped. "Ah! Ah! Is that how you peel yam in your house?" (p.134). It is therefore Ifeoma's duty as a co-mother to make sure that as a woman Kambili learns how to prepare yam. She tells Amaka, who looks at her mother "as if she could not believe that anybody had to be told how to peel yam slices properly" (p.134), to show Kambili how

to peel it. Amaka does not realize that the reason why she knows how to prepare yam is because she has been taught by her mother through a socialization process and that her cousin, Kambili, has not had the opportunity to learn how to cook due to the setup of their family. By teaching the girls how to cook, Ifeoma also prepares them for their role as mothers who will be responsible for the well being of their families. Thus, this act emphasizes Fultz's assertion that the black mother in her role as enabler and nurturer trains her daughters to be mothers and initiates them into womanhood.

Ifeoma as a co-mother further engages Kambili in a socialization process by teaching her to pull off the brown skin of hot cocoyams when Kambili fails to do so.

> The skins seemed to slip off easily enough for Aunty Ifeoma, but when I pressed one end of a tuber, the rough brown skin stayed put and the heat stung my palms.
>
> "Soak your hand in water first." She demonstrated where and how to press, to have the skin come sliding off. I watched her pound the cocoyams, dipping the pestle often into the bowl of water so the cocoyam wouldn't stick too much to it. Still, the sticky white mash clung to the pestle, to the mortar, to Aunty Ifeoma's hand. She was pleased though, because it would thicken the *onugbu* soup well. (p.166)

Kambili does not know how to prepare these traditional foodstuffs because she was never taught about them. Since her father demands that they have a timetable for every activity, cooking has never been part of the programme for her. Moreover, her mother abides by

her husband's rule and therefore would not have even dared to derail Kambili from her timetable in order to teach her this cooking tradition. Ifeoma does not rebuke Kambili for her lack of knowledge. She rather sees it as a platform to socialize her into the role of a woman, in which society expects her to be able to cook.

Ifeoma also teaches Kambili to have confidence in herself as a woman, when she realizes that Kambili is at an age when she is supposed to start showing interest in the opposite sex. She is worried when she notices that Kambili "can't even hold a conversation with the children upstairs" (p.172). When Father Amadi, the young Catholic priest, insists on taking Kambili out to watch/play football, Ifeoma encourages Kambili not to be afraid of him.

> "There is nothing to be frightened about, *nne*. You will have fun at the stadium." Aunty Ifeoma said, and I turned to stare blankly at her ... She seemed so happy, so at peace and I wondered how anybody around me could feel that way when liquid fire was raging inside me, when fear was mingling with hope and clutching itself around my ankles. (p.174)

Knowing how withdrawn and insecure Kambili is, Ifeoma sees Father Amadi's taking her out as an opportunity for Kambili to grow and to gain some confidence and sense of self-worth as a person and as a young woman. Ifeoma wants to teach Kambili to be more outgoing. She wants Kambili to come out of her shell, to interact more with people and to be able to speak to people without stuttering or being shy. Ifeoma realizes that Father Amadi's invitation for an outing will give Kambili confidence that she is worthy of

attention and it will also boost her self esteem. In addition, being in the presence of other people especially male company that she is not used to will improve her interaction skills with people. Ifeoma encourages this outing by urging Kambili to get ready quickly so as not to keep Father Amadi waiting. She also advises her on the appropriate clothes for an outing such as that by suggesting that Kambili wear a pair of shorts. However, because of Kambili's strict religious background, she does not own any shorts and Ifeoma tells her to borrow one from her cousin, Amaka.

Kambili's interest in Father Amadi makes her aware of her sexuality for the first time in her life. She wants to make herself look more attractive for Father Amadi. When she hears Father Amadi's Toyota drive up to the front of the flat, she takes Amaka's lipstick and runs it over her lips, in the same way she had seen Amaka do. Amaka is a young woman who is aware of her femininity and hence enhances it by using cosmetics specifically designed for women. Amaka, who looks up to her mother from whom she learnt the art of wearing makeup, wears the lipstick proudly and confidently just like her mother. However, Kambili is unable to pull off wearing lipstick, "It looked strange not as glamorous as it did on Amaka; it did not even have the bronze shimmer" (p.174). She is uncomfortable with the way the lipstick looks on her because she is insecure about herself.

Kambili's constant encounters with "the unpriestly looking" Father Amadi makes her fall in love with him. She observes about him:

> Father Amadi's car smelled like him, a clean scent that made me think of a clean azure sky. His shorts had seemed longer the last time I saw him in them, well past his knees. But now they climbed up to expose a muscular thigh sprinkled with dark hair. The space between us was too small, too tight. I was always a penitent when I was close to a priest at confession. But it was hard to feel penitent now, with Father Amadi's cologne deep in my lungs. (p.175)

Because of the encouragement that Kambili gets from her aunt, she is able to discover herself as a woman with feelings. Kambili is aware of Father Amadi as a sexually attractive man, and not as a priest who offers penitence to his flock. She acknowledges his masculinity by admiring his strong thighs and even takes notice of the way he smells. Kambili goes through a sexual awakening and for the first time in her life she recognizes herself as a woman with sexual feelings.

In *Lucy*, Lucy's mother is also responsible for initiating Lucy into womanhood. Despite the tension between mother and daughter, it is Lucy's mother who shapes her daughter's female identity. Katherine Sugg observes of the tension between mother and daughter: "Lucy's descriptions of her mother's aggressive image and discourse and how she threatens to overwhelm Lucy's sense of self show how the mother fulfills the role of identificatory other, the double who takes over the subject's place and generates feelings of an uncanny and horrifying invasion."[97] Lucy perceives her mother's overwhelming

[97] Katherine Sugg, "I Would Rather Be Dead": Nostalgia and Narrative in Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy* in *Narrative*, Vol. 10, No.2, May 2002. Web. 15 March 2009, p.161.

attempt to make her into a carbon copy of herself as imprisoning. Thus, she refuses to open letters from her mother because she knows that reading them will make her die from longing for her and hence cause her to fall into the same trap again. Lucy criticizes her mother for wanting to mould her into a particular definition of womanhood. “I said that she had acted like a saint, but that since I was living in this real world I had really wanted just a mother. I reminded her that my whole upbringing had been devoted to preventing me from becoming a slut; I then gave a brief description of my personal life, offering each detail as evidence that my upbringing had been a failure and that, in fact, life as a slut was quite enjoyable, thank you very much…” (p.128). “The saint” then replies that Lucy would always be her daughter and that her place belonged with her. Lucy criticizes her mother for treating her as a project and not as a child who just needed love and care from her mother. She rejects her mother’s idea of what ideal black womanhood should be. Instead, Lucy recreates an identity of what a woman her age, living in her time, should be like.

Lucy’s mother guides her through early womanhood when Lucy reaches puberty. Filled with confusion and dread, Lucy is reminded of her past when she forgets to protect herself after sleeping with a man called Hugh. Her memories take her back to the time when she was nearing womanhood and started observing changes on her body. When she notices a rust colour stained on her underpants after an earlier pain in her stomach, it is her mother who initiates her into womanhood by explaining her fears away. “…I didn’t recognize this colour as blood. It frightened me all the same, and I immediately cried out for my mother to come and help me. When she saw my predicament, she laughed and

laughed. It was a kind of laugh, a reassuring laugh. And then she said that finding blood in my underpants might be something one day I would get down on my knees and pray for" (p.69). Because it is a problem concerning the female body, the frightened Lucy immediately calls for her mother and she realizes what the rusty colour means. As a mother, Lucy's mother reassures her daughter that there is nothing wrong with her and that it is completely natural. In cryptic words, she informs Lucy that the occurrence of a period, which indicates that there has not been any conception of a baby, would be something that a sexually active woman who does not want to get pregnant would cherish. With those words, she teaches Lucy that when a woman starts menstruating it means that she is capable of having a baby if she has unprotected sex or if she is not using any contraception.

