

“HOME IS NOWHERE”: NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES IN COLONIZED WORLDS

by

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(Under the Direction of Barbara McCaskill)

ABSTRACT

The *Bildungsroman*, a term that derived from German literary criticism, is a genre of literature that highlights popular conceptions of manhood and depicts the growth of the male protagonist. Many female authors use the *Bildungsroman* as a form of cultural expression not only to transform patriarchal views, but also to redefine femininity, articulate cultural conflict, and describe what it means to be a woman in a colonized culture. I will revisit this topic in Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* (1984) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), and examine family dynamics in order to show how each female protagonist negotiates the complexities of a hybrid identity and attempts to harmonize two opposite cultures.

INDEX WORDS: *Bildungsroman*, hybridity, home, island, European, African

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DEDICATION

To my family with gratitude and love.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, reaching manhood differs significantly from reaching womanhood because of the way in which society socializes boys and girls. Expectations associated with becoming a lady are to assume the roles of nurturer and/or caretaker. On the other hand, expectations associated with becoming a man are to become independent and to assume the role of provider. The traditional male *Bildungsroman*, a term that derived from German literary criticism, is a genre of literature that highlights popular conceptions of manhood and depicts the growth of the male protagonist. Often, an outside force and/or catalyst coerces the protagonist to leave home to reach maturity. Usually at the end of the traditional male *Bildungsroman*, the hero has accomplished something “great” and becomes a “man” through his efforts. (The quotations are mine for emphasis). Similar definitions of the male *Bildungsroman* are given by Pin-chia Feng in her book *The Female Bildungsroman by Toni Morrison and Maxine Hong Kingston: A Postmodern Reading* (1997) and Christi Rishoi in her book *From Girl to Woman: American Women’s Coming-of-Age Narratives* (2003).

Female authors, however, subvert masculine structures such as the *Bildungsroman* and attempt to transform the ideology behind womanhood. When the traditional *Bildungsroman* is subverted, several elements distinctive to the male tradition change for females in their coming-of-age stories. The female *Bildungsroman* focuses on the development of the female protagonist and her epiphany as she reaches adolescence (Feng 11-12). In addition, the female genre often includes heroines that reject traditional female roles and engage in activities that are outside the

conventional female domain. In the protagonist's emergence from girlhood to womanhood, she often contends with social expectations associated with becoming a lady, typically learned from her parents, and she must decide whether she will conform to these expectations or resist them.¹

Like many female authors, Michelle Cliff and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie use the *Bildungsroman* as a form of cultural expression not only to challenge patriarchal views, but also to redefine femininity, articulate cultural conflict, and describe what it means to be a woman in a colonized culture. In their coming-of-age stories, these authors recognize that all aspects that form identity are interwoven or interlocking entities that affect how each protagonist perceives herself and are inseparable, suggesting that one factor is not more important than the other. I will revisit this topic in Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* (1984) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) in order to examine the ways in which these writers negotiate the complexities of hybrid identities in their female protagonists. I will also examine the ways in which each author strategically uses her female protagonist to articulate the necessity for balance. Furthermore, I will convey how each female protagonist questions societal notions and attempts to reconcile a hybrid identity through equilibrium.

The concept of hybridity is a useful theory in understanding marginalized writers' experiences and their struggle to obtain a full identity. It provides new definitions of formulating an identity and takes many forms, which include cultural, political, and linguistic aspects. Hybridity seeks to add some nuance to ways in which individuals form an identity and combines two diverse cultures and/or traditions all at the same time. By emphasizing the notion that identity is fluid and not fixed, hybridity expresses the multiplicity of identities and points to the resistance and refusal of choosing a single identity (Anthias 625). Non-hierarchical and

¹ The depth of this tradition remains prevalent amongst works such as Jamaica Kincaid's "Girl" (1978), Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970), and in other literary works.

multifarious, hybridity addresses the concept of transculturation and allows individuals to dialogue with cultural components and embrace multiple identities (Morejón 229). It encompasses a variety of cultural components that pertain to self identity and asserts that most individuals contend with negotiating multiple identities in different spaces whether it is through religion, race, ethnicity, and other factors. For this reason, forging identities can be a form of resistance to dominant homogeneous cultural forms (Anthias 626).

Through vivid descriptions of family relationships, the coming-of-age novels *Abeng* and *Purple Hibiscus* articulate the complexities of hybrid identities. Cliff's *Abeng* explores the life of Clare Savage, a light-skinned Jamaican girl growing up in the 1950s, who is torn between a father who embraces European culture and a mother who embraces her African heritage. Likewise, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* describes a Nigerian girl named Kambili Achike who is divided between the rigid doctrine of Catholicism on the one hand and Igbo culture and its religious practices on the other. In each novel, these hybrid characters go beyond society's limited definitions of identity by creating a new identity that includes aspects of both their father and mother. Each female protagonist eventually tries to find ways of merging two opposite cultures without creating more hierarchies and privileging one identity over the other.

The relationship between the female protagonist and her parents is emblematic of a triangle, which includes the child and two authority figures, the mother and father. While the middle generation, which represents the father, rejects tradition and embraces values of the dominant culture, the maternal figure is closer to traditional customs of the first generation.² In each novel, the maternal figure becomes a mediator and anchors the third generation in traditional cultures. The father is dominant over the mother and symbolizes the impact of

² The first generation that I refer to in *Purple Hibiscus* is the grandfather. In *Abeng*, the first generation is Clare's ancestors that the omniscient narrator speaks of such as her great-great grandfather and her grandmother.

colonization. Conversely, the mother links her daughter to a forgotten, overlooked, African and/or indigenous heritage. In each novel, however, the female protagonist struggles to form an individual self separate from the two identities imposed on her. For this reason, she is torn between two cultures which bring to the forefront the following questions: How are our identities constructed? Do we have agency when it comes to forming our identities? In what ways are we forced to conform to a fixed cultural identity?

The years of puberty and adolescence, addressed in each novel through the female protagonist, are characterized by fundamental changes and challenges, and these are the years when each protagonist deals with questions of identity and develops her own unique ideals aside from her parents' values. As they change from child to adolescent, the protagonists' relationship with their parents changes. Each novel addresses this change and demonstrates how in some ways our identities are constructed and in other ways we do have agency in choosing our identities. In the home culture, each female is exposed to a fixed identity, but when she moves outside her home life, she is able to develop her own values aside from the worldviews of her parents. For this reason, the female protagonist's rebellion and/or rejection of home culture suggests that Clare and Kambili eventually have agency in constructing their identities.

What is distinctive to these coming-of-age stories as it pertains to the complexities of a hybrid identity is their emphasis on place. *Abeng*, set on the island of Jamaica, describes Clare as she transitions from her home in the urban section of Kingston, to the countryside, where her grandmother lives, to the childhood home of Mrs. Phillips and Miss Winifred. *Purple Hibiscus* is set in Nigeria, where Kambili journeys from her urban home in Enugu, to Abba, the hometown of her parents, to her aunt's rural home in Nsukka. In the home lives of the female protagonists, the home becomes the colonized place where views of the colonizer/father permeate everyday

conversations and relationships. The homes where the female protagonists reside can be defined as not only sites of oppression, but also as metaphors for the Eurocentric culture that pressures them to assimilate. In each *Bildungsroman*, the home becomes a site of entrapment because it keeps the protagonist from embracing a fulfilling identity (Davies 21). Clare's home life consists of her father's ideologies that suggest Europeans are God's Chosen People, and are superior to people of color. Likewise, the home culture of Kambili is defined by silence and the notions that Catholicism is the right way of life as opposed to Igbo religious customs. Thus, home, in each *Bildungsroman*, becomes a symbol for the family structure and its restraints.

While the home culture is reminiscent of the colonizer's values, the island and island-like places depicted in each novel expose each protagonist to her neglected heritage.³ I am examining islands in the geographical and metaphorical sense and expanding the island metaphor to any location that becomes a crucible for subversion and rebellion against colonial practices that deem the Eurocentric way as superior to indigenous and/or African culture(s). For Clare in *Abeng*, the bush and the childhood home allow her to assert an identity that challenges the racial constructs that her father and mother impose. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Nsukka allows Kambili to discover a life beyond the constraints of her father and the rigid home culture. For this reason, the island culture becomes a safe haven where each female protagonist can resist colonial practices imposed on her in the home culture. Though an island often becomes a metaphor for alienation, remoteness, and strangeness in relation to the dominant culture, the land also is an articulation of femininity and the desire to revert back to the natural state. These writers' interest in islands and island-like places not only represents the feminine but also express the experience of being colonized

³ Though the home and island culture(s) can be perceived as hybrid, these authors intentionally evoke the home culture as more Eurocentric and the father's domain and the island culture as linking the characters to a more indigenous and or African tradition.

Navigating between realms that have different values creates confusion for Clare and Kambili respectively. Thus, the issue of equilibrium plays a significant role in the ways in which these two characters negotiate the complexities of identity and address issues of hybridity in the family relationships depicted in each coming-of-age novel. Each novel addresses two cultures: the modern and the traditional. Male or female parents in the novels represent each of these cultures. The fathers value Eurocentric cultures, while the mothers insist on maintaining a connection to the past. The child occupies the margin of both worlds, but fits neither. Each female protagonist attempts to navigate both worlds and seeks to find a space for herself within both realms. In seeking a space, each protagonist questions these fixed binaries that her mother or father's identities represent and either seems ambivalent about a hybrid identity or seeks to embrace both the modern and traditional segments of her parents' background.

