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The Divine Feminine as a Healing Mechanism to Trauma

Case Study: The Protagonist of The Secret Life of Bees

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English Language in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of Master Degree in English Literature and Civilization

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Dedication

In the Name of Allah the Most Compassionate. This humble effort is dedicated to my sweet and loving mother and father. I dedicate this work to all the women in my life, who I have been blessed with their inspirational existence, who provided me with illuminating guidance, energetic motivation, and financial support to pursue my educational journey in the university. I also dedicate this to all the teachers I have encountered throughout my learning process, from childhood to adulthood without any exception. But I emphasize proudly on the English Department teachers of Ammar Thelidji, who have been patiently and professionally a valuable source of knowledge and inspiration.

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Abstract

This dissertation delves into a Southern American novel, projecting trauma theory as a basis for psychological analysis, with regard to the protagonist in Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2002), and then traces her healing process, which will reveal the existence of common features that correlate aspects of the Divine Feminine with Cathy Caruth's memory narratives of healing. The latter is humbly achieved through an introduction, a theoretical framework, and two chapters; the theoretical framework is composed of two sections; the first is an exploration to Caruth's theory of trauma, where it will be followed chronologically whereas the second will function as both an introduction to the divine feminine with its aspects, mainly the 'Moon Cycle' three Goddesses, while the second chapter will label the protagonist as a trauma victim; besides, it will situate *The Bees* (2002) as Goddess text, mainly under the embedded features and symbolisms in it. Moreover, the characters of the Calendar Sisters will be compared to the Triple Goddess archetypes, and the matching similarities will likely nominate them to be therapists to the protagonist. So, this will smoothly pave the way to the third and analytical chapter, wherein, the influence of the Calendar Sisters, the black Madonna, and the Daughters of Mary on Lily's healing will be discussed. With this intention, this paper aims to examine whether or not the aspects of the divine feminine, particularly those related to the Triple Goddess or the 'Moon Cycle', are effective in healing Lily's trauma, especially, once applied by the Calendar sisters. By the end, the paper will highlight the reliability of using the divine feminine as a healing mechanism to treat trauma.

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General Introduction

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It is not surprising that the past millennia, with all of its atrocities, have been of pivotal significance in the evolution of traumatic diagnosis, as we know it today. This evolution, however, carried in parallel the possibility of providing different treatments and healing processes. The Holocaust, amongst other events like the two World Wars, the Vietnam war, slavery and the modern women's movement have been the main reasons which have raised interest in what is now called 'Trauma Theory'. (McGrath, 2016)

Throughout American history, women experienced a series of traumatizing events, mainly due to their gender. Men and patriarchy are also considered one of the key factors that generated severe psychological damage to females, and the American South is rich in terms of intense patriarchy, since the area was a fertile ground for growing conflicts related to racism and opposing authority, namely by the white men or the 'master'. Both black and white women were victims of this oppression, and faces of this dilemma were manifested in behaviors like sexual abuse, workplace abuse and harassment, domestic abuse, devaluating and degrading the self-esteem of women and girls. (Wineman, 2003)

Depicting this horrific treatment of women in a work of fiction would definitely portray a closer simulation to reality, which demonstrates the power of literature. It can be of assistance in terms of extracting a detailed analysis to the effects of trauma on the psyches of women, as well as to follow the journey by which their healing took place. Coming of age fiction, particularly, will lend a hand to the coherent progression of this research because this genre depicts the psychological growth of its protagonist. Therefore, this will allow us to have

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both sides of the story; firstly, where and how the trauma and psychological damage had occurred, and secondly how the healing was achieved.

Nevertheless, throughout the investigation of the existing literature discussing trauma and the divine feminine, the existence of a recurring archetypal pattern was remarkably striking. For instance, in Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2002), the case study of this research, where a repeated pattern has been represented through number three (3); specifically, it has been noticed that there are three components nearly everywhere, mostly in each corner of the novel, from the title, to the author's name, to the names of major characters, three settings and so forth. Later on, this idea became an obsession. Fortunately, it unleashed a strong desire to unveil the secret life of bees or at least some parts of it, however, what attracted the attention the most were the three black sisters, or the Calendar Sisters. They were the real inspiration behind the development of this paper.