Lucy's mother also teaches her daughter local methods of emergency contraception. When Lucy has unprotected sex with Hugh, she is not worried about her period not showing up. This is because way back, without telling her exactly how one might miss a menstrual period, her mother had shown her which herbs to pick and boil and what time of the day to drink the potion they produced, in order to bring out a reluctant period.

> She had presented the whole idea to me as a way to strengthen the womb, but underneath we both knew that a weak womb was not the cause of a missed period. She knew that I knew, but we presented to each other a face of innocence and politeness and even went so far as to curtsy to each other at the end. (p.70)

Lucy's mother acts like a prude by refraining from explaining explicitly what the herbs are. Instead of explaining the real function of the herbs, she tells her daughter that the herbs are meant to strengthen the womb if one misses a period when in fact the herbs are a traditional form of emergency contraceptives which induces a period hence forcing the "potential" baby out. Lucy however knows what the herbs are meant to do and her mother is aware of that and thus the lesson is successful. The dilemma that Lucy is in after the encounter with Hugh is that the herbs do not grow in America and the only way she could get them was to write her mother to send them, and that would mean letting her know what she had been up to. Lucy declares that she would rather die that let her judgmental mother see her "in such a vulnerable position–unmarried and with child" (p.70). By refusing to ask her mother for help, Lucy continues to intensify the separation between mother and daughter.

Contrary to her mother's view of what a "lady" should be like, Lucy sleeps with different men. She falls in love not with the men she sleeps with, but with the power her sexuality gives her. "Power not over men, but power to control her own happiness."[98] That kind of power is what makes her liberated. She says, "…what an adventure this part of my life had become, and how much I looked forward to it, because I had not known that such pleasure could exist and, what was more, be available to me" (p.113). Lucy longs for freedom to be herself and not an echo of her mother, to determine her future,

[98] Jessica Barswick, *A Stranger In Your Own Skin : A Review of Jamaica Kincaid's Lucy* cited @ http://voices.cla.umn.edu/essays/fiction/lucy.html. Accessed on 17 July 2009.

and to be in charge of her sexuality. She, therefore, believes that being in love would complicate her life and 'latching" on to a man was "not for somebody her age" and definitely not for her. At this point in her life, Lucy is not ready to be tied down to a man who would dominate her and hinder her freedom to do as she likes.

As Mariah, Lucy's boss, relates her sexual adventures to Lucy, she discloses that she had had bad sex with her husband. Lucy does not understand what Mariah means because she had never imagined that the word "bad" could be applied to sex. She had learnt from her conservative mother, as she was being initiated into womanhood, that "the experience could leave you feeling indifferent, that during it you might make out with the grocery list, pick a style of curtains, memorize a subtle but choice insult for people who imagined themselves above you" (p.116). As a contemporary woman who controls her sexuality, Lucy, therefore, rejects her mother's and Mariah's views that sex should remain a passive experience for women.

In *The Bluest Eye*, unlike the dysfunctional Breedlove family, the MacTeers are a family which admits of some "disorder but which still has some order, some form of control, some love." [99] Like Lucy's mother in *Lucy*, whose aim is to prevent Lucy from becoming a "slut", Mrs. MacTeer is determined to prevent her daughters from becoming loose women like "the fancy women of the maroon nail polish" (p.77). As the girls are fast approaching womanhood, she warns them against being in the presence of the three

[99] Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi qtd in Shelley Wong, "Transgression as Poesis in *The Bluest Eye*" in *Callaloo*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Summer, 1990), p. 475.

prostitutes, China, Poland and Marie who live nearby. According to Mrs. MacTeer, the three women, especially Marie (whom they call the Maginot Line), are ruined. The Maginot Line is the one:

> "My mother said she wouldn't let eat out of one of her plates." That was the one church women never allowed their eyes to rest on. That was the one who had killed people, set them on fire, poisoned them, cooked them in lye. Although I thought the Maginot Line's face, hidden under all that fat, was really sweet, I had heard too many black and red words about her, seen too many mouths go triangle at the mention of her name, to dwell on any redeeming features she might have.(p.77)

The Maginot Line and the two other prostitutes are alienated by the community because of the type of life they lead. No one wants to associate themselves with them. The society sees the Maginot Line, in particular, as immoral, dirty and dangerous. Church women can not lay their eyes on her because they think she is abominable and therefore will make them impure just by looking at her. Women are afraid that she will manipulate their men and then destroy them. Mrs. MacTeer does not want her daughters anywhere near the Maginot Line and her friends because their behaviour will influence her daughters negatively. These prostitutes' behaviour perpetuates stereotypes of black women as being lecherous (the Jezebel image), and Mrs. MacTeer resists this controlling image by protecting her daughters from this label. When Mr. Henry, a lodger in the MacTeer's house inappropriately touches Frieda, Mrs. MacTeer and her husband nearly kill him. Later on when Miss Dunion, a friend of Mrs. MacTeer suggests that Mrs.

MacTeer should take Frieda to the doctor because she might be ruined, Mrs. MacTeer gets angry at her and starts "screaming all over again" (p.101). As a mother, the thought of her daughter being sexually violated and hence no longer chaste is something that she cannot entertain in her mind. Upon hearing Miss Dunion say that she might be ruined, Frieda gets upset as she pictures herself into the same abominable state that the Maginot Line is.

> "I don't want to be *ruined*!"
>
> "What's ruined?"
>
> "You know. Like the Maginot Line. She is ruined. Mama said so" The tears came back. An image of Frieda, big and fat, came to my mind. (Emphasis not mine) (p.101)

In their young minds, Claudia and Frieda imagine the ruin not in terms of morals but in terms of physical appearance. Even Pecola's mother, Mrs. Breedlove, who really does not care much about her daughter, warns her against going to the Maginot Line's house because she is bad. However, Pecola goes against her mother's wishes by going to the only people who do not despise her. This is probably because the three prostitutes are also marginalized in the society. They, therefore, identify with Pecola's alienation and thus welcome her into their home.

Motherhood constitutes a large part of what it is to be a woman especially in the lives of black women.[100] It is valued so much because it represents the continuation of a group and also serves as a site where black women express and learn the power of self-definition. As noted earlier on in the chapter, Lucille P. Fultz observes that mothers are the ones that socialize their daughters into motherhood, who show their daughters how to be mothers and this starts from an early age. In *The Bluest Eye*, this is evident when the parents buy a baby doll for Claudia. Because black society has internalized white standards of beauty, the baby doll that the parents buy for Claudia is a blue-eyed one. "From the clucking sounds of adults I knew that the doll represented what they thought was my fondest wish" (p.20). However instead of producing the desired and expected feelings in Claudia, the doll inspires feelings of bemusement.

> What was I supposed to do with it? Pretend I was its mother? I had no interest in babies or in the concept of motherhood. I was interested only in humans my own age and size, and could not generate any enthusiasm at the prospect of being a mother. Motherhood was old age and other remote possibilities. I learned quickly, however, what I was expected to do with the doll: rock it, fabricate storied situations around it, even sleep with it. (p.20)

[100] Signe Arnfred, "Images of 'motherhood' –African and Nordic perspectives" in *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies* (2003).