In trying to strike a balance between each parent, the child recognizes the significant differences between her father and mother and questions where she actually fits as their progeny. The notion of accepting a hybrid identity suggests that one acknowledges all affiliated worlds and realms and constructs her own identity based on these intersectional and/or oppositional realms. Each female protagonist comes to terms with the two opposite cultures that form dichotomies and either succeeds in fully embracing both or privileges one identity over the other. In rejecting the home life, each female protagonist seeks out an individual self, particularly of the island culture. Her quest for identity, however, is marked by great difficulty. In the next two chapters, I will closely examine the family dynamics of each protagonist and show how Clare and Kambili at first conform to the cultural values of the home culture and later rebel against these notions. In the end, they either embrace the values of their parents or attempt to create a new identity separate from their mother and father.

CHAPTER TWO:
BETWEEN AFRICANNESS AND EUROPEANNESS:
FORGING IDENTITIES IN MICHELLE'S CLIFF'S *ABENG*

In the Caribbean, issues of nation, race, and identity are interwoven entities that cannot be separated. Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* (1984) reveals that Jamaican identity is composed of different strands based on aspects such as race and class. Cliff demonstrates that there are three ethnic streams present in the island—Indian, African, European. The first lines of the novel allude to multiple identities present in Jamaica. In describing the different ethnic strands on the island, the narrator notes:

The island rose and sank. Twice. During periods in which history was recorded by indentations on rock and shell. This is a book about the time which followed on that time. As the island became a place where people lived. Indians. Africans. Europeans. (Cliff 3)

In recognizing these three ethnic groups, Cliff conveys the idea that because of British colonization, the European identity is the national identity some Jamaicans often valorize. Known as the superior race, whiteness is generally glorified and symbolizes power, goodness, and beauty. At the same time, African and indigenous ethnic groups different from Europeans are devalued and exoticized (Williams 1-2). By emphasizing class-color hierarchies between the European race and other ethnic groups, ethnicity in the Caribbean focuses more on social aspects than biological factors. Thus, light skin is an indicator of social privilege, whereas dark skin connotes a lower class (6-7). Cliff, however, shows how attitudes towards ethnicity in Jamaica

construct her characters' identity in society, and she deconstructs the myth of what is valuable in Jamaican culture. Through her female protagonist, Clare, she reassigns value to Africanness.

In addition, Cliff's *Abeng* brings to the forefront the idea of Jamaican identity and its complexities through her vivid description of place and family relationships. Cliff's representation of Clare's family intersects with the theme of a hybrid identity and captures the complexities of the relationship between father and daughter and mother and daughter. Cliff portrays a mixed-race protagonist who refuses to give in to racial constructs that favor the dominant culture of Europeans over her African heritage. As Clare moves from the Savages' house in Kingston, to her grandmother's countryside house, to Mrs. Phillips's house, and to the childhood home of Mrs. Phillips and Miss Winifred, she attempts "to negotiate the conflicting elements of her cultural and familial background" (Lionnet 25). By highlighting her African heritage, Clare Savage seeks out an identity once hidden from her by her bigoted father and passive mother, who suggest she embrace an all-white identity, and ultimately claims both identities of her parents.

Clare's relationship with her father is one that is reminiscent of a father-son relationship. Her father, better known as "Boy," embodies the post-European lifestyle and claims a pure white lineage, even though he is closely descended from Africans, making his own ethnic identity mixed. Clare's paternal family attempts to remove the Africanness found in their lineage from their personal identities. For this reason, the Savages⁴ embrace European culture only and believe that their color, class, and religion distinguish them from other people. Cliff's narrator notes:

⁴ Although the name "Savage" is fitting for Boy because of his racist ideologies, Cliff deconstructs the idea that blackness is associated with savagery and associates the label with whiteness. This strategy is also prevalent in *Moby Dick* (1851). In this book, Herman Melville examines the white/black binary and subverts it by transforming the representation of evil to whiteness in the white whale instead of blackness.

The definition of what a Savage was like was fixed by color, class, and religion, and over the years a carefully contrived mythology was constructed, which they used to protect their identities. When they were poor, and not all of them white, the mythology persisted. They swore by it. It added a depth to their conversation, and kept them interested in each other. If the conversation turned to the knotty hair of a first cousin, it would be switched to the Savage ancestor who had been the first person to publically praise *Paradise Lost*. If the too-dark skin of a newborn baby was in question, it would be countered with the life of the Savage who had “done his duty” onboard the *H.M.S. Victory* with Nelson at Trafalgar. (Cliff 29)

The Savages’ fabricated stories of a pure white lineage were passed down from generation to generation, and Clare’s father passes these stories down to Clare, his oldest daughter, reassuring her that “[s]he was a true Savage” (Cliff 45). In suggesting that Clare’s “fate was sealed,” Boy treats her as an heir of the supposed pure lineage and expects Clare to assimilate into European culture by eventually marrying someone of a lighter hue than herself (45).

Conversely, Clare’s mother shows no affection toward her daughters, family, and friends, and only shows a connection with her husband. Unlike Boy, Kitty embraces her ex-slave heritage and finds subtle ways to share these values with Clare. Kitty instills Clare’s early life with “a sense of Jamaica that [Boy] would never have” (Cliff 52). The Freemans,⁵ Clare’s maternal family, are described as being complicit with the postcolonial structure that favors whites over non-whites, but prideful of their mixed-race heritage while highlighting their blackness.⁶ The narrator states:

⁵ The name “Freeman” points to Kitty’s Maroon heritage and embodies a symbol of resistance to colonial rule.

⁶ Cliff’s capitalization of the “b” in black in the following quotation affirms that blackness is a significant aspect in constructing Kitty’s identity.

Kitty's mother was both Black and white, and her father's origins were unknown—but both had brown skin and a wave to their hair. Her people were called “red” and they knew that this was what they were. No one had suggested to them that they try to hide it—were they able to. [T]he Freemans did not question this structure, or the fact that the white people brought money and seemed able to buy themselves any place on the island that suited them. The Freemans fit themselves into the structure and said that yes they were red people and that was nothing to be ashamed of. At the same time preserving their redness. (Cliff 54)

The Freemans assert their identity as red people who are of mixed-race ancestry; however, though Kitty cherishes blackness, she does not pass this idea down to her daughter. Instead, like Boy, she insists that Clare assume an all-white identity as well.

Her mixed-race heritage on both sides creates confusion for Clare because she is uncertain about where her loyalty should lie (Gourdine 48). Throughout the novel, Clare is never considered her mother's daughter by Miss Mattie, Clare's maternal grandmother, but her father's daughter. For example, after Clare takes Miss Mattie's gun to kill a wild pig, Miss Mattie thinks Boy should punish Clare because “the girl was his child after all” (Cliff 145). As a child of a Freeman and a Savage, she must constantly negotiate the identities of both her mother and father:

Her father told her she was white. But she knew that her mother was not. Who would she choose were she given the choice. [S]he was of both dark and light. Pale and deeply colored. To whom would she turn if she needed assistance? From who would she expect it? Her mother or her father—it came down to that sometimes. Would her alliances shift at any given time. The Black or the white? (Cliff 36-37)

Knowing that “a choice would be expected of her,” Clare resents feeling torn between the oppositional dichotomies her parents represent: the home life/urban culture of Kingston vs. the rural culture of Clare’s mother; the refined Presbyterian church of John Knox Memorial vs. the vernacular country church of Tabernacle of Almighty⁷; her father’s bigotry vs. her mother’s humanitarianism (Cliff 37). Clare feels at odds with and torn between both parents, especially during their violent arguments about her father’s alcoholic tirades and affairs. She thinks “if he killed Kitty, then she would have to take responsibility, would have to call the police—become her mother and her father, the one dead, the other crumpled over his wife’s body” (Cliff 51). Imagining this tragic possibility reveals that even in a distressed state, Clare would feel divided between her mother and father. She expresses the anxiety attached to the dilemma of occupying the margin of two worlds, her mother’s and father’s, and the pressures of choosing a side.

Within *Abeng*, Cliff employs a third person perspective instead of using Clare as the narrator. The third person narrative aids in describing the double binds of Clare’s life and the difficulties of making a choice. The omniscient narration is valuable for discussing identity tensions because the audience is able to attain not only Clare’s perspectives on asserting an identity, but also the contrasting perspectives of Boy and Kitty. In revealing these perspectives and showing the great distinctions between her mother and father, the narrator suggests that identity formation is not simple, but complex for all the characters. For this reason, the narrator portrays Boy and Kitty, though flawed, as both victims of colonization because they both adhere to the preconceived notions that Europeanness is superior.