The field of trauma studies in literary criticism garnered significant attention with the publication of Cathy Caruth's two fundamental works: *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996) and *Trauma: Exploration in Memory* (1995). Henceforth, this dissertation explores the trauma theory developed by Cathy Caruth as a projection to the psychological status of the protagonist of *the Bees* (2002), which is both rich with trauma narratives and symbolisms related to the Divine Feminine. So, the choice of the novel is fitting in order to examine the following main research question: To what extent will the notion of the Divine Feminine provide a healing atmosphere to the protagonist of the novel?

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Therefore, further investigation on the archetypal appearances of the threesome was set in motion in both mythology and psychology, the latter being based on the former. Additionally, this paper attempts to associate the sisters with the divine feminine archetypes. On the other hand, it also explores it as a healing mechanism for the protagonist's wounds. This was attained mainly through the '*Moon Cycle*' co-operative work to nurture and heal the protagonist psychologically. Hence, further efforts were made to embed the divine feminine within a psychological framework. Thus, transpersonal psychology was tackled since it was felt it conveys reasonably the principles of the notion.

As it is considered, there are three settings in the novel; however, this paper is only concerned with two of them. In this vein, and since the third setting is heaven, it will be largely misleading to the research analysis because it is expected from the present paper to respect the page number limitations as much as possible for academic purposes, and using this setting as third edge of the triple dimension of number three (3) will definitely enlarge the scope of this present research, which will be negatively reflected on obtaining the expected results.

Both settings relate to and depict the protagonist's journey within two communities, which are completely different from each other. Lily is a motherless fourteen year old girl who narrates her experience and reactions in a detailed description that allows us to witness her coming of age gradually. She spent fourteen ruthless years with her abusive father in a patriarchal society which repressed her femininity deeply, till it reached a point which hurt her both psychologically and spiritually.

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With this intention, this paper aims at examining whether or not the aspects of the divine feminine, particularly those related to the Triple Goddess or the ‘*Moon Cycle*’ are effective once applied by the triad in healing trauma, a trauma that is launched and reinforced through the extensive practice of patriarchy against women in *Sylvan*, the first setting in *the Bees* (2002). However, this study will maintain its focus on the protagonist Lily Melissa Owens, since her trauma is experienced both through the loss of her maternal figure and later through abuse by her biological paternal figure. Thus, projecting both elements of psychological trauma and notions of the divine feminine onto this major character will be an interesting investigation, and like the majority of investigations, a number of sub-questions and hypothesis are expected to be laid out, namely, the following:

- What is the history of the term ‘trauma’ and how can we distinguish between traumatic and memory narrative?
- What makes *the Bees* (2002) a suitable text to examine elements of trauma narratives and Goddess implementations?
- Do the Calendar sisters fit with the ancient descriptions of the Triple Goddess archetypes (*Moon Cycle*)?
- Did the Triple Goddess archetype promote the protagonist’s healing and spiritual growth? How?

These research questions provoked in turn the following hypothesis in an attempt to provide the paper with a limited scope of research, as well as to enrich the analytical platform for the study:

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▪ It is related to the psychological disturbance, which will be later developed into inner wounds that can affect the linearity in the narratives of the trauma victim;

▪ *The Bees* (2002) contain narratives of trauma, and Goddess texts features, which, if true, will make it a fertile textual space to examine the possibility of juxtaposing the two in order to provide a new perspective for healing trauma;

▪ The Calendar Sisters helped the protagonist to establish a coherent narrative of her past memories, and thus she was able to narrate the past as past rather than to keep reliving it and with her abusive father in Sylvan;

▪ The triad provide an example for feminine power and presence to Lily, something that she rarely witnessed in her patriarchal society in Sylvan;

▪ They share some characteristics with the Triple Goddess archetype that nominates them to be healing heroines to the protagonist;

▪ They will provide her with theoretical/practical teachings of her inner feminine abilities and worth, which is something she has never experienced given the absence of her biological mother and the absence of a suitable example of a feminine figure;

▪ They share some of the healing strategies with ‘memory narratives of healing’, and their application in a female, matriarchal community enhanced and quickened Lily’s healing process.