Claudia does not understand what she is supposed to do with the doll. What is a child like her supposed to do with another child? In her mind, motherhood is for grown ups and a choice she will have to make when she is older. She later discerns that mothering the doll is supposed to be the socialization of how she will mother her own children when she grows up. Claudia learns from the grown ups that her experience in rocking the baby doll, enacting real life situations with it was preparation for when she becomes a mother. As Janice Bale-Henson argues, black girls are socialized into a very strong motherhood orientation. From a young age some women are trained and prepared to fit in their role as a mother whether in the biological sense of the word or the communal sense. Thus this emphasizes the concept of motherhood as being of central importance in the philosophy of both African and Afro-American peoples.

As an "othermother", Mrs. MacTeer fulfills the role of initiator of daughters into womanhood when Pecola starts her first menstruation. With the absence of her mother, Pecola has no one to guide her through the path of womanhood, no one to explain to her what having a period means.

> "A brownish-red stain discoloured the back of her dress. She kept whinnying, standing with her legs far apart. Frieda said, "Oh. Lordy! I know. I know what that is!"
>
> "What?" Pecola's fingers went to her mouth. "That's ministratin'."
>
> "Am I going to die?"
>
> "Noooo. You won't die. It just means you can have a baby!"
>
> "What?"

> "How do you know?" I was sick and tired of Frieda knowing everything.
>
> "Mildred told me, *and Mama too*." (p.28) (Emphasis mine)

Frieda knows the significance of the bleeding because her mother explained to her the changes that the female body undergoes when one reaches a certain age. Mrs. MacTeer is aware that Frieda is at the advent of puberty and therefore she has to be aware of the physical changes that will take over her body. Mrs. MacTeer, therefore, explains to Frieda what menstruation is and that it means that a girl can now have a child. That is why Frieda, in expressions befitting her age, is able to explain to her peers what the blood signifies. In a process of socialization, Mrs. MacTeer also explains and teaches her daughter what to do when the first period occurs. Armed with this knowledge, Frieda takes charge of the situation. She gets a rectangular piece of cotton and tells Pecola to hold it between her legs. Then she takes safety pins from the hem of her skirt and begins to pin the ends of the napkin to Pecola's dress. On the other hand, Pecola has had no one to tell her what to do when she "becomes" a woman hence the panic when she notices the blood.

It is only when Mrs. MacTeer intervenes that Pecola falls into experienced hands. She teaches Pecola what to do and explains to her that having a period means that she can have a child. "Trooping in, whilst Frieda cried, Pecola carried 'a white tail' and Claudia 'carrying the little-girl-gone-to-woman pants'" (p.31), Mrs. MacTeer ushers Pecola into the bathroom to give her a talk on womanhood. "We could hear water running into the bathtub" (p.31). The naïve Claudia thinks her mother is going to drown Pecola but Frieda assures her that "she's just going to wash her clothes and all" (p.31). Reminiscent of

Lucy's mother's reassuring laughter in *Lucy* when Lucy starts her first menstruation, the music of Mrs. MacTeer's laughter can also be heard over the gushing water.

In conclusion, the chapter has argued that mothers in the three texts initiate their daughters into womanhood by guiding them through the physical changes taking place in their bodies. In addition, they mould their daughters to fit into society's idea of womanhood. Through example and precept, black mothers prepare their daughters for the life long role of being a woman and also of motherhood. Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* depicts Beatrice Achike as confiding in Kambili on becoming a mother but also on the miscarriages that she as a woman has experienced. This is a way of initiating her daughter into womanhood by making her aware of experiences that the female body goes through. Similarly, Mrs. MacTeer and other women in *The Bluest Eye* initiate Mrs. MacTeer's daughter, Claudia, into womanhood by giving her a doll to mother. This act provides a training ground for equipping Claudia with the knowledge of what to do when she becomes a mother. This emphasizes the centrality of motherhood in black women's lives. Mothers in all the three novels play a dominant role in guiding their daughters through the early stages of womanhood by explaining the biological changes taking place in their bodies, hence emphasizing their roles as initiators of daughters into womanhood. For example, Lucy's mother is the first to know when her daughter starts her first period and she explains to Lucy what her body is undergoing. She also teaches her ways in which she can induce a period whenever it is missed. Likewise, it is Mrs. MacTeer who tells her daughter Frieda the meaning of menstruation, what it entails and what to do when it occurs.

Through the analysis of the three novels, the study observes, however, that biological mothers are not the only ones who play the role of initiators. Co-mothers and othermothers also initiate black girls into womanhood as portrayed by Mrs. MacTeer in *The Bluest Eye*, who guides Pecola through her first menstruation by reassuring her and explaining the changes taking place in her body. In addition, Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* also initiates Kambili as well as her own daughter into womanhood, by training them to be 'good' women and mothers who will take proper care of their families in future.

CHAPTER FOUR

PATRIARCHY AND SOCIALIZATION

Oppressive forces for black women appear not only in the form of race (mainly for the diasporic women), colonial domination, or class differences. There is also the form of patriarchy which relegates them to the peripheral. Adrienne Rich defines patriarchy as "the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men - by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, law, and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male."[101] It further includes titles being traced through the male line. This chapter, therefore, analyses how black patriarchy influences the socialization process of daughters by their mothers in the three works.

Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* portrays how black patriarchy silences and oppresses women in this post-colonial setting. Patriarchy in Africa has been attributed to several factors, one of them being cultural traditions that view women as inferior despite being given positions of authority in pre-colonial black Africa. Another factor is the result of colonial practices which favoured men and put them in positions of power, as well as certain religious teachings which relegated women to the peripheral. One tradition that was exported to Africa during the colonial period was the exclusion of women from the

[101] Adrienne Rich qtd in Dorothy E. Roberts, *Op. Cit*, p.3.

newly created colonial public sphere.[102] In Britain, access to power was gender-based and the same was transferred to their colonies. Although both African men and women as conquered people were excluded from the echelons of colonial state structures, men were represented at the lower levels of government thus leading to a legacy of women's marginalization.[103] Black patriarchy privileges men and male children while the position of the female members of society is reduced to that of an appendage to men and child bearers for their husbands. Men in African patriarchal societies are important because they will continue the family name and hence make it immortal. The female child serves a subordinate role because she will not continue the familial line but will rather ensure another man's immortality when she gets married off. Her only worth will be her capability to produce a male child for her husband, for this child is the one who will continue the family name. Adichie depicts this perception in her novel:

> "*Nekene*, see the boy that will inherit his father's riches!" one woman said, hooting even more loudly, her mouth shaped like a narrow tunnel. "If we did not have the same blood in our veins, I would *sell* you my daughter," another said to Jaja… "The girl is a ripe agbogho! Very soon a strong young man will bring us palm wine!" another said. (p.91-2)

The village women fuss over Jaja because as a man he will inherit his father's wealth. His being male ensures that the money is kept in the family, unlike Kambili who will get

[102] Oyeronke Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women: Making Sense of Western Gender Discourses,* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p.123.