In addition, the omniscient narrator discloses past histories unknown to Clare concerning the choice of negotiating identities. The narrator indicates that the dilemma of rejecting or

⁷ The father’s church sang militaristic hymns and consisted of mostly white families, while the mother’s church focused on redemption and the necessity for deliverance in their hymns and consisted of mostly black women (Cliff 11-12).

merging into a society that values European culture is timeless and originated with Nanny and Sekesu (Krus 45). The narrator declares: “In the beginning there had been two sisters—Nanny and Sekesu. Nanny fled slavery. Sekesu remained a slave. Some said this was the difference between the sisters. It was believed that all island children were descended from one or the other. All island people were first cousins” (Cliff 18). In this passage, Cliff asserts that resistance and assimilation are not new to the complexities of identity in Jamaicans. This idea that suggests that everyone is somehow related in the Jamaican context threatens the postcolonial structure that deems people of European descent superior to people of African and/or native Indian descent. This implication that everyone on the island is related rejects the Savages’ fabricated stories of pure European lineage and aligns with the idea that racial constructs are fluid and arbitrary. In addition, this construct gives “island children” the freedom to reject racial boundaries and codes that separate individuals based on ethnicity, race, class, and other societal factors (Cliff 18).

The idea of home points to the dilemma of finding a place for one’s self and how one will define herself in that space. Home and the subsequent analysis of location elucidate the ambiguous nature of Jamaican identity and the difficulties Clare faces in creating her own identity. The literary critic Carol Boyce Davies states that “home becomes a critical link in the articulation of identity” (115). The home culture in this text becomes dominated by the father’s ideologies, keeping Clare from exploring other aspects of her identity freely. In the house, Boy Savage’s superior portrayal of whiteness as powerful and beautiful and his suggestion that he and Clare both adhere to the historic notion that Europeans are “the Elect” compel Clare to resist an all-white identity (Cliff 44). For Boy, the home becomes a place where he can be a patriarch and align his views with that of the colonizer. For this reason, the home serves as a site of oppression

for the females (i.e. Kitty, Clare, and Jennie) where Boy feels the most comfortable sharing his racist ideologies.

It is through literature such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1947) and *Ivanhoe* (1819) that Clare resists Boy's racist ideologies at home. *The Diary of Anne Frank* provides a first-hand account of Anne's life as a Jew during the Holocaust and the repression she experiences on a daily basis while in hiding from the Nazis. In examining the life of Anne Frank during the Holocaust, Clare searches "without knowing it, for an explanation of her own life" (Cliff 72). Her interest in the life and death of Anne Frank intersects with histories of her paternal great-great-grandfather and maternal grandmother; she is unaware that her great-great-grandfather burned a hundred slaves to deny their upcoming freedom and her grandmother once cut cane (71-72). Her teachers, however, avoid the questions Clare asks concerning the Jews' persecution and fail to address the issues surrounding the Holocaust, particularly the question as to who is responsible for the death of six million Jews (Cliff 70-71). Jamaica, like most of the world, here in the text remains silenced about issues that trivialize the doctrines of Christianity.

Likewise, *Ivanhoe*, an adventure novel by Sir Walter Scott, recounts a series of events in which Ivanhoe is torn between his love for Rowena, a Saxon, and Rebecca, a Jew. In the end, Ivanhoe marries Rowena, and Rebecca, who is falsely accused of being an alleged sorceress, is banished from the country. When Clare questions her father about "inter-religious love" in *Ivanhoe*, she asks him what would happen if she married a Jew (Dagbovie 96). His reply that she would be an "outcast," even if her lover were half-Jewish, further shows his bigotry (Cliff 73). Clare asks:

'Then how come you say I'm white?'

‘What the hell has that got to do with anything?’ ‘You’re white because you’re a Savage.’

‘But Mother is colored. Isn’t she?’

‘Yes.’

‘If she is colored and you are white, doesn’t that make me colored?’

‘No. You are my daughter. You’re white.’ (Cliff 73)

This conversation reveals Clare’s desire to reject the ideas and values imposed on her by her father and seek an individual identity separate from the one her father demands and expects.

The Diary of Anne Frank and *Ivanhoe* both examine how Jews are persecuted on the basis of their religion. Thus, these two texts force Clare to look at racial tensions in a different light, separate from her father’s ideologies (Dagbovie 96). These literary examples of racial and religious injustice aid in helping her draw a parallel between Jews and blacks and the mistreatment and hatred shown towards both groups. In scrutinizing her father’s philosophy about Jews, Clare rejects her father’s idea that she is white. As a result, Clare questions her place amongst the “colored and white” and concludes that claiming an all-white identity does not make sense “with a colored mother, brown legs, and ashy knees” (Cliff 73). She wants to acknowledge her multiple identities without pitting one against the other as her father suggests.

For Clare to question her father’s reasoning, she must both recognize a part of her racial makeup as black and confront her privilege as a light-skinned individual. The narrator acknowledges that Clare’s physical appearance⁸ is prized by people on the island, and for this reason, she is elevated over other darker-skinned Jamaicans:

⁸ The name “Clare” suggests that her complexion is clear, pale, and light-colored. In fact, the name “Clare” is often used in literary works to describe mulatto figures such as Claire Neville in Julia Collins’s *The Curse of Caste* (1856) and Clare Kendry in Nella Larsen’s *Passing* (1929).

But she was a lucky girl—everyone said so—she was light-skinned. And she was alive. She lived in a world where the worst thing to be—especially if you were a girl—was to be dark. The only thing worse than that was to be dead. She knew the composition of her school and the constraints of color within. An unease seemed to live in a tiny space in her soul—for want of a better word—and she was struck by what she told herself was unfairness and cruelty while at the same time she was glad of the way she looked and she profited by her hair and skin. (Cliff 77)

She is conflicted by the preferential treatment she receives. Although she likes it, she questions the social constructs that regard her as beautiful. This dilemma points to an internal struggle against racial confines, even though occasionally she yields to them. Because conventions of beauty set by Europeans concerning lighter skin are “overvalued in the colonial context” and since Clare embodies this physical ideal of beauty, she is initially isolated from her darker sister and mother, which alienates her from the African part of her identity that they represent (Lionnet 29-30). Since Clare does not fit the standards that characterize an individual as a black Jamaican, she is pressured into fully embracing whiteness.

The alienation that Clare experiences parallels bell hooks’s profound statement: “at times home is nowhere. At times one only knows extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is not just one place. It is locations” (hooks 155). hooks suggests that location is crucial not only to obtaining knowledge, but also to fulfilling self-knowledge. For hooks, home consists of “locations” and places where one must learn to feel comfortable with his or her position in the margin and become open to new perspectives (155). The home culture that consists of Boy’s beliefs for Clare is fixed and closed to difference. Conversely, Kitty’s idea of home consists of African heritage and culture, which greatly contrasts everything Boy values. In asserting her

identity, Clare cannot conform to the ideas of what her father regards as home. For this reason, Clare expands her idea of home to include the values of both parents. In finding a space for herself within the “margin” that hooks alludes to, Clare manages to reconcile her two identities (156). Nonconformity provides Clare with the access to use the margin as a site of resistance to the Eurocentric sphere (hooks 156).

Clare has the ability to assume the identity of her mother and/or father; yet both parents pressure her into fulfilling an all-white identity. Her light skin compels people to perceive her as white and of a higher class; and as a result, in everyday instances, her blackness is ignored. In one incident, a poor-dark-skinned woman asks two of her classmates, “darker than Clare,” the time (Cliff 77). The girls, not wanting to be associated with her, ignore the lady. Because of her racial and class privileges, Clare cannot understand why her classmates reject the old lady: “Clare did not understand enough about her world and her place in it to question why the old lady had approached the other girls and not herself” (Cliff 77). Societal conventions that connote light as superior and dark as inferior remove Clare from any associations with people that do not share her complexion. She wants to be recognized by her mother’s people, but her societal privileges will not allow her to connect fully with this heritage. Her gesture of giving the woman the time and money points to her desire to align herself with a history that she shares with the woman.

Similarly, Kitty refuses to see Clare’s blackness, and as a result Kitty contradicts her own worldviews of blackness and its centrality in forming her identity (Dagbovie 97). While Kitty embraces her African heritage and has a deep love and affection toward her people, she is married to a man who only acknowledges his European traits and has no respect for anyone outside of that domain. In Kitty’s discussion with her mother as to why she marries Boy her

response—“What choice did I have”—alludes to two possible reasons she is forced to marry Boy: to avoid a pregnancy out of wedlock and to engage in the concept of whitening and lightening the race (Cliff 147). For this reason, Kitty becomes the vehicle of patriarchal rule that occurs in the home because she is complicit in her relationship with Boy. In spite of her complicity, however, Kitty shares values with Clare. Clare’s name itself is ambiguous: her father thinks she is named for a prestigious university, but her mother, Kitty, names her after a childhood friend, Clary, who helps nurse her back to health. In this act, Kitty resists patriarchy and Eurocentrism in naming. The narrator points out:

Kitty told Boy he could name their eldest daughter after the college his grandfather attended at Cambridge University—when in fact she was naming her first-born after Clary, the simple minded dark girl who fought for her and refused to leave her side. [B]ut Kitty never told this to Clare—that her namesake was a living woman, a part of her mother’s life, rather than a group of buildings erected sometime during the Middle Ages for the education of white gentlemen. Clare never knew whom she was called after—whom she honored. (Cliff 141)

In providing a maternal connection to Clare’s name, Cliff gives voice to the mother and reveals Kitty’s subtle affection for her daughter. In addition, in naming Clare after a childhood friend, Kitty ingeniously links her to a despised heritage and reassigns positive values to African heroines.