This research was approached via an analytical-descriptive method in an attempt to follow the behaviours of the characters in motion. Also, this paper counts on different mythological and psychological perspectives to synthetically shed some light on a number of

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mysterious symbolisms in the novel. This will offer the paper with a mosaic structure, which provides us with a diverse exploration of viewpoints from different perspectives. The fact that will enrich the study with various and solid arguments to humbly draw a clear image of what the researcher has in mind. In this context, the research is divided into three chapters. The first chapter will examine a body of theoretical knowledge which permits us to evaluate the significance and contribution of concepts like ‘trauma narratives’ and ‘healing narratives of memory’, while the second chapter explores trauma narratives of the protagonist, and divine feminine archetypes via symbolisms in the novel, which makes it function as a medium to the third chapter where it discusses the influence of female figures, namely the ‘*Moon Cycle*’ members on the healing progression of the protagonist of *the Bees* (2002).

Chapter One:
Theorizing Trauma and the Divine Feminine

I.1. Introduction

Trauma stories have been widely debated since the past century, especially when they became embedded in fiction. This chapter deals with two sections: the first one presents the theoretical background to 'trauma theory', where the discussion includes the history of the theory, its integration in literary studies by Cathy Caruth, the discussion will also include the characteristics of trauma narratives and memory narratives of healing, whereas the second section integrates a spiritual healing process through notions of the divine feminine, this notion is supposed to be a healing mechanism to be applied on women, who suffered from intense patriarchal practice. Henceforth, this section situates the divine feminine within the transpersonal psychology column. However, the main discussion will be on the description of the three parts of the '*Moon Cycle*' archetypes.

I.2. Theorizing Trauma

This section sets theoretical platform to the trauma theory, where it chronicles briefly its development from the definition of the word 'trauma' to Caruth's integration of the theory and its concepts into literature and literary criticism. This was done for the purpose of presenting a comprehensive understanding of the behaviors of the victims of trauma. Especially, when it comes to their incoherent narrative, mainly because of their shaky interaction with the past, where their trauma took place. This past seems to refuse to let them go and keeps on haunting them through memories and flashbacks. Thus, memory narratives of trauma will measure whether or not the traumatized individual was healed from his past. (Caruth, 1995.12)

I.2.1. Definition of Trauma

The word trauma comes from the ancient Greek word meaning ‘wound’. It is related to any physical wound rather than a mental or an emotional disturbance. Obviously, a bodily wound can be healed after suitable treatment, whereas the mind fails to be healed easily, especially after facing a severe traumatic experience. (Online Etymology Dictionary)

Thus, if we consider trauma to be a wound, it is a very extraordinary kind of wound. As a matter of fact, finding a clear set of physical characteristics that can identify it is very challenging. This is due to its particularity which renders it invisible at the instant it occurs. On the other hand, there are some consequent behaviors such as flashbacks, dreams and oversensitivity, all of which occur in a repetitive manner and appear later in time and can cause great deal of damage to the brain and hence to the individual, his family, and ultimately the whole society.

Lenore Terr, a child psychiatrist who did the first longitudinal study of traumatized children, writes:

Psychic trauma occurs when a sudden, unexpected, overwhelming intense emotional blow or a series of blows assaults the person from outside. Traumatic events are external, but they quickly become incorporated into the mind. (08)

Van der Kolk articulates a parallel idea concerning the vague nature of trauma when he states: “Traumatization occurs when both internal and external resources are inadequate to cope with external threat” (393). Both psychiatrists highlight the idea that the traumatic event is not fully responsible for the damage, however, they argue that what fuels trauma is the individual’s reaction to that particular event, and how his mind interprets the traumatic experience. In addition, the intervention of his entourage will help in terms of surmounting this psychological damage. Hence, in accordance with how the individual’s social

environment reacts to the traumatic experience, each one has its own unique way of reacting to trauma. (Bloom 2015)