[103] Ibid.

married elsewhere. Jaja will also continue the family name and hence the lineage while Kambili will leave the Achike name and adopt that of her husband. One should notice how the woman in the passage above says she would sell her daughter to Jaja. This demonstrates how, in traditional African societies, women are commodified and hence can be subjected to any kind of exchange without asking for their permission. The people who look into the exchange of the bride will be the male members of that society. According to Mary Wentworth, a male's privilege begins during his mother's pregnancy when his family expresses the age-old preference for a boy, especially if the baby is to be the first. In many cultures, a man's virility is questioned if he does not father a son. "In contrast, patriarchy makes a daughter a liability since it requires that she be married, a status that normally affords her little possibility of economically benefiting her family of origin."[104] This ethos of the society's preference of the male child is also echoed by Papa-Nnukwu when Ifeoma asks her father why she does not behave the way Eugene does despite the fact that she also went to a missionary school. "But you are a woman. You do not count"(p.83). He replies confirming society's view that males are more valuable than women.

> "Eh? So I don't count? Has Eugene ever asked about your aching leg? If I do not count, then I will stop asking if you rose well in the morning." … "I joke with you, *nwa m*. Where would I be today if my *chi* had not given me a daughter?" Papa Nnukwu paused. "My spirit will intercede for you, so that *Chukwu* will send a good man to take care of you and the

[104] Mary L. Wentworth, "What is Patriarchy and Why is it the Most Powerful Force in the World Today?" cited @www.global_sisterhood.org

> children." "Let your spirit ask *Chukwu* to hasten my promotion to senior lecturer, that is all I ask," Aunty Ifeoma said. (p.83)

From this dialogue, Papa Nnukwu, a traditionalist reveals African society's perception that women are incomplete without a man and they need men as saviours to take care of them. This perception applies even in the case of Ifeoma who has already established herself as a university lecturer. Ifeoma's achievements do not mean anything unless she is married.

Eugene Achike, a member of the educated elite group created by colonialism, is a strict Catholic whose distorted perception of the faith has made Catholicism intolerant and Manichean. He lives by the dictates of the white Catholic priest, Father Benedict, whom he does not question and tries very hard to please. Through his own questionable interpretations of Catholicism, Father Benedict encourages Eugene to use his church-sanctioned power as the head of the family to dominate his family. Eugene is an extremist in all his endeavours and he is feared like a god by his family. He inhibits his daughter's freedom by ordering her to wear skirts which are strictly below the knee and prohibiting her from wearing trousers because wearing trousers for a woman is a sin. When going to mass on Sundays, according to Father Benedict and his follower Eugene, young girls, in this case Kambili, have to cover their hair because exposing one's hair in church was ungodly. Like Chinua Achebe's Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, Eugene would go to any length to avoid being like his father. "Eugene is an angry man who has constructed his self-identity around his rejection of his own father and all that he stands for…we do see

how his father's traditional Igbo beliefs threaten the entire structure upon which he bases his identity and his power."[105] He is a bundle of contradictions. He is a successful and important man in the society. Hence the wealth amassed from his factories and newspaper has earned him the title of *Omelora*, "The One Who Does for the Community," because he provides for the underprivileged in his village community. His title earns him respect and the villages view him as a good leader and yet he abusively reigns over his family by constantly beating them. Beatrice and her children fear to even talk when this patriarchal figure is around and any dissenting view is met with violence or a judgmental prayer since it interpreted by Eugene as an act of deviation. In one instance, Beatrice, who has suffered several miscarriages because of her husband's beatings, feels the effects of her latest pregnancy and asks to stay in the car when they go to visit Father Benedict after mass.

> "Let me stay in the car and wait, *biko*," Mama said, leaning against the Mercedes. "I feel vomit in my throat." Papa turned to stare at her. I held my breath. It seemed a long moment, but it might have been only seconds. "Are you sure you want to stay in the car?" Papa asked. Mama was looking down; her hands were placed on her belly, to hold the wrapper from untying itself or to keep her bread and tea breakfast down. "My body does not feel right," she mumbled. "I asked if you were sure

[105] Heather Hewett, "Coming of Age: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the Voice of the Third Generation" in *English in Africa* 32, no. 1 (May 2005), p.76.

> you wanted to stay in the car." Mama looked up. "I'll come with you. It's really not that bad." (p.29)

Fear of Eugene's violent behavior urges her to leave the car and force herself to go into the priest's house even though she is not feeling well. Beatrice is afraid to argue that she is experiencing morning sickness because of her pregnancy. Eugene is an abuser who does not mind if his wife is feeling well or not as long as she abides by his rule. In this case, the rule is that they go to see God's messenger, Father Benedict. This is one of the instances that Eugene uses religion to abuse his family. Eugene's emphasis on obedience and Beatrice's submission illustrate the power relations that are dictated by patriarchy: the man, who is the head of the family, controls his wife by any means necessary and she obeys without question. Pauline Ada Uwakweh (1998) observes about abuse:

> Silencing comprises all imposed restrictions on women's social being, thinking and expressions and these are religiously or culturally sanctioned. As a patriarchal weapon of control, it is used by the dominant male structure on the subordinate or muted female structure.[106]

The Achike family cannot speak out about their years of abuse to anyone. Instead, they present to the world a picture of family bliss. Kambili and Jaja have found their own way

[106] Pauline Ada Uwakweh qtd in Ogaga Okuyade, "Changing Borders and Creating Voices: Silence as Character in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*", *Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol.2, no.9, March 2009, p.248.

of communication through a language of the eyes. Their mother Beatrice is passive and can only speak in a low tone or sometimes in monosyllables.

Adichie portrays Beatrice as conforming to the dictates of a patriarchal society that states that a woman only gains respect when she is married. Even though Eugene tortures his wife and children, Beatrice refuses to leave him and still reveres him like a god. She internalizes the abuse and starts seeing it as the norm. She still praises him for not listening to members of his *umunna* when they told him to marry another wife for more children. Beatrice who is "an embodiment of the traditional African woman, who is unsophisticated and content with the economic security her husband guarantees"[107], has internalized the patriarchal dictates of society that view women without husbands as inadequate or incomplete. "...you say a woman with children and no husband, what is that?"(p.75), Beatrice asks her sister in law Ifeoma whom she accuses of being unrealistic with her university talk. "You have come again, Ifeoma. You know what I mean. How can a woman live like that?" Mama's eyes had grown taking up more space on her face" (p.75). Beatrice is shocked by the idea that a woman can even think of existing without a husband because culturally that is unacceptable and unheard of. In other words, what Beatrice means is that it does not matter even if a woman is being abused in her marriage. As long as she has a husband to "crown" her life, she has to endure all the pains and restrictions of that marriage. It is from this premise that Beatrice refuses to leave Eugene after he breaks a stool on her belly causing her to miscarry again. An outraged Ifeoma asks "Has a nut

[107] Ibid, p.255.

come loose in your head *gbo*? You are not going anywhere"(p.249). But Beatrice is stubborn and refuses to stay at Ifeoma's house.

> "Where would I go if I leave Eugene's house? Tell me where would I go?" She did not wait for Aunty Ifeoma to respond. "Do you know how many mothers pushed their daughters at him? Do you know how many asked him to impregnate them, even, and not to bother paying a bride price?" (p.250)

The abuse has left Beatrice believing that she is nothing without Eugene. Beatrice is trapped in an order which does not give her economic and social empowerment to break away from her oppressive station in life. She sees futility in breaking away from Eugene because of over depending on her husband in everything be it economic or social. She is also afraid of losing respect as a married woman and also for leaving her prominent husband. Beatrice's fear of starting afresh on her own is similar to Ramatoulaye's in Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*. Ramatoulaye refuses to leave her husband despite neglecting her after he takes a second wife. She says, "I am one of those who can realize themselves fully and bloom only when they form part of a couple…I have never conceived of happiness outside marriage."[108] Beatrice also finds security in the concept of marriage despite the confines that come with the marriage. In her mind, she is fortunate to be the one carrying Eugene's name and to be the mother of his children.