Kitty is not attached to either one of her daughters, but the narrator suggests that “If Kitty could have shared her love-which-proceeded-from-darkness with anyone, it would have been with Jennie, her younger, darker child” (Cliff 128). For this reason Clare, who could pass for white in Jamaica, “would never gain admission—she had been handed over to Boy the day she

was born” (128). Clare is viewed in her mother’s eyes as “an unwanted inheritance to be passed over to her father” (Dangovie 97). The narrator notes: “Perhaps [Kitty] assumed that a light-skinned child was by common law, or traditional practice, the child of the whitest parent. This parent would pass this light-skinned daughter on to a white husband, so she would have lighter and lighter babies” (Cliff 129). Kitty lacks a relationship with her daughter because she wants Clare to have the best in life. She points to Clare’s privilege as a light-skinned individual and suggests that preserving whiteness and obliterating darkness is best for Clare’s situation. For this reason, she negates her responsibility as a mother and adheres to the social custom that encourages the concept of whitening and/or racial passing.

Still, Clare yearns for a relationship with her mother and a connection to her black identity. The island suggests the possibility of connection between Clare and Kitty and serves as a place where Clare has the fondest memories of her mother: “Those mornings and afternoons with her mother in the bush sometimes made Clare think—wish—that they were on a desert island together—away from her father and his theories and whiteness” (Cliff 80). It is here in the countryside that Kitty teaches Clare about the bush and its purposes. When the setting changes from the home culture to the bush⁹, Clare finds solace in her black identity. This rural location equalizes the power relations that deem Europeanness superior to Africanness and diminishes the pressures on her to conform to the culture of the European colonizer and deny African and/or indigenous aspects of her heritage. Thus, while the home represents Boy’s Eurocentrism and masculinity, the bush of Kitty is African and feminine. The narrator says: “For her, God and Jesus were but representatives of Nature, which it only made sense was female, and the ruler of all” (Cliff 52-53). The island is not only an articulation of the feminine, it also represents

⁹ In the African context, the bush is often viewed in oral literature as an isolated sphere and an escape from the responsibility of marriage, which violates societal conventions that purport a girl must be assigned a husband when she reaches puberty.

lawlessness, and provides Clare with the freedom of exploring her black Jamaican heritage. The lawlessness present on the island allows Clare to go beyond the social constructs attached to Eurocentrism. As a result, the island unsettles social order and conventions concerning the friendship between Zoe and Clare that attempts to transcend issues of race, class, and sexuality.

Just as Clary becomes a surrogate mother for Kitty, Zoe assumes this role for Clare in the bush. Zoe shares the intimate conversation with Clare that Kitty avoids. Zoe educates Clare about her sexuality by explaining menstruation, sex, and pregnancy. For these reasons, she embodies a maternal presence in Clare's life. Clare uses Zoe subconsciously to please her mother and have a sense of the Jamaican identity her mother values. "In her love for Zoe, Clare knew that there was something of her need for her mother. But it felt intangible and impossible to grasp hold of" (Cliff 131). By befriending Zoe, she tries to resolve the conflict of being both a Freeman and a Savage. Her friendship with Zoe, however, does not resolve the split she feels between the two opposite cultures of her mother and father. Their differences surface when Clare refuses to allow Zoe to try on her bathing suit. She tells Zoe: "No, man, Grandma say no" (Cliff 101). Zoe's response to Clare that she is "one wuthless cuffy, passing off wunnaself as buckra" exposes their social and racial differences (101). By referring to Clare as a "cuffy"¹⁰ passing as a "buckra,"¹¹ Zoe emphasizes Clare's social privileges (Cliff 101). Clare's inability to connect fully to Zoe points to her connection to her father and the privilege associated with the Eurocentric sphere.

Though their friendship oftentimes erases issues of color and class, the social constructs associated with race and class are inescapable. After being ostracized from a game by her male cousins, Clare develops a plan for her and Zoe to kill a wild pig in the bush not only to rebel

¹⁰ A cuffy is "an upstart—one who fancies herself upper class" (Gourdine 51).

¹¹ A buckra is "a white person; specifically one representing the ruling class" (Cliff 167).

against the social expectations of a lady, but also to gain equal respect from her male cousins. Zoe resists Clare's plan and highlights Clare's social and racial privileges. Zoe says:

'Wunna know, wunna is truly town gal. Wunna a go back to Kingston soon now. Wunna no realize me have to stay here. Wunna no know what people dem would say if two gal dem shoot Massa Cudjoe. [D]em will say dat me t'ink me is buckra boy, going pon de hill a hunt fe one pig. Or dat me let buckra gal lead me into wickedness. [D]is place no matter a wunna a-tall, a-tall. Dis here is fe me territory. Kingston a fe wunna. Me will be here so all me life—me will be a marketwoman like fe me mama. Me will have fe beg land fe me and fe me pickney to live pon. Wunna will go a England, den maybe America, to university, and when we meet later we will be different smaddy. But we is different smaddy now.' (Cliff 117-118)

Since Clare can easily pass as a member of the dominant white culture, she can choose her position in society, while her friend Zoe cannot. The wild pig incident further reveals the “split” Clare feels between “white and not white, town and country, scholarship and privilege, Boy and Kitty” (Cliff 119). In acknowledging what Zoe tells her that “Kingston [is] the place of her existence,” Clare recognizes the privileges she has that her friend does not (119).

Not choosing sides becomes more and more difficult as the novel progresses because her parents never let go of their daughter's duality and attribute her behavior to her divided racial makeup. When Clare is punished for taking a gun from her grandmother's house, Kitty wonders if “it was whiteness—and the arrogance which usually accompanied that state—which had finally showed through her daughter's soul” (Cliff 148). Boy, on the other hand, thinks that “Blackness was the cause of his daughter's actions” (149). Her father's authority in the house

prevents her from feeling secure in siding with either parent. Clare tries to merge both identities and “because [her] biological genealogy is complicated by the social/class rules of life in Jamaica she must conflate her father’s simple understanding of identity as rooted in color and her mother’s location of selfhood in place” (Gourdine 50).

Though Kitty continues to insist that Clare reject darkness, and embrace Eurocentric values, she questions whether she “should save her daughter from this—or give in to it” and subconsciously wants her child to embrace both worlds without having to choose (Cliff 148). This gesture points to the internal struggle she experiences in neglecting her daughter. In questioning her lack of affection towards her daughter, Kitty implies that she wants to save Clare from the Eurocentric values her husband imposes on their daughter and teach her about the love she has for African culture. Boy, on the other hand, does not take any responsibility for his daughter’s actions and just faults her African traits. He refuses to see Clare’s blackness and wants her to preserve her whiteness. He thinks: “On this little island so far removed from the mother country, a white girl could so easily become trash” (Cliff 149). Clare’s parents recognize a racial, cultural split and “reinscribe a black/white binary that Clare resists” (Dagbovie 95). These racial constructs that her parents rely on prevent her from identifying with whomever she chooses.

Although Kitty wants Clare to share the same love she has for her African heritage, she suggests that her daughter’s punishment¹² of living with a Savage family friend, Mrs. Beatrice Phillips, will be a valuable learning experience in claiming her European identity. Kitty tells Clare: ““You have to learn once and for all just who you are in this world. [M]rs. Phillips can teach you to take advantage of who you are. I can’t do that for you”” (Cliff 150). Despite Kitty’s efforts, Clare refuses to assimilate into Eurocentric culture. Kitty’s warning that Mrs. Phillips is

¹² Upon taking a gun from Miss Mattie’s house, Clare accidentally shoots and kills her grandmother’s bull.

“narrow-minded about colored people” urges Clare to ask, “then what do you want me to learn from her?” (151). Kitty’s response—“You will just have to overlook that other part. There are many many narrow-minded people in this world. You have to learn to live among them” (Cliff 152)—suggests that she is telling her daughter to “negotiate her visible identity, to lose her blackness, to be white,” in order to attain upward mobility (Dagbovie 98). Because of the stigma attached to African heritage, Kitty urges her child to embrace her European heritage exclusively and consider leaving Jamaica to engage in better opportunities.

Mrs. Phillips’s home becomes an extension of the home culture established by Boy and replicates the similar Eurocentric focus. This home is one of leisure, routine, and mundaneness. Like Boy, Mrs. Phillips is adamant about maintaining the social division between whites and non-whites. Here, Clare moves towards her father’s expectations of a lady and learns how to suppress her ideas about race. In one incident, Clare reads the newspaper and comes across an article about a renowned “coloratura soprano” coming to Kingston to perform (Cliff 157). Mrs. Phillips mistakes the word “coloratura” for a black woman, and when Clare tries to correct her she is reprimanded (157). The narrator notes:

[C]lare learned to keep her mouth shut about anything to do with color or colored people. Anything that might be mistaken by Miss Beatrice for sympathy or concern. She was learning to live with narrow-mindedness. Learning not to wince when the white lady rolled down the Packard window and slid her stick through to slap Minnie Bogle across the shoulder blades. Learning not to smile when she heard Minnie’s voice in the kitchen wearing out the “ole bitch.” (Cliff 158)

In “[n]ot rocking the boat,” Clare learns to suppress the African identity of her mother and adopt Mrs. Phillips’s views that align with her father’s principles (158).