Experiencing trauma can transform a person's life completely. It may influence how he thinks, the way he learns and adapts, the way he recalls memories, and it has the power to change how he feels about himself and other people he encounters on a daily basis. Trauma impacts even how he perceives items from the external world. In other words, our entire life can depend on one single traumatic event. Life, then, can be dramatically altered. In this vein, the triangular relationship among trauma, mind, and body must have been discussed long before the emergence of the so-called 'theory of trauma'. These ideas were pioneered by Jean Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud, and then further developed by Cathy Caruth. (Bloom 2015)

I.2.2. History of the Trauma Theory

Current trauma studies date back to the late nineteenth century. Earlier, the term 'trauma' was referred to as "a violent disruption of the body's integrity" (J. Hirsch 8). In other words, it was more closely associated with the physiological part of the individual at the expense of his psychological aspect. Fortunately, the advent of investigative research by Jean-Martin Charcot, a French neurologist, shaped clearer understanding of how trauma occurs, how and where it is reflected, according to which norms it is diagnosed so that it can eventually be healed. Actually, he is the first scholar to insert 'trauma' into the category of mental illness. More precisely, Charcot's interest in women's hysteria has paved a primary shift towards integrating trauma into psychology. (Ringel 2012)

The majority of his patients who suffered from hysteria were women. Its symptoms took the form of sensory loss, convulsions, amnesia, and sudden paralysis. Charcot arrived at the conclusion that hysteria is more psychological than physiological. He strengthened his

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argument through a live treatment session for a patient. The latter suffered greatly from violence and sexual abuse. She was hypnotized by Charcot in front of a large audience who then “helped them to remember their trauma, a process that culminated in the abrogation of their symptoms”(Hartman 01). In this sense, it is very important to emphasize that hysterical symptoms were not physiological, but psychological in nature, referring to hysterical attacks as dissociative problems.

According to Ringel (2012), Charcot has been of great influence on two major pioneers in contemporary psychoanalysis: Pierre Janet, who was a student of Charcot, and Sigmund Freud, who is considered the father of the psychoanalytical approach. Both scholars had contributed to a great extent in providing a link between hysteria and trauma. Janet and Freud continued further in their study of dissociative phenomena and traumatic memories (01). Their works were based on the ideas of Charcot. To illustrate, Freud states in his *Studies on Hysteria* (1983):

We must point out that we consider it essential for the explanation of hysterical phenomena to assume the presence of dissociation, a splitting of the content of consciousness. The regular and essential content of a hysterical attack is the recurrence of a physical state which the patient has experienced earlier. (Ringel 02)

During the 1880s, both Freud and Janet independently came to the conclusion that hysteria was undoubtedly a consequence of psychological trauma, and for the purpose of understanding trauma we must recognize the existence of dissociation, which is described as the splitting of the content of consciousness. In the same context, Janet states, “dissociation manifested in hysterical symptoms, putting the emotions into words and reconstructing the past helped alleviate the patient’s symptoms.” (Ringel 02)

In 1919, Freud faced another challenge with a different and more severe type of trauma. During WWI, soldiers returning from the front had shown similar symptoms to those of trauma such as unexplained paralysis, deafness, blindness, staring eyes, and even sometimes violent behavior toward their families and colleagues. These symptoms were referred to as 'shell shock'. "Psychological first aid was first developed to help World War I soldiers overcome their symptoms of uncontrollable weeping and screaming, memory loss, physical paralysis and lack of responsiveness."(03). Healing these soldiers was a major concern for the authorities so that they could return to the battlefield as soon as possible. For this purpose, extensive studies and experiments were carried out in this domain. So, Freud introduced the concept of the death drive in his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1922).

According to De Laurites the 'death drive' is defined as "the presence in the human organism of a force driving the apparatus to lower excitation beyond the pleasure threshold to a zero level of energy or the total absence of tension characteristic of inorganic matter"(08). In other words, within each human being there lies an unconscious, innate, active force, which drives the individual towards self-destruction. Thus, the death drive can stand for the desire to repeat painful, intolerable experiences such as those of war.