[108] Mariama Ba, *So Long a Letter*, Ibadan: Heinemann, 1989, p. 55-6.

However, her lack of empowerment to leave further endangers the lives of her children. Eugene nearly beats Kambili to death when he discovers that she is clinging to a painting of her Papa Nnukwu. Kambili is left unconscious in the hospital for days leaving the people around her in suspense, not knowing whether she will live or not. Again when Ifeoma tells her sister-in-law to leave, Beatrice, in a zombie like state, keeps on chanting "It has never happened like this before. He has never *punished* her like this before" (p.214) (Emphasis mine). Typical of an abused woman, Beatrice sees the beating up of her daughter as punishment for her wrong doing. She excuses Eugene from taking responsibility for his actions. Instead, she sees his cruelty as an expression of love whereby he wants his daughter to be morally upright. When Kambili gains consciousness, Beatrice again refuses to paint her husband as an abuser. "Your father has been by your bedside every night these past three days. He has not slept a wink." (p.214) Despite the pain he has inflicted on their daughter, Beatrice portrays Eugene as a loving and caring father. At this point, Kambili has become disillusioned with her father and with great effort, she turns her painful head away from her mother and ignores her comment. She resents her mother for failing to protect her from the abuse and for making excuse for him. She "wished (she) could get up and hug her, and yet [she] wanted to push her away, to shove her so hard that she would topple over the chair" (p.213). Finality is reflected in Kambili's action of turning her head away from her mother. It is at this moment that she seems to emotionally sever her ties from her mother's physical and emotional baggage, to work towards her own empowerment.[109] Ogunyemi defines a young girl's growth into a womanist through experiencing a

[109] Shalini Nadaswaran, *Op.Cit,* p.10.

traumatic event. It is in learning to cope within this traumatic experience that the female character develops a sense of agency and personhood.[110] Kambili's decision not to listen to her mother's excuses anymore illustrates the womanist theory that there are trigger points in the young female characters' lives that act as defining moments leading them towards their process of empowerment. This process of empowerment may not involve drastic actions or reactions but rather a psychology of willfulness and conscious decision-making.[111]

Beatrice also socializes her daughter according to these patriarchal dictates because that is what society demands her to do. Kambili inherits powerlessness from her mother whom she has seen helpless countless times at the hands of her father. Like her mother, she has also internalized the abuse to the point that she sees it as normal.

> Every time Aunty Ifeoma spoke to Papa, my heart stopped, then started again in a hurry. It was the flippant tone; she did not seem to recognize that it was Papa, that he was different, special. I wanted to reach out and press her lips shut and get some of that shiny bronze lipstick on my fingers. (p.77)

Kambili sees her father as godlike, as "special" and somebody who is incapable of doing wrong. She hates it when anybody speaks to him in a way that removes him from the pedestal that she and the entire society has placed him. She tries to please him in whatever she says and does, and constantly seeks his approval. Usually, when Jaja says

[110] Ibid, p.6.
[111] Ibid.

something pleasing to her father, she wishes she had said it first. For example, when Eugene talks about a newspaper calling the military dictator a president, something which his newspaper the *Standard* would not do, Jaja comments to his father's pleasure: "'President assumes he was elected,' Jaja said. 'Head of State is the right term.' Papa smiled and I wished I had said that before Jaja had" (p.25). Kambili, who has been socialized by her mother to see her father's harsh actions as the normal way of heading a family, also refrains from implicating her father in his wrong doings. When she suddenly blurts out that she had sinned (according to her father) because she had slept in the same room as her heathen grandfather, Father Amadi who obviously disagrees with her, asks her why it is a sin. "I stared at him. I felt that he had missed a line in his script. 'I don't know.' 'Your father told you that.' I looked away, out of the window. I would not implicate Papa, since Father Amadi obviously disagreed" (p.175).

Kambili also refuses to implicate Eugene when he flings his missal at Jaja for not receiving Eucharist. The missal misses Jaja and instead breaks Beatrice's figurines into pieces. The wiping of these beige, finger-size, ceramic figurines of dancers has served a therapeutic role for Beatrice for a long time. Kambili says:

> Years ago, before I understood, I used to wonder why she polished them each time I heard the sounds from their room, like something being banged against the door. Her rubber slippers never made a sound on the stairs, but I knew she went downstairs…She spent at least a quarter of an hour on each ballet dancing figurine. There were never tears on her face. (p.10)

Beatrice finds comfort and lets out her pain by polishing the figurines every time her husband beats her. The breaking of these figurines, therefore, serves as a symbol for the disintegration of the whole family including her passivity. Kambili's refusal to implicate her father in the family's terror leads her to say the opposite of what she had intended to say. "I meant to say I am sorry Papa broke your figurines, but the words that came out were, 'I am sorry your figurines broke, Mama'" (p.10). Kambili knows the importance of the figurines to her mother and what their loss means to her. However, her father is too great a man to be indicted for breaking the figurines. By refusing to implicate him in the breaking of the figurines, she excuses him for the pain that he has inflicted on her family. She does not hold him responsible for hurting them but rather sees it as his God sanctioned and cultural duty to lead them to the right path.

In contrast with the Achike's turbulent marriage, Ifeoma and her husband led a loving and respectful life with each other before he died. Ifeoma is headstrong and independent and is critical of men dominating their wives.

> "Six girls in my first-year seminar class are married, their husbands visit in Mercedes and Lexus cars every weekend, their husbands buy them stereos and textbooks and refrigerators, and when they graduate, the husbands own them and their degree." (p.75)

Ifeoma disagrees with the patriarchal dictates of society that allow women to be controlled by their husbands. She is critical of her female students who marry early and

end up being owned by their husbands who provide for them financially when they are students. Despite being educated, these women do not liberate themselves from their husbands' domination. Rather, they end up being objects that these wealthy men accumulate. Ifeoma is apprehensive of this kind of male domination. She speaks against it and encourages women to defy this kind of oppression. She believes that "being defiant can be a good thing sometimes…defiance is like marijuana-it is not a bad thing when used right" (p.144). Ifeoma teaches her daughter that even though defiance, especially by women, is perceived negatively, when done properly and for the right reason, it becomes necessary. Her philosophy of defiance and her encouragement of opinions are passed on to her daughter who is passionate about activism and being true to her cultural roots. Amaka's defiance, for example, is illustrated when she refuses to choose an English name for her confirmation. "What the church is saying is that only an English name will make your confirmation valid. 'Chiamaka' says God is beautiful…Don't they all glorify God as much as 'Paul' and 'Peter' and 'Simon'?" (p.272). Even when her mother tells her not to bother Father Amadi and just give him the name, she openly tells her mother that she disagrees and defiantly walks away. Amaka holds her ground and refuses to adopt an English name. She is therefore disqualified from being part of the confirmation.