Clare's final search for identity, self, and place, arises not only after the abrupt separation from her mother and father, but also upon meeting Miss Winifred, Mrs. Phillips's sister, at their childhood home. Unlike her sister who values decency and respectability, Miss Winifred rejects societal standards of what a lady traditionally represents. For example, she does not bathe because she thinks "water [is] sacred," and is open about intimacy (Cliff 159). Though forbidden by Mrs. Phillips to talk to Miss Winifred, Clare is fascinated with her behavior and rebellion against social rules. The narrator notes,

Clare had never heard a grown-up woman talk like this. She was embarrassed by the intimacy of Mrs. Stevens's [Miss Winifred's] words. Caught between politeness—not wanting to hurt Mrs. Stevens, not wanting to ask too much—and needing to know more about her. No grown-up had ever been so bare before her, and she was confused. (Cliff 162)

Miss Winifred catalyzes a way for Clare to become comfortable with both of her identities. In Clare's search for identity, Miss Winifred's perceived madness and conduct allow Clare to branch out from the parental and societal worldviews that pressure her to form a monolithic, homogeneous identity.

In a brief conversation, Clare discovers that Miss Winifred lives on the fringes of Jamaican society because she has born a child out of wedlock with a black gardener. Miss Winifred talks about her relationship with the black man, which parallels Clare's relationship with her mother. Just as Kitty instructs Clare about the bush and its purposes, the gardener teaches Miss Winifred significant aspects of island culture such as grafting mango trees and swimming in the sea (Cliff 163). Although she speaks highly of the gardener, Miss Winifred

warns Clare not to make the same mistakes she does.¹³ Like Kitty, she insists that Clare not engage in interracial relationships and suggests that, since her child was taken away from her to be raised by nuns, ““only sadness comes from mixture”” (Cliff 164). Clare’s response is, “[T]here’s all kinds of mixture in Jamaica. Everybody mixes it seems to me. I am mixed too”” (164). By affirming that the mixed-race identity is the new, improved race among Jamaicans and the white race is obsolete, Clare reconciles her two identities. This gesture suggests that Miss Winifred’s confusion and disorderly conduct are the catalysts behind that recognition. In proudly acknowledging her identity as mixed-race, Clare “admit[s] what she was afraid to admit to Miss Beatrice. Maybe it was becoming time. Maybe she was relying on the confusion in Miss Winifred’s mind. So she might take it back” (Cliff 164). For this reason, the childhood home of Mrs. Phillips and Miss Winifred not only raises questions of resistance to decorum and racial boundaries, but helps Clare assert a hybrid identity that includes both the identity of her mother and father.

Though Clare is conflicted at the end of the novel about her identity, the narrator suggests that she favors her mother’s cherished Africanness over her father’s Europeaness. Clare’s dream of Zoe at the end of the novel not only marks her growth, it also represents her desired connection to her mother and her black identity. She dreams that,

[S]he and Zoe [are] fist fighting by the river in St. Elizabeth. That she picked up a stone and hit Zoe underneath the eye and a trickle of blood ran down her friend’s face and onto the rock where she sat. The blood formed into a pool where the rock folded over itself. And she went over to Zoe and told her she was sorry—making

¹³ Miss Winifred’s warning, however, does not suggest that she is prejudiced, but implies that her past experiences lead her to this resolution—that black and mixed-race individuals are persecuted because of their skin color.

a compress of moss drenched in water to soothe the cut. Then squeezing an aloe leaf to close the wound. (Cliff 165)

This dream alludes to the actual incident of Tia and Antoinette who are childhood friends in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). Like Clare and Zoe, Antoinette and Tia are close friends separated by race and class. The roles, however, are reversed in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Like Clare, Tia throws a rock at Antoinette, which metaphorically represents Antoinette's movement from her black childhood into a white Creole world of Spanish Town. Here in *Abeng*, Clare throws the stone at Zoe and later apologizes for her actions. Her violent actions point to the conflict she feels about whether to embrace her African identity or reject it. In throwing the stone at Zoe, she expresses uncertainty and perhaps considers assuming an all-white identity. Her apology and gesture of using an aloe leaf to heal the wound, however, at the end of her dream, fully reject an all-white identity and suggest that she wants to maintain a relationship to the island culture and her black Jamaican heritage.

Though the narrator states “[s]he was not ready to understand her dream. She had no idea that everyone we dream about we are,” Clare's dream of blackness points to her fervid desire to be accepted fully by her mother and Zoe (Cliff 166). Without succumbing to the notions that favor whiteness over her other racial identities, she rejects the white privilege of her father and the larger society. In shaping a new identity, Clare chooses to reject the European identity imposed on her and creates her own. This consists of multiple identities: indigenous, Indian, African, European, and Jamaican, with a particular emphasis on her Africanness. Her parent's insistence that she identify with whiteness has ironically encouraged Clare to “live without racial scripts and move towards blackness” (Dagbovie 107). In the end, Clare's rejection of her family

positions her outside of the black-white dichotomy and assumes an identity that is not limited by racial and social constructs.

CHAPTER THREE:
TRADITION OR MODERNITY
IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's coming-of-age novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), set in Enugu and Nsukka, explores a Nigerian girl's conflicted relationship with her admired but flawed father who insists that his family adhere to the principles of Catholicism. As Kambili and her brother journey from Enugu, where they reside, to Abba, where her grandfather lives, to Nsukka, where her aunt lives, she is able to discover a life without limits away from her father's authority. As she emerges from girlhood to womanhood, Kambili contends with her father's social expectations that she will become a Christian, and must decide whether she will conform to these expectations or resist them. The Christianity that Kambili's father values stems from the colonizer's distorted interpretation of the Christian religion, which was implemented by British rule to colonize African nations such as Nigeria (Fanon 42). Kambili confronts what it means to be a colonized child of both Catholic teachings and Igbo practices and formulates new ways of embracing both cultures.

Like Boy in *Abeng*, Eugene, Kambili's father, embodies the post-colonized lifestyle. He represents the supremacy of modernity over tradition and values Catholicism over Igbo religious customs. In the text, the house in Enugu, Nigeria, becomes a metaphor for the father's Eurocentrism and his value of the rigid doctrine of Catholicism over traditional religious customs. For Kambili, the house is a site of terror and betrayal, where silence is inevitable and she, her brother Jaja, and her mother all seek approval from Eugene. In this home culture, silence

is a central part of Kambili's life. For example, she mentions that the members of her family ask each other questions when they already know the answers. She says: "We did that often, asking each other questions whose answers we already knew. Perhaps it was so that we would not ask the other questions, the ones whose answers we did not want to know" (Adichie 23). She continues:

Our steps on the stairs were as measured and as silent as our Sundays: the silence of waiting until Papa was done with his siesta so we could have lunch; the silence of reflection time, when Papa gave us a scripture passage or a book by one of the early church fathers to read and meditate on; the silence of evening rosary; the silence of driving to the church for benediction afterward. Even our family time on Sundays was quiet, without chess games or newspaper discussions, more in tune with the Day of Rest. (Adichie 31)

This silence that exists in the home interrupts Kambili's growth, since her father makes her decisions for her and limits her choices. In the beginning of the novel, fear keeps Kambili from embracing a fulfilling identity. Sheltered from the outside world, she knows very little beyond the confines of her father's home, which implies that the home becomes an obstacle and place of entrapment, limiting her perceptions and knowledge.

Her father's lifestyle is contradictory. He condones freedom of speech against the military in his paper, the *Standard*, but at the same time, he rules his home like a Catholic patriarch. In addition, Eugene is an important figure in the local church and community. He donates to charities and provides for his hometown in Abba during the Christmas season by hosting gatherings with an abundance of food for his extended family. At the same time, Eugene's patriarchy at home is ever present. Calculating his children's every move, Eugene

draws out daily schedules that “separat[e] study from siesta, siesta from family time, family time from eating, eating from prayer, [and] prayer from sleep” (Adichie 24). A vivid example of his abuse occurs when Eugene scalds Kambili’s feet for disobeying his rules of no extended contact with ungodly people like her grandfather. Though her father shows great remorse after he abuses his children, he continues to be the sole arbiter of punishment towards his family.

Limited by her father’s schedules and rules, Kambili knows very little beyond the world at home that her father creates. For this reason, she does not question him. For example, when Beatrice, Kambili’s mother, miscarries as a result of her husband’s abuse,¹⁴ Kambili never questions why she and her brother must ask for Beatrice’s forgiveness instead of their father’s. She notes:

Later, at dinner, Papa said we would recite sixteen different novenas. For Mama’s forgiveness. And on Sunday, the first Sunday of Trinity, we stayed back after Mass and started the novenas. Father Benedict sprinkled us with holy water. Some of the holy water landed on my lips, and I tasted the stale saltiness of it as we prayed. If Papa felt Jaja or me beginning to drift off at the thirteenth recitation of the Plea to St. Jude, he suggested we start all over. We had to get it right. I did not think, I did not even think to think, what Mama needed to be forgiven for. (Adichie 35-36)

A novena is a nine-day period of prayer for special occasions or intentions.¹⁵ The novena prayers described in the text are to St. Jude, the patron saint of lost causes, and are prayers that help people through distressed times (Guiley 196). In addition, the novenas in the text are indulgenced

¹⁴ There is an implication in the text that Eugene beats Beatrice for asking to wait in the car because she is not feeling well while the rest of the family visits Father Benedict. As a result of the physical abuse, Beatrice miscarries.