I.2.3. Trauma and literature

Literature today has become an essential platform to experiment with a great deal of theories, be they in the field of psychology, sociology, anthropology or others. Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma is one good example: she delves into her theory by "bridging the gap between the known and the unknown". (03). This idea is well expressed by Geoffrey Hartman when he states: "A theory emerges, focusing on the relationship of words and trauma, helping us to 'read the wound' with the aid of literature". (03)

I.2.3.1. Cathy Caruth's Theory of Trauma

Freud's interpretations of traumatic experiences were, at first, useful for Cathy Caruth in terms of shedding some light on the ambiguous side of trauma. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), she relies on the story told by the Italian poet Tasso in his romantic epic 'Liberta'. In this context, Freud uses fiction to explain a number of vague aspects of trauma. "If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experiences, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing." (Caruth 1996, 3)

For this purpose, it is important to highlight the strong link between psychoanalysis on the one hand, which tries to excavate the mind of the traumatized individuals, and literature on the other hand, which reflects how people's life unfolds. Caruth believes that Freud's employment of the poetic story was for the purpose of foreshadowing a relationship between literature and trauma theory.

It is easy for any reader to detect significant aspects related to trauma when exploring Tasso's story. To illustrate some of them, we notice that the traumatized character denies that he is wounded. Actually, he is unconscious at the moment of the shock. Furthermore, he is not fully aware of his wound. However, it takes a period of time for the victim to discover that he is facing some issues, especially after he encounters a number of repeated images, nightmares, hallucinations and flashbacks. Only then he does recognize that something odd had happened to him. Freud (1922), in this sense, noted that the victim may forget the moment of impact: it may take him weeks to begin recalling the shock and feeling its consequences.

Furthermore, Caruth (1996) broadens Freud's views on the previous idea, wherein she explains the meaning of Tasso's story by stating "it is always the story of a wound that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available." (04)

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Accordingly, and with reference to the tale, Tancred kills his beloved Clorinda by accident, and goes to the magic forest and hits a tree. Suddenly, the tree starts bleeding, and then crying that he has killed her again. In addition, she asserts that the victim is indeed in a state of denial at the moment of impact. Thus, his brain does not process and realize the incident.

Eventually, if the person is willing to excavate the truth of what happened that moment, he has no choice but to revive the process of memorization. The latter has the power to awaken his consciousness again. As Caruth puts it: “This truth in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language.”(04)

Caruth further highlights the link between literature, trauma and reality when she explains the example of the man who escaped from a train crash unharmed, but suffered from symptoms of shock after a couple of weeks. Indeed, the person did not fully realize the accident, exactly like Tancred in Tasso’s poem. Therein lays the core assimilation between fiction and reality: both of them experienced these symptoms after the moment of impact.

The inherent latency of the trauma experience is considered the second aspect of trauma theory, or the incubation period as Freud prefers to describe it, which is an allusion to the pathology of contracting a disease during the period that lies between the moment of impact and the appearance of trauma symptoms. This is known as latency. The period between the two moments is when nothing disturbing happens; to put it another way, life goes on without interferences or issues. Caruth describes it in her *Exploration in Memory and History* (1995): “the period which the effects of experience are not apparent.”(07)

Moreover, the victim begins to experience the effect of the traumatic event only after a period of time, when s/he starts to see images like hallucinations, flashbacks, and sometimes hears voices that can be strikingly haunting. In this respect, Caruth argues that “the experience

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of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not only in the forgetting of a reality that hence never be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself.” (7-8) Unlike Freud, Caruth cleverly tackles an important aspect of her theory, which is the solid connection between the trauma experience and the latency. She claims that the concept of latency is inherent and naturally incorporated into the experience itself.