Ifeoma's philosophy of defiance is also passed on to Kambili when she realizes that in order to grow and discover herself she has to defy her father's wishes. When Eugene discovers his children admiring a painting done by Amaka of their grandfather, he is furious and he grabs the painting and tears it into little pieces. However, Kambili is not ready to give up something which she had been denied all her life-a relationship with

her grandfather which is now represented by the painting. Kambili's grandfather represents the traditional roots that Eugene was trying so hard to cut and deny his daughter. She defies her father by falling down on the pieces of the painting and refusing to get up. Kambili's acknowledgement of her father's weaknesses challenges his dominance over her and begins her process towards self-empowerment.[112] Shocked and realizing that his religious indoctrination of his children was falling apart, Eugene is confused. Rather than admit that his philosophy is inhuman and inefficacious, with a doleful expression on his face, he degenerates into an uncontrollable fit of anger and beats her up heavily, until she falls unconscious.[113]

Regardless of the physical and cultural separation of the Middle Passage, black women share a common fate of male domination as argued by Black feminists. In *Lucy*, Lucy's mother also internalizes the patriarchal dictates of her West Indian society. While some women resist and break away from the confines of patriarchy, for example Ifeoma and Amaka in *Purple Hibiscus*, some women perpetuate their own marginalization by conforming to their society's patriarchal values. When Maude Quick, Lucy's childhood babysitter, shows up at Mariah's doorstep with the news that Lucy's father had passed away, she tells Lucy that she reminds her of her mother and Lucy is enraged.

> "I am not my mother. She and I are not alike. She should not have married my father. She should not have had children. She should not

[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid.

> have thrown away her intelligence. She should not have paid so little attention to mine."(p.123)

Lucy's refusal to be likened to her mother reveals her disgust and resistance towards patriarchy. Lucy's mother deliberately shelved her ambitions and her daughter's because of their gender. To her, a woman's aspiration is to become somebody's wife and bear his children, who should preferably be male. Leota S. Lawrence observes about black women in the West Indies:

> It is a fact that many a young woman in the Caribbean has deliberately stifled any pretensions to a career, lest in so doing she outshines her male counterpart and in so doing end up an "old maid"…they are not considered complete unless there is a man in their lives.[114]

Lawrence argues that despite the fact that black women in the Caribbean have proved to be innovative in making a livelihood for themselves and their family, regardless of social and economic constraints, they have never been encouraged to take pride in any function other than that of being a wife and mother.[115] Indeed, this observation is also true for African women where society has dictated that "a woman without a child for her husband is a failure" as powerfully portrayed in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*.

[114] Leota S Lawrence, *Op cit*, p.4.

[115] Ibid.

Kincaid portrays Lucy's father as a black West Indian man "whose function as a father is limited to fertilizing the female."[116] He had fathered numerous children (close to thirty) without getting married to any of their mothers before finally settling down with Lucy's mother. Lucy's father is much older than his wife. Lucy says of her father, "I long ago thought he married her for her youth and strength, the way someone else would marry for money. He was such a clever man" (p.126). Lucy's father marries a younger woman for his own benefit so that he can be looked after in his old age. This is reminiscent of polygamous African men who acquire younger women to take care of them when they as well as their other wives are well advanced in age. For example, Nnaife in *The Joys of Motherhood* marries a sixteen-year-old girl to take care of him and to give him more children when his wives grow old. Upon getting married to Lucy's father, Lucy's mother lets go of herself, discards any ambitions of a career and devotes herself to her marriage. Lucy says: "My mother was devoted to him. She was devoted to her duties: a clean house, delicious food for us, a clean yard, a small garden of herbs and vegetables, the washing and ironing of our clothes" (p.127). She neither has the energy nor the time to develop her own intelligence for her life is dedicated to developing and nurturing this old man and her family. Shelving one's ambitions and being an appendage to a man is a negative value that Lucy's mother tries to instill into Lucy. She does this by not paying attention to Lucy's intelligence as well. By wanting to make Lucy "an echo of her", Lucy's mother does not see the potential that women have in being anything else other than being a man's wife and ensuring the continuation

[116] Merle Hodge, "The Shadow of the Whip: A Comment of Male-Female Relations in the Caribbean" qtd in Leota S. Lawrence, *Op cit*, p.3.

of his lineage. Lucy's mother believes that a woman is incomplete without a man, thus echoing Beatrice Achike's views that a husband "crowns" a woman's life. Lucy remembers what her mother used to say about a certain nurse back home who delivered Lucy when she was born.

> She was a woman my mother respected to her face but had many bad things to say about behind her back. They were: she would never find a man; no man would have her; she carried herself like a strong box, and from the look on her face a man couldn't find reason to break in; she had lived alone for so long it was too late to start with a man now. (p.93)

Despite this woman's independent achievements, Lucy's mother does not respect her because she does not have a man in her life. According to Lucy's mother, a woman who was very independent and never showed any emotion on her face would never find a man. These are not qualities of a woman and according to her, a man would never want such a woman because men want women who are soft and who depend on them. As a result, women are supposed to adopt those submissive qualities in order to find a man. The fact that women are supposed to adopt certain qualities just to attract a man emphasizes the view also shared by African societies that a woman is incomplete unless she is attached to a man. By all means necessary, a woman has to have a man in order for her to be respected by society. Merle Hodge comments that " the unmarried…or childless woman (in the Caribbean), say, in her forties, is projected as a stock joke; frustrated,

nagging, disagreeable, withering away for the want of a man to rule her, or offspring to prove her fecundity."[117]

Lucy resents her mother for trying to socialize her according to these confines of patriarchy. She reveals to Mariah, her boss, that she had been an only child for nine years before her parents, in a space of five years, had three male children. It is this particular moment, the birth of Lucy's brothers, which starts the breaking down of Lucy's relationship with her mother-her alienation from her mother whom she had loved deeply. Thus totally ignoring Lucy's intellectual capabilities because of her gender, "each time a new child was born, my mother and father would announce to each other with great seriousness that the new child would go to university in England and study to become a doctor or lawyer or someone who would occupy an important and influential position in society" (p.130). Lucy says:

> I did not mind my father saying those things about his sons, his own kind, and leaving me out. My father did not know me at all; I did not expect him to imagine a life for me filled with excitement and triumph. But my mother knew me well as she knew herself: I, at the time, even thought of us as identical; and whenever I saw her eyes fill up with tears at the thought of how proud she would be at some deed her sons had accomplished, I felt a sword go through my heart, for there was no accompanying scenario in which she saw me, her only identical

[117] Merle Hodge, "Young Women and the Development of Stable Family Life in the Caribbean" *Savacou*, (Kingston, 1977), p.42.

> offspring, in a remotely similar situation. To myself I then began to call her Mrs. Judas... (p.131)

Patriarchy, which places value on sons rather than daughters, triumphs in Lucy's family and the fact that Lucy's mother participates in this discrimination and tries to socialize Lucy into this type of thinking is an act of betrayal to the female kind according to Lucy. Lucy's mother betrays the female bond that she had with her daughter. She believes in the inferiority of women and that their dreams of a career should take a subsidiary role to the ambitions of men. Conforming to patriarchy and therefore ignoring Lucy's capabilities, Lucy's mother lives to fulfill her dream of seeing her sons become great people in society.

Lucy's dilemma is reminiscent of Tambudzai's in Tsitsi Dangaregmba's *Nervous Conditions*, whose parents prefer to educate her brother because he is male. Mariah, who wants to "rescue" Lucy from the painful memories of her mother's betrayal, tries to tell her of "women in history," "women in society," and "women in culture," where the woman has been "othered," has been denied full humanity and only defined in relation to man and by her ability to bear children. She brings a large book bearing a definition of woman. "Woman? Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an ovary; she is a female-this word is sufficient to define her" (p132). However, Lucy realizes that Mariah had misinterpreted her situation. "My life could not really be explained by this thick book that made my hands hurt as I tried to keep it open. My life was at once something more simple and more complicated than that: for ten of my twenty years, half of my life, I had been mourning the end of a love affair, perhaps the only true

love in my whole life I would ever know" (p.132). Mariah's misinterpretation of Lucy's situation thus highlights the cultural distance between the two of them.