¹⁵ Its origin can be traced to the nine days Mary and the disciples spent together in prayer between Ascension and Pentecost Sunday (Meagher 466).

novenas, a ritual used to seek forgiveness or pardon (Meagher 466). Generally, forgiveness of others is the Christian duty of the believer. In Roman Catholic churches, God's forgiveness of the believer is mediated through the Church through ritual acts such as the novenas, which involve an ordained priest (Meagher 467). Christian rituals of forgiveness, however, are generally focused on the individual who wants forgiveness. Although it is clear in the text that Eugene rather than Beatrice should ask for forgiveness, his authoritarian rule suppresses his children's ability to think for themselves. Eugene immorally abuses the Christian doctrine by demanding his children recite novenas for the improbable wrongs of their mother. He distorts the concept of forgiveness, and instead of examining his own actions, Eugene concludes that Beatrice has sinned.

Unlike Cliff in *Abeng*, Adichie uses the first person perspective of Kambili as the narrator. Her strategic use of the first person raises questions of how the book would differ if Jaja, Eugene, Beatrice, or any of the other characters would have assumed the role as narrator. The events Kambili presents as significant would change for the other characters. Although the first person narrative often leaves gaps for the readers, Kambili's perspective aids in portraying an intimacy that would not have been expressed by the other characters. Her narration portrays her vulnerability and later her growth as a protagonist. In presenting only Kambili's perspective, Adichie shows how Kambili evolves throughout the novel.

Although Kambili fears her father, she also loves and admires him. In describing her father, Kambili alludes to the Biblical story of Jesus and the woman with the issue of blood. She portrays both the generous and authoritarian sides of her father when she says: "He led the way out of the hall, smiling and waving at the many hands that reached out to grasp his white tunic as if touching him would heal them of an illness" (Adichie 90-91). This scriptural reference alludes

to Luke 8:41-48, which describes a poor woman who is plagued with an issue of blood for twelve years. By touching the cloak of Jesus' garment, the woman is instantly healed because of her faith. Eugene's generosity and ability to help his fellow Nigerians financially parallels Jesus' miraculous deeds in healing the sick. However, according to Mosaic Law found in Leviticus 15:19-28, the woman with the issue of blood is considered unclean, and as a result, an outcast of society. Although the woman violates the law by being a part of the crowd, Jesus does not scold her, but shows compassion. After he discovers who touches him, Jesus' response, "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace," is not one of rebuke and correction; rather he comforts her and tells her that her faith heals her (Luke 8:48). Unlike Jesus, Eugene displays a lack of compassion toward non-Christians; instead, he reprovcs them and devalues their traditions. For this reason, Eugene is both a philanthropist and a zealot.

For many colonized and/or formerly enslaved people, God is a form of control. Several European colonizers and American slave owners believed that they were fulfilling God's plan and it was their responsibility to enslave and/or Christianize people of African descent. They formulated many misconceptions of the Bible and justified British colonization and American slavery by arguing that blacks were ancestors of Cain and Ham. As descendants of Cain or Ham, blacks were assumed by many white Christians to possess the status as lowly servants of whites (Skinner 20). As a result, many Africans thought of the Europeans as the Supreme Being and even looked at them as divine. When the oppressor makes the slave and/or colonized person conform to the European mindset, he or she feels worthless and often views his or her master as all-powerful. This brutal psychological technique, utilized by European colonizers and American slave owners, compelled some members of the oppressed groups to conflate the Christian God and the oppressors who assumed the role of God.

Like American slaveholders, European colonizers used religion to suppress and control the minds of native African populations. Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and Malcolm X in his autobiography (1964) both convey that white Christians, who justify colonial rule and slavery respectively, take biblical scripture out of context to suggest black individuals were not made in the image of God and must whiten themselves to become acceptable in God's sight. Often taken out of context, a familiar scripture, "[T]hough your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow," alludes to this misconception that black is evil (Isaiah 1:18). Fanon further suggests that the Christian doctrine was projected on Africans to portray white culture as superior to African culture(s). He notes: "The Church in the colonies is the white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor" (Fanon 42). According to Fanon, the colonizer's Christian religion was not utilized to encourage Africans to attain a relationship with God, but to convince natives that their cultural values were wrong. Likewise, Malcolm X argues that warped Christian beliefs become a justification for double standards, arrogance, and inferiority. He declares:

And where the religion of every other people on earth taught its believers of a God with whom they could identify, a God who at least looked like one of their own kind, the slavemaster injected his Christian religion into this "Negro." This "Negro" was taught to worship an alien God having the same blond hair, pale skin, and blue eyes as the slave master. This religion taught the "Negro" that black was a curse. It taught him to hate everything black, including himself. It taught him that everything white was good, to be admired, respected, and loved. (*Autobiography* 162-163)

Like Fanon, Malcolm X questions the hypocrisy of Christianity in the West and wonders why blacks are considered inferior to whites under this religion.

Just as European colonizers and American slaveholders perpetuate misconstrued versions of Christianity, Eugene uses Christianity in a similar fashion. In controlling his family through fear and violence, Eugene develops such dominion over Kambili that she becomes paranoid. In fact, the paranoia Kambili develops is similar to how, as stated earlier, some Christians may have been taught to view God. Upon leaving for Nsukka, Kambili is frightened and delighted by the idea that her father would not be with them for five days. She says, “[M]y throat tightened at the thought of five days without Papa’s voice, without his footsteps on the stairs” (Adichie 108). In addition, when her father is poisoned and dies, Kambili questions the truth of his death because his dominant control causes her to think he is invincible. In coming to terms with her father’s mortality, she thinks, “I had never considered the possibility that Papa would die, that Papa could die. He was different from Ade Coker, from all the other people they had killed. He had seemed immortal” (Adichie 287). Eugene’s unyielding dogma compels Kambili to confuse God with her father, who looms as God-like to her.

Eugene controls his family both through fear and violence, and by abusing the principles of Christianity. In valuing Catholicism, he has a misunderstanding of what constitutes Christianity, because he hates the sinner more than the sin. God is not viewed this harshly by all Christians; the opposite view of Christianity which asserts God’s love for everyone follows John 3:16 that states, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Another familiar text, treat others the way you wish to be treated, often referred to as the Golden Rule, proposes that God teaches us to love everyone even if each has sinned (Matthew 7:12). In the text, however,

Eugene does not adhere to the actual teachings of God. His sister, Ifeoma, talks about how her brother tries to do “God’s job” by converting fellow Nigerians to Christianity with bribes (Adichie 95). Eugene is so judgmental that he banishes his own father from his life because he practices Igbo religion instead of Catholicism. Criticizing Eugene’s tactics, his sister says, “Eugene has to stop doing God’s job. God is big enough to do his own job. If God will judge our father for choosing to follow the way of our ancestors, then let God do the judging, not Eugene” (Adichie 95-96). Eugene’s lack of compassion for individuals who do not profess to be Christians contradicts scriptural teachings that address judging others and unconditional love. He instead internalizes the Christian values of the colonizer that consider indigenous forms of religion sinful and ungodly.

Eugene not only embodies the role of colonizer, he parallels the idea that many Africans and African Americans cannot respect culture(s) of their homeland because of the significant effects of colonization (Fanon 23-24). For example, he admires and shows more respect for his father-in-law, who values Eurocentrism, than his own father. In describing the ways in which Eugene treats his father as opposed to his father-in-law, Kambili says,

If Papa-Nnukwu minded that his son sent him impersonal, paltry amounts of money through a driver he didn’t show it. [I]t was so different from the way Papa had treated my maternal grandfather until he died five years ago. [P]apa would stop by Grandfather’s house at our ikwi nne, Mother’s maiden home, before we even drove to our own compound. [P]apa still talked about him often, his eyes proud, as if Grandfather were his own father. He opened his eyes before many of our people did, Papa would say; he was one of the few who welcomed the missionaries. Do you know how quickly he learned English? When he became an

interpreter, do you know how many converts he helped win? Why, he converted most of Abba himself! He did things the right way, the way the white people did, not what our people do now! (Adichie 67-68)

Like his father-in-law, Eugene internalizes the view of Africa as uncivilized and demonstrates how colonization can alter natives' minds about their own skin color and heritage (Skinner 28). Eugene embodies the notion that everything associated with whiteness is morally right and holy, and everything associated with the Nigerian nation before colonial rule is immoral and sinful.

Language is often used to privilege the culture of the colonized. Literary critics who study marginalized groups often address the significance of language as it pertains to self-identity and discuss the inferiority attached to speaking a native language as opposed to the standard or national language. Gloria Anzaldúa's assertion, "Wild tongues can't be tamed, they can only be cut out," emphasizes the idea that English and other languages of the colonizer are used to detach natives from their language and assimilate them into the dominant culture (76). Similarly, Fanon discusses in great detail how language can be a tool of oppression for non-Western populations. He says:

Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (18)

As Fanon asserts, natives' language(s) and culture(s) are diminished by the colonizers, creating an inferiority complex that pressures the colonized to whiten his or herself and thus become more like the colonizer.

Like Christianity, Kambili's father Eugene prioritizes a Western education and English over native African languages and culture: "[He] changed his accent when he spoke, sounding British, just as he did when he spoke to Father Benedict. He was gracious, in the eager-to-please way that he always assumed with the religious, especially the white religious" (Adichie 46). In addition, Eugene teaches Kambili and her brother to suppress Igbo, their native tongue/language. In forbidding Kambili and her brother, Jaja, to speak Igbo in public, Eugene emphasizes the colonial approach that Anzaldúa speaks of in her essay "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" (1987) and that Fanon highlights in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). Eugene privileges colonial languages and detaches not only himself, but also his children from Igbo culture, assimilating into the culture of the colonizer (Fanon 18).