Henceforth, due to the lack of knowledge on the experience of trauma, it is experienced after with other places and voices which stimulate the actual moment stored in the unconscious of the victim. The latter will recall images and sounds from the traumatic event only when s/he faces a typical situation to the original one. “Trauma... is a temporal delay that carries the individual beyond the shock of the first moment.” (Caruth 1995, 17)

The third aspect of Caruth’s theory of trauma is embodied in repeating the traumatic event through flashbacks, nightmares, sounds and images that are consistently overwhelming. As a matter of fact, Freud’s interpretations of Tasso’s story were the basic ground for Caruth’s explanations, particularly when Tancred wounded Clorinda in the battlefield, then repeated his action in the magic forest. Freud examines the way that experience of trauma repeats itself in his text. However, Caruth points out the limitations of Freud’s conceptual theory of trauma. She continues by saying:

For what seems to particularly striking in the example of Tasso is not just the unconscious act of the infliction of the injury and its inadvertent and unwished for repetition, but the moving and sorrowful voice that cries out, a voice that is paradoxically released through the wound. Tancred does not only repeat his act but, in repeating it he for the first time hears a voice that cries out to him to see what he has done. (2-3)

As a consequence of latency the person perceives the event from a different angle, as if the event is occurring to another person rather than him.

Additionally, the last aspect of Caruth's theory consists of a dual nature of trauma experience. Surviving the accident drives the victim to feel guilty: he blames himself for being alive while others are not, and also holds the burden of their death on his shoulders. This shifts his attention from escaping death to interrogating the reason for his survival. Henceforth, if he fails to find suitable answers to his questions, the victim might attempt to put an end to his life. The latter became meaningless, gloomy and chaotic to him. Ultimately, life becomes a heavy burden for him, difficult to bear and endure. In the same context, Caruth frames the dilemma thus: "Is the trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it?" (07) Therefore, the victim faces an internal conflict: a crisis of escaping death or danger on the one hand, while on the other, despising the fact of his survival. In other words, the crisis of an intolerant atmosphere of violence and fear from external threats, or the crisis of staying alive, safe but with an unbearable burden of hollowness and meaninglessness.

I.2.3.2. Characteristics of a Traumatic Narrative

The atrocities of the traumatic event make it quite difficult for writers to represent a suitable narrative. One can, however, distinguish a traumatic narrative through its structure and form, a fact which creates another challenge for writers dealing with trauma, which is an abstract concept in the mind. How can they reflect and represent an item which is totally invisible and only perceived through fictional characters? Language, then, plays a crucial part with regard to trauma representations.

Similarly to reality, fictional representations also have the characteristic of "recovery and memory and the acknowledgment of the denied, the repressed and the forgotten" (Whitehead 82). Nevertheless, the significance of trauma narratives is not merely limited to remembering memories: they can also be used to understand the process through which these memories are recalled, and even explain the reasons behind their appearance.

Another significant characteristic of traumatic narrative is non-linear narration or the multiple focalizers¹. Writers switch from one viewpoint to the next, and these different focalizations of the story actually represent 'the inherent latency of trauma'. Traumatized characters are often considered unreliable narrators, because their minds fail to digest what really happened at the moment of the traumatic event.

An additional important feature inherent in trauma fiction in terms of language is repetition: it could be a repetition of images or even the plot. As was explained in the theoretical framework, repetition of actions and language portrays a clear feature of the victims. The latter have a tendency to repeat some actions, as if they are stuck in the past, and as such repeating those actions over and over creates a comfort zone where they perceive the world according to their lens, whereby they show a sort of fidelity and nostalgia to those who passed away. As a result, we notice throughout the plot a journey full of moments of sufferance depicted in the form of a pattern, through which we accompany those characters.

Additionally, trauma narratives support a non-linear stream of events. This reflects the fragmented life perceived in the mind of the traumatized. He is imprisoned between the past and the present. In this vein, the non-chronological aspect of this narrative best depicts the internal status of the victim when he is depressed and tormented between the past and the present. This type of narration fits best with the nature of trauma as it distances itself from comedic endings which are a total contradiction of trauma narrative.

I.2.3.3. Memory Narratives of Healing

Since trauma experience is recorded at the level of the brain, the mind is responsible for retrieving or repressing the memories related to the painful event of trauma. In this sense,

¹The Multiple focalizers: the focalizer is the primary consciousness of a story. Everything happens is narrated and viewed through his lens. This character holds the main point of view. narrative, resulting in multiple focalizers for one story. Thus, the focalizer is not always the narrator or the main character.