Toni Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* depicts black patriarchy as a result of racism suffered by black men and women. She observes the effect of racism on the Breedloves:

> You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and you could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear and they accepted it without question. (p.39)

The dominant hegemonic ideology of white superiority, with the shaming look as its instrument, controls and devalues the Breedloves. It assigns them to their inferior social place and correspondingly to their hierarchy of physical beauty. Frantz Fanon remarks on this black feeling of inferiority in *Black Skin, White Masks*: it is a feeling "that comes into being from the other." He describes the experience of being seen as an object of contempt in the eyes of white people: "Negroes are savages, brutes, illiterates" and whose bodies are "given back" to them "sprawled out, distorted" after being "dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes."[118] Morrison echoes Fanon's observations by describing Cholly Breedlove's ugliness as behaviour which was a result of "despair, dissipation, and violence directed toward petty things and weak people" (p.38). Cholly's self-worth is distorted by the dominant culture which humiliates him, builds up his anger and leaves

[118] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, New York: Grove, 1967, p.116-7.

him with no opportunity to control his anger. His reaction is therefore to be violent towards things and people that can not react back.

Cholly is a victim of the dominant society's racism. Abandoned at a young age by his mother and rejected by his father over a game, Cholly harbours anger and lacks love in his heart. Furthermore, as a young boy he was humiliated by two white men who found him engaging in a sexual act with a black girl called Darlene.

> …Cholly had been surprised in some bushes by two white men while he was newly but earnestly engaged in eliciting sexual pleasure from a little country girl. The men had shone a flashlight right on his behind. He had stopped, terrified. They chuckled. The beam on the flash light did not move. "Go on," they said. "Go on and finish. And, nigger, make it good."…From some reason Cholly had not hated the white men; he hated, despised the girl. Even a remembrance of this episode, along with myriad other humiliations, defeats, and emasculations could stir him into flights of depravity that surprised himself-but only himself. (p.42-3)

Black women have been victims of male patriarchy which has resulted partly from white racism on black people but also an African heritage as well as the dominant culture, which places women in an inferior position. Because black men have been emasculated, humiliated and oppressed under white racism, they tend to displace their aggression on the easiest group of people and these are the vulnerable members of their society, women and children. This is why Black Feminist theory focuses on the interconnectedness of

race, class and sex as factors that influence oppression of black women. Cholly, who has been emasculated and humiliated under racism, walks around with this hatred for all women and uses his masculinity to prove his power and authority on them, something which he failed to do when he was humiliated by the white men.

The early days of Cholly and Pauline's marriage were happy. They used to enjoy each other's company, "he talked to her about her (deformed) foot and asked, when they walked through the town or the fields, if she were tired" (p.115-6). However things change upon moving to the north where "Cholly said steel mills were begging for workers" (p.116). Pauline fails to cope with northern black people there who were "no better than whites for meanness" (p.117). She feels alienated from the northern way of life, from the women who were "amused by her because she did not straighten her hair and who privately snickered at her southern accent" (p.117). As a result of her loneliness, she turns to her husband's "reassurance, entertainment, for things to fill the vacant places" (p.117). Cholly begins to resist her total dependence on him. Thus sensing her vulnerability and her dependence on him and stressed with the oppressive socio-economic factors of the north, Cholly becomes meaner and meaner every day and wants to fight her every time. Pauline, like Beatrice Achike in *Purple Hibiscus* and Lucy's mother in *Lucy*, also conforms to the patriarchal order and refuses to leave Cholly even when she finds a job on which she could support herself. When her white female boss tells her to leave Cholly for he was no good to her, she argues:

> "How are you going to answer a woman like that, who don't know what good a man is, and say out of one side of her mouth she's thinking of

> your future but won't give you your money so you can buy something other besides to eat? So I said, 'No good ma'am to me. But just the same I'd best stay on.' …I reckon now she couldn't understand. She married a man with a slash in his face instead of a mouth. So how could she understand?" (p.121)

Like Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus*, Pauline believes that a husband should be in charge and discipline his wife by telling her what to do unlike her boss's husband, who can not control his wife and lets her do whatever she wants. In addition, Pauline's refusal to leave her husband because a white woman has told her, illustrates Black feminism's view that black men and women should fight the racial war together for it is this racism that leads to the oppression of women by black men.

Despite their fights, Cholly and Pauline begin to need each other more and more, both of them for different reasons. Pauline needs Cholly's sins desperately to justify her self-imposed role of martyrdom. Cholly, who sinks more and more into drink, needs Pauline to displace his frustrations of society and his hatred for the racism that he can not fight. Pauline's vulnerability to oppression as a black woman offers Cholly an opportunity to exert his power and to exorcise the demons of humiliation and worthlessness that drive him. To Cholly, "she was one of those few things abhorrent to him that he could touch and therefore hurt. He poured out on her the sum of all his inarticulate fury and aborted desires. Hating her, he could leave himself intact"(p.42). Cholly displaces his anger for the injustices that he is facing on his wife who physically cannot match his strength. Pauline, in an attempt to make sense of the drudgery, isolation,

the domestic upheaval and poverty that characterize her small town existence, escapes into the fantasies of Hollywood's classic cinema. Most of the films, however, perpetuate the negative stereotypes of the black race. She absorbs these images portraying the inferiority of black people and passes them on to her daughter as soon as she is born.

Pecola learns that she is ugly and wants to change the way she looks in order for her to gain acceptance. Just like her mother, she also admires movie characters who continue to set standards of what beauty should be. Pecola wants to be like the blonde, blue-eyed Shirley Temple. She feels that she is unlovable and craves affection from her father who also feels unloved. Cholly hates her vulnerability when he sees her back hunched, a typical posture of one with low self esteem. "His revulsion was a reaction to her young, helpless, hopeless presence…why did she look so whipped? She was a child – unburdened- why wasn't she happy? The clear statement of her misery was an accusation. He wanted to break her neck- but tenderly" (p.161). Pecola's helplessness and vulnerability turn her into the embodiment of her father's self-contempt and loathing. She, therefore, becomes the target of her father's humiliated fury.

> What would he do for her–ever?...What could a burned out Black man say to the hunched back of his eleven-year-old daughter?...How dare she love him? Hadn't she any sense at all? What was he supposed to do about that? Return it? How? What could his heavy arms and beduffled brain accomplish that would earn him his own respect that would in turn allow him to accept her love? His hatred of her slimed in his stomach and threatened to become vomit. (p.162)

In Pecola's hunched back, Cholly realizes his powerlessness to protect his daughter from the harsh realities of the world. He recognizes his inability to provide for his daughter and this brings back to him feelings of worthlessness and self-loathing. His self-hatred does not make him worthy of any love according to Cholly, and the fact that Pecola loves him despite his faults angers him and he hates her for it. In his eyes, he is a failure and therefore not worthy of any love especially from his own flesh and blood whom he has failed. In the same way that he resents Pauline for depending more and more on him when they first move up north, he also resents Pecola and sensing her vulnerability he wants to inflict pain on her so that he can relieve his own pain.