Eugene not only promotes English as the official valid language, he values the written word. His own role as a newspaper editor for the *Standard* informs this position. Because of Eugene's refusal to communicate between the two educational systems, the tension between the colonial education he values and the native, oral education of Kambili's grandfather creates an even wider generation gap between older and younger generations. Unlike Eugene in the novel, Anzaldúa recognizes that her native tongue represents her full being and existence. She suggests that she must accept all of the languages she speaks as legitimate to accept the legitimacy of herself. She says: "So if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself" (Anzaldúa 81). Anzaldúa encourages Chicanos and

Latinos to actively speak their language(s) and take pride in their mother tongue. Likewise, Papa-Nnukwu, Kambili's paternal grandfather, takes pride in his Igbo heritage and the informal, oral educational system that he values allows his grandchildren to connect to a culture that affirms them. For example, while in Nsukka, Papa-Nnukwu recounts to his grandchildren the "story of why the tortoise has a cracked shell" (Adichie 157). Through storytelling, the grandfather introduces Kambili to a culture that is neglected and devalued in her home.

Although Kambili does not defy her father as openly as her brother does,¹⁶ she knowingly goes against his rules by bringing a portrait of Papa-Nnukwu to his home. Kambili notes, "Perhaps it was what we wanted to happen, Jaja and I, without being aware of it. Perhaps we all changed after Nsukka—even Papa—and things were destined to not be the same, to not be in their original order" (Adichie 209). For Kambili, the unfinished portrait of her grandfather, which results in her nearly fatal beating, connects her to Igbo religion and culture and becomes a symbol of rebellion against her father. When her father apprehends the portrait, Kambili exclaims:

The painting was gone. It already represented something lost, something I had never had, would never have. Now even that reminder was gone, and at Papa's feet lay pieces of paper streaked with earth-tone colors. [I] suddenly and maniacally imagined Papa-Nnukwu's body being cut in pieces that small and stored in a fridge. "No!" I shrieked. I dashed to the pieces on the floor as if to save them, as if saving them would mean saving Papa-Nnukwu. I sank to the floor, lay on the pieces of paper. (Adichie 210)

The Igbo religion and culture allow Kambili to connect to an identity that articulates the values and realities of her Nigerian identity. Her connection to her grandfather, as symbolized by the

¹⁶ Kambili's brother, Jaja, defies his father when he refuses to attend communion on Palm Sunday.

portrait, has given her voice and agency. Kambili's refusal to remove herself from the ruined portrait of her grandfather is a way of questioning the established order that her father values. For this reason, the beating marks the growth of the protagonist because she is no longer silenced. In her own way, she resists the rigid home culture and questions his dictatorial rule.

Because Kambili and her mother, Beatrice, both share similar positions of seeking Eugene's approval and avoiding his violence, Kambili and her mother only connect through silence and tears. They both become conditioned to accept oppression found in the home as the natural order. For example, Eugene hits his wife and children with a belt for suggesting Kambili break the Eucharistic fast to take Panadol, a medicine that requires food before consumption (Adichie 101-102). In another instance, Eugene breaks a table on Beatrice's belly without probable cause, resulting in her second miscarriage in the novel (248-249). Beatrice, like Kitty in *Abeng*, conforms to patriarchal notions associated with womanhood, which include constant, relentless interdependence and submissiveness to her husband. Although her husband beats her, she speaks highly of him for staying and not choosing a second wife even after she has difficulty bearing more children (Adichie 20). Her response to Auntie Ifeoma—"Where would I go if I leave Eugene's house?"—parallels Kitty's reasons for marrying Boy in *Abeng* and points to the idea that her choices are limited and she must stay with her husband out of obligation (250).

When describing her mother, Kambili says, "there was so much that she did not mind" and expresses that she "spoke the way a bird eats, in small amounts" (Adichie 19-20). This description shows how Kambili's sense of self is at first intricately linked to her mother because she too speaks very little. Although Beatrice cannot protect her children from Eugene's wrath, she seeks other ways to show love and nurturance towards her children by tending to their wounds after they have been abused by their father. For this reason, Kambili's relationship with

her mother is centered around silence because her mother's position does not allow her to deal with the abuse of both herself and her children. An example of Beatrice nurturing Kambili is vividly illustrated after her father scolds her for neglecting to tell him that she and her brother were living with their grandfather in Nsukka. In speaking about her mother after the incident, Kambili says:

Papa put his hands under my arms to carry me out, but I heard Mama say, "Let me please." I did not realize that Mama had come into the bathroom. Tears were running down her face. [S]he mixed salt with cold water and gently plastered the gritty mixture onto my feet. She helped me out of the tub, made to carry me on her back to my room, but I shook my head. She was too small. We might both fall. Mama did not speak until we were in my room. "You should take Panadol," she said. (Adichie 195)

As many others in the novel, this passage shows how the rigid home life will not allow Kambili to have a closer relationship with her mother.

At the conclusion of *Purple Hibiscus*, though their relationship is still centered around silence, Kambili and Beatrice reverse roles. The author's title of the ending section, "a different silence," suggests that after the death of the father/patriarch, the silence of Kambili and Beatrice is not measured by Eugene's rules, but by defiance (Adichie 293). In assuming her mother's role as the nurturing one, Kambili rewrites the script of a sacrificing woman. She and her mother now connect in a different way and their relationship evolves as a result. Kambili becomes more nurturing like her mother, and Beatrice becomes more defiant like Kambili. For example, Beatrice defies the status quo by not wearing the proper dress after her husband's death, while Kambili chooses to attend a church that values what her father rejects. Without the patriarch

hovering over their every move, Kambili and her mother both come-of-age at the end of the story and challenge the established order.

Like the bush and the childhood home of Miss Winifred and Mrs. Phillips in Jamaica for Clare Savage in *Abeng*, Nsukka embodies the island culture and is a place where Kambili can discover a life away from her father's authority. It is not until she visits her Aunty Ifeoma in Nsukka that she begins to question her life in her father's home. Her aunt's home is cramped, mismatched, and noisy; however, it has everything Kambili's home lacks: laughter, freedom of expression, warmth. For Kambili, her aunt's home is a place "where you can say anything at anytime to anyone, where the air was free for you to breathe as you wished" (Adichie 120). Kambili is both frightened and amazed by so much freedom to talk and express herself. She continues, "Laughter floated over my head. Words spurted from everyone, often not seeking and getting any response. We always spoke with a purpose back home, especially at the table, but my cousins seemed to simply speak and speak and speak" (120).

Amaka, Kambili's first cousin, becomes the catalyst behind Kambili's ability in Nsukka to break her silence and empower herself. Aunty Ifeoma asks Kambili to prepare the *orah*, but because Kambili has a maid at home who prepares the food, she does not know how to perform this task. In turn, Aunty Ifeoma asks Amaka to do it and Amaka shouts, "'Why? [B]ecause rich people do not prepare *orah* in their houses? Won't she participate in eating the *orah* soup?'" (Adichie 170). Amaka's insults allude to Kambili's higher class status and her ignorance of preparing Igbo food. Aunty Ifeoma's firm suggestion that Kambili defend herself and "[t]alk back to her" aids in breaking her perpetual silence in the text (170). Kambili describes her final outburst:

‘You don’t have to shout, Amaka,’ I said, finally. ‘I don’t know how to do the *orah* leaves, but you can show me.’ I did not know where the calm words had come from. I did not want to look at Amaka, did not want to see her scowl, did not want to prompt her to say something else to me, because I knew I could not keep up. I thought I was imagining it when I heard the cackling, but then I looked at Amaka—and sure enough, she was laughing. (Adichie 170)

As a figure of empowerment, Amaka’s values that consist of speaking her mind compel Kambili to achieve voice and selfhood. In addition, Amaka gives the portrait she illustrates of Papa-Nnukwu to Kambili as a gift, which becomes a symbol of rebellion to Eugene’s rules and the Eurocentric sphere.

While in Nsukka, there is a brief mention that Kambili reads *Equiano’s Travels, or the Life of Gustavus Vassa the African* (1798). Adichie’s insertion of this slave narrative possibly points to the false teachings of Christianity, a main theme addressed in slave narratives (143). In this narrative, Equiano provides a trenchant critique of the distorted Christianity of the slaveholding South.¹⁷ Like Clare in *Abeng*, it is through literature that Kambili possibly recognizes her father’s misconstrued version of Catholicism and becomes enlightened that the slaveholders’ Christian teachings depicted in the slave narrative she reads parallel her father’s teachings of Christianity. Her reading of the text subconsciously transforms her views that Catholicism is superior to Igbo religion.

In Nsukka, Kambili also gets to know her grandfather, who is a contrast to Eugene. Unlike his son, Papa-Nnukwu values the Igbo nation over British colonization. Described as a “traditionalist,” Papa-Nnukwu follows the teachings of Igbo religion and only speaks in Igbo, his

¹⁷ The depth of this tradition is prevalent in other slave narratives such as the Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) and Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), which shed light on the way slaveholders immorally abused the Christian doctrine.

native tongue. For this reason, he regrets letting his son attend missionary school. He says, “[L]ook at me. My son owns that house that can fit in every man in Abba, and yet many times I have nothing to put on my plate. I should not have let him follow those missionaries” (Adichie 83). Papa-Nnukwu suggests that British teachings in the missionary schools have resulted in the demise of his son and their detached relationship. Because Papa-Nnukwu is not Catholic and practices an indigenous form of religion that includes gods and spirits, Eugene has excluded him from the family life. Kambili and her brother have become accustomed to restricted visits of fifteen minutes to spend with Papa-Nnukwu over the Christmas holidays. Gradually, Kambili begins to notice that her grandfather does not appear as ungodly as her father suggests: “I had examined him that day, too, looking away when his eyes met mine, for signs of difference, of Godlessness. I didn’t see any, but I was sure they were there somewhere. They had to be” (Adichie 63). Visiting Nsukka for an extended period of time allows her to create her own perceptions of her grandfather that oppose her father’s opinions and thus represent her move towards independence.

Though Kambili is forbidden to have a relationship with her grandfather, she wants a connection to him like Amaka. She says, “Amaka and Papa-Nnukwu spoke sometimes, their voices low, twining together. They understood each other, using the sparest words. Watching them, I felt a longing for something I knew I would never have” (Adichie 165). Just as Clare in *Abeng* wants a relationship with her mother and the culture she values, Kambili desires a similar connection with her grandfather. Her father’s restrictions and Papa-Nnukwu’s untimely death do not allow Kambili to engage in a more intimate relationship with her grandfather. Because Papa-Nnukwu is a culture bearer and is interested in keeping the family rooted in Igbo language, religion, and tribal customs, he emerges as a maternal figure for Kambili upon his death. The

portrait of Papa-Nnukwu allows Kambili to develop a connection to her Igbo roots and her grandfather.

Upon returning home, Kambili and Jaja are filled with new ideas which complicate their sense of place in the rigid home culture. For Kambili, nothing will be the same. She says:

I wanted to tell Mama that it did feel different to be back, that our living room had too much empty space, too much wasted marble floor that gleamed from Sisi's polishing and housed nothing. Our ceilings were too high. Our furniture was lifeless: the glass tables did not shed twisted skin in the harmattan, the leather sofas' greeting was a clammy coldness, the Persian rugs were too lush to have any feeling. (Adichie 192)

In suggesting that her home lacks warmth, love and affection, Kambili implies it is no longer fulfilling. Her exposure to a more leisurely, laid-back lifestyle in Nsukka has catalyzed this change.

The question of being forced to choose between two cultures instead of being able to embrace them both is Kambili's dilemma in *Purple Hibiscus*. Clare's stance, however, at the end of *Abeng* becomes more radical than Kambili's. In *Abeng*, the novel ends at the childhood home of two women, which implies that the patriarchy is not present. Though the author seems to suggest that Catholicism does not have to be as rigid, Kambili's decision not to reject Catholicism fully but to attend a church that embraces both Igbo and Catholic customs suggests she still adheres to patriarchal notions associated with Catholicism. In the end, Kambili no longer questions the ideals that oppose her father's ideologies. St. Andrew's Church, which joins both British and Igbo cultures, becomes a symbol for how she ultimately learns to be at peace

with both. The story of how St. Andrew¹⁸ unified two cultures in the Bible is found in John 12:20-22. In these verses, because Andrew and Phillip have Greek names and originate from Bethsaida in Galilee, a Gentile region of Palestine, they become mediators in bringing the Gentiles to Jesus (Guiley 18). In joining St. Andrew's Church, Kambili similarly finds a way to combine both European cultural values and Igbo cultural values. She says:

I no longer wonder if I have a right to love Father Amadi; I simply go ahead and love him. I no longer wonder if the checks I have been writing to the Missionary Fathers of the Blessed Way are bribes to God; I just go ahead and write them. I no longer wonder if I chose St. Andrew's church in Enugu as my new church because the priest there is a Blessed Way Missionary Father as Father Amadi is; I just go. (Adichie 303-304)

St. Andrew's Church metaphorically represents unity. In the end, Kambili is able to embrace both formal and informal segments of European and Igbo religious customs. Kambili takes all that she learns from those around her and shapes a hybrid identity, finally flourishing into a girl who speaks for herself.

¹⁸ In the Bible, Andrew and his brother, Simon Peter, are the first disciples chosen by Jesus. In turn, Jesus summons Andrew and Simon Peter to be "fishers of men" (Mark 1:35-36).

CHAPTER FOUR:

CONCLUSION

Abeng (1984) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) provide explorations of hybridity and raise questions about what it means to be Jamaican and what it means to be Nigerian. Michelle Cliff and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie use the *Bildungsroman* to reveal the life and circumstances behind a hybrid identity and show how each female protagonist attempts to reconcile her two identities. Through their female protagonists, they investigate the larger issues of a hybrid identity, place, and the trauma one experiences as a result of colonialism. Cliff addresses the ways in which Clare resists an all-white identity. In assuming multiple identities, she rejects the Eurocentric identity imposed on her by her father. Likewise, Adichie's Kambili rebels against her father's religious expectations and ultimately embraces both the religion of her father and grandfather. In these literary texts, Cliff and Adichie dismantle the postcolonial structure that creates hierarchies of class, color, and religion and through their female protagonists, they encourage women to come up with new definitions of identity.

In addition, Cliff and Adichie capture the complexities of the relationship between father and daughter and investigate the ways in which the fathers assume the role of colonizer. Boy values European culture and continues to perpetuate the misconceptions of blackness by denigrating blackness and associating stability and power with lighter skin. Similarly, Eugene's missionary schooling greatly influences the reasons he imposes the colonial ideal on his family that Christianity is superior to indigenous forms of religion. Through father-daughter relationships, these coming-of-age novels show how the emotional bond between a father and

daughter is often varied and complex and how sometimes views of the colonizers permeate relationships and are either passed down from generation to generation or disrupted.

At the same time, these literary works provide varied, complex relationships between mothers and daughters and offer different perspectives on the ways in which each mother-daughter relationship explores distance and/or reconnection during a girl's growth into adulthood. Though the mothers do not neglect their heritage, they do not contest their husbands' rearing of their daughters. Though the mother-daughter relationship between Kitty and Clare is not one of love and nurturance, Kitty finds subtle ways of sharing her values with her child. On the other hand, Kambili's mother, Beatrice, cannot aid in helping Kambili assert an identity beyond the home culture because she is reduced to the same status as her children. Because Beatrice is largely silenced by marital abuse, the mother-daughter relationship in the text is less prominent and, as a result, the grandfather emerges as a maternal figure and aids in connecting Kambili to her Igbo culture. Unlike Clare who is separated from both her mother and father at the end of *Abeng*, Kambili reconnects with her mother and they both achieve voice at the end of the novel.

The distinct places illustrated in each novel either inhibit or stimulate the growth of the protagonist. While the home culture in each novel becomes a metaphor for the Eurocentric sphere, and compels each female protagonist to conform to a fixed identity, the island culture represents the pristine, traditional culture and exposes Clare and Kambili to other aspects of their identity. Because each female protagonist eventually makes the decision to resist and refuse a single identity, hybridity becomes feminized in each coming-of-age story. Clare and Kambili are able to attain a hybrid identity only after they are exposed to other aspects of their identity in the island culture. For this reason, the home culture is depicted as masculine, while the island culture

exudes the feminine and becomes the catalyst behind each female protagonist's recognition of her multiple and/or hybrid identities.

Clare's journey to the bush/countryside and to the childhood home of Mrs. Phillips and Miss Winifred, her final destination in the novel, enables her to claim her black Jamaican heritage. It is in the bush where she is able to assert an African identity and learn about home remedies from her mother and facts surrounding puberty and sexuality from Zoe. At the same time, her visit with Miss Winifred is the catalyst behind her recognition of her mixed-race heritage. Like Clare, Kambili's trip to Nsukka allows her to discover a life beyond the constraints of her father and the rigid home culture. In Nsukka, Kambili achieves voice and attains the ability to deviate from the original teachings of Catholicism and combine Igbo religious customs to the Catholic doctrine. Because *Abeng* ends at the childhood home, we are uncertain about how Clare changes after her trip. We can only assume by her dream that she embraces a mixed-race identity that highlights her Africanness. In *Purple Hibiscus*, however, we are able to see the complete change and growth of Kambili. After her visit to Nsukka, she defies her father and later joins St. Andrew's Church, a church that combines Catholic teachings with Igbo ancestral worship.

In shaping an identity, Clare and Kambili question the identity chosen for them and seek out an identity that embraces the home culture which represents the father and the island culture which represents the mother and/or maternal figures. Although Clare's father and mother both insist she claim an all-white identity, she must negotiate the Eurocentric identity of her father and the Afrocentric identity of her mother. Ultimately, Clare rejects an all-white identity and creates an identity that consists of indigenous, European, African, and Jamaican cultures. In asserting a hybrid identity, however, Clare highlights her African identity, the identity of her mother, which

suggests that she privileges her African identity over her other identities in the end. Kambili, on the other hand, successfully finds a way to merge both of her identities. By joining St. Andrew's Church, she combines Catholic teachings with Igbo religious customs. All in all, by defying societal notions, Michelle Cliff's Clare and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Kambili negotiate the identities of both their mother and father and achieve an individual identity without succumbing to the ideals of the dominant culture that their fathers value.

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