Pecola's sudden movement when she scratches her ankle with her toe reminds Cholly of the first time he saw Pauline and his emotions move from hatred to tenderness, "not the usual lust to part tight legs with his own, but a tenderness, a protectiveness." (p.162) In an animal-like posture, symbolizing the status that black men have been reduced to through the racist dominant society's dehumanization, Cholly goes down and crawls on all fours and nibbles at Pecola's ankle, just as he did Pauline years ago. The "gigantic thrust" he makes into her "provokes the only sound she made-a hollow suck of air in the back of her throat. Like the rapid loss of air from a circus balloon" (p.163). Cholly preys on Pecola and rapes her, taking away with him her innocence and eventually her sanity. By raping Pecola, "he inflicts on her his own feelings of exposure, powerlessness, narcissistic injury and humiliation."[119] Pauline Breedlove fails to protect

[119] J. Brooks Bouson, *Quiet As Its Kept: Shame, Trauma and Race in the Novels of Toni Morrison,* Albany: State of New York Press, 2000, p.42.

her daughter from the trauma of rape and incest. Just like Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus* who excuses her husband's abuse of their daughter, Pauline refuses to implicate her husband in the rape. When Pecola tells her about the rape, she does not believe her and beats her nearly to death in denial that her husband would do that to their daughter. This is a betrayal to Pecola by her mother who was supposed to protect her and understand the vulnerability that females have in the society.

In conclusion, this study has argued that black patriarchy plays a role in the socialization of daughters by their mothers. Various factors are attributed to the source of black patriarchy. As the study asserts, some of the factors attributed to the existence of patriarchy in Africa are cultural traditions and colonial views that deny women places of authority and privilege men. In the Diaspora, racism, the dominant ideology of male superiority and the African heritage that views women as inferior to men, are some of the sources of patriarchy. As victims of an order which puts preference on males and relegates women to the peripheral, some women in the novels conform to the dictates of this order. All the mothers in the novels, except for one mother in *Purple Hibiscus*, internalize the dictates of patriarchal society by reflecting the views that women are incomplete if they are unmarried or not attached to a man. For example, Beatrice in *Purple Hibiscus* and Pauline in *The Bluest Eye* refuse to leave their husbands because of fear of losing respect for being unmarried. Adichie, however, presents a different view through Ifeoma who resents male domination and encourages her sister-in-law to break away from an abusive marriage. Because these women have internalized the patriarchal dictates, they tend to socialize their daughters to view the male members of their society

as superior to them. For example, Lucy's mother in *Lucy* ignores her daughter's intellectual capabilities and concentrates on the ambitions of her three sons. The study has observed that the daughters in the three novels react to this kind of socialization in different ways. While some of the daughters, for example, Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus*, internalize the superiority of the male figures in her life, Lucy in *Lucy* rejects her mother's ideas that she is inferior to men.

The authors also portray male figures who use their positions as heads of their families to dominate their wives and children. In *Purple Hibiscus* and *The Bluest Eye*, Eugene Achike and Cholly Breedlove, respectively, use their male privilege to oppress their wives and daughters. Eugene is a product of a colonial order which brainwashes him and Cholly is a victim of humiliation and emasculation under racism. Cholly and Eugene are both products of a dominant racist system, and their wives and daughters must bear the results.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

As mothers, black women in Africa and in the Diaspora share similar characteristics in the way that they socialize their daughters into their particular environments. By comparing mother-daughter relationships in *Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria), *Lucy* by Jamaica Kincaid (Antigua) and *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison (The United States of America), the study has illustrated that, despite the cultural and physical separation brought by slavery, black mothers are portrayed by the three authors as sharing various commonalities in the experiences of raising their daughters. Using Black feminism as the theoretical framework, the thesis has demonstrated that memory, race and gender play a role in the socialization of black daughters by their mothers. Through memory, women in the Diaspora remember their African foremothers' way of mothering their daughters since Africa is where they originated. In traditional African society, the mother is instrumental in passing on values to her daughters and socializing them with skills with which to fit into the society. The same applies to black women in the Diaspora who are responsible for transferring societal values to their daughters. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie portrays Beatrice Achike as the one who explains and teaches her daughter Kambili certain cultural values, for example, why her Aunt Ifeoma calls her "my wife". Beatrice explains that it shows that she accepts her into the family as her brother's wife, thus teaching Kambili ways of her culture. Similarly, Kincaid depicts Lucy's mother in *Lucy* as teaching her daughter

cultural values which require that a woman should never take a man's side over her fellow woman.

The study further observes that these mothers not only socialize their daughters by teaching them positive values, but also notes that some of them teach their daughters negative values that are reflected by society. These negative values therefore have a destructive influence on the daughters and further affect their perception of themselves. Morrison portrays Pauline Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye* as passing on negative values of society to her daughter, Pecola. Pauline internalizes the racial hatred that society has for her people and she passes this hatred on to her daughter from the moment that she is born. She favours the white child that she minds at the expense of her own daughter. Thus Pecola grows up believing her ugliness and inferiority and wishing for blue eyes.

The three novels also depict communal mothering. The concept of communalism in the Diaspora originates from Africa where raising a child is not the job of one person. This communal mothering is evident in *Purple Hibiscus* when Aunty Ifeoma takes in and nurtures Kambili as her own child as she fights demons of her father. Ifeoma teaches Kambili traditional values and encourages her to be confident in the same way a biological mother would do. This kind of communal mothering is also depicted by Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* when Mrs. MacTeer takes in Pecola and treats her like her own daughter when she starts her first menstruation. This communal mothering is evidence of a common origin between Africans and the black people of the Diaspora.

The study has further shown that black women in all the three novels are the ones who are responsible for initiating their daughters into womanhood, teaching them what it is to be a woman in their society. For example Ifeoma, in *Purple Hibiscus,* is responsible for teaching both her daughter, Amaka, and her niece, Kambili, into fitting in the roles of women in their African society. Ifeoma teaches Kambili to cook and prepare *orah* leaves which she had never known how to do. In *Lucy*, Lucy's mother is the one who initiates her daughter into womanhood when she starts her first menstruation, later showing her the herbs with which one could "induce a reluctant period". It is also mothers who prepare their daughters into motherhood by guiding them as evident in the buying of dolls in *The Bluest Eye* where Claudia is expected to mother the doll.

Since all these women have a commonality of subjection to marginalization because of their sex and the colour of their skin, the study has also argued that race and gender are factors that also influence black women when socializing their daughters. The thesis has argued that patriarchy plays a role in socialization. Black women sometimes internalize the dictates of an order that oppresses them and use them to socialize their daughters. In *Purple Hibiscus,* Beatrice Achike conforms to the patriarchal order by accepting and defending her husband's abuse of her and her daughter. She passes this internalization to her daughter who tries to please her father in everything she does and refrains from implicating her father in his wrong doings. Likewise, Lucy's mother conforms to patriarchy by accepting the patriarchal societal views that male children are more important than females. She does this by ignoring Lucy's intelligence and trying to make her into an echo of herself. Likewise, Pauline Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye* accepts

the patriarchal values that a woman is incomplete without a husband by refusing to leave her husband Cholly even though he physically abuses her.

The study, therefore, asserts that the three authors portray that a cultural bond exists between African women and black women in the Diaspora despite the cultural and geographical divide that came to be as a result of slavery. African culture survived the Middle Passage and crossed over into the New World. It adapted into the new environment but it is still evident in the lives of black women. The study shows that the three authors portray mothering as one of the ways through which patterns of African culture are evident, and this African mothering manifests itself in both positive and negative socialization. The study also suggests that further investigations with regard to the experience of motherhood by black women across the globe should be carried out.

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