Pierre Janet claims that “memory...is an action; essentially, it is the action of telling a story.” (Ruth 98) Hence, victims of trauma pave the way towards healing through actions of telling their story coherently. Caruth (1995) further emphasizes this idea by stating that victims of trauma are “often incapable of making the necessary narrative which we call memory regarding the event,” (160) so basically the traumatized individual is so deeply affected by the event that he finds difficulty in narrating the experience itself.

As an attempt to establish a difference between trauma narratives and memory narratives, Janet distinguishes between the two and states that trauma narrative “merely and unconsciously repeats the past” (Ruth 105) whereas memory narrative “narrates the past as past.” (105) Thus, and according to the definition of trauma narratives, the traumatized person locks himself in the past, which portrays the split and dissociative mind status caused by the horrors of the event. However, when the traumatized individual is able to tell the memory of their painful trauma in a logical order that demonstrates the healing in his mind, there the healing memory narrative is achieved and then healing occurs. In this regard, Sonya and Silvia argue in their book *Trauma Narratives and Herstory* (2013) that:

The healing of trauma only begins when the traumatized person is able to transform traumatic events into coherent narrative are the traditional examples of the view that the main step for the recovery of trauma is to verbalize the experience of suffering. (qtd in Bentahar 59)

In this context, the quotation denotes that the moment when the traumatized individual faces his traumatic memory of the event, and when he begins to articulate it into words, be it verbal or written, at that moment the healing process begins.

I.3. The Divine Feminine: Towards Integrating a Feminist/Spiritual Healing Process

This title functions as an overture for discussing the ‘Divine Feminine’; this will be approached through an exploration of different perspectives, each of which defines the term from a specific point of view. First, a psychological platform was settled to situate the divine feminine within the academic canon using ‘transpersonal psychology’. Then, we presented examples of three pioneers from the feminist spirituality movement, where they share their personal experiences and views of the divine feminine. After that, we shall tackle the Triple Goddess concept as they form the ‘*Moon Cycle*’ components; the latter are presented as a healing mechanism for the psychological wounds of women.

I.3.1. Accounting for the Divine Feminine: Psychology and the Notion of the Transpersonal

The integration of the world’s spiritual traditions with contemporary psychology results what is known as ‘transpersonal psychology’, which aims to acknowledge spirituality and unusual states of consciousness as valid doorways to access wholeness state of stability. (Cortright 1997) In the domain of transpersonal psychology, the healing potential of transpersonal experiences is asserted, spirituality is regarded as cardinal aspect of psychological health, and spiritual issues are analyzed from a psychological perspective. (Vaughan 1993)

Efforts are elaborated in order to distinguish pathology from spiritual experiences, and to detect the efficiency of spiritual practices in terms of enhancing growth towards wholeness against masking pathology. The former is conceived as an evidence of unifying interconnectedness, inner resources, and transcendence. (Daniels and Fitzpatrick 2013)

Similar to psychology, transpersonal psychology dedicates much attention to the study of consciousness; however, the belief that the origin of consciousness is spiritual is what triggers the knowledge of consciousness relates itself with a transpersonal perspective. Transpersonal psychology, then, investigates what improves or limits the growth, healing, advancement, and enlargement of consciousness. “From a transpersonal perspective, consciousness heals.” (Cortrigtht 56) .Additionally, transpersonal psychology discusses the idea of shifting focus from a model that advocates the absence of disease towards a wellness model that emphasizes the human potential, even though the former is regarded as a side-effect of the latter.

Moreover, themes like beyond-ego psychology, integrative/holistic psychology, and psychology of transformation (Hartelius, Caplan, and Rardin 2007) are often discussed within the field of transpersonal psychology. These themes stem from the three Latin interpretations of *trans*: beyond, pervading, and changing. Illustrations of transpersonal cases take account of dreams, intuitive knowing, visions, and unusual intensity in positive feelings, body/somatic experiences, and energetic vibrations. Transpersonal cases are also called spiritual, mystical, and Altered States of Consciousness (ASC) incidents. Thus, transpersonal cases can be transcendent. The transcendent traits and experiences of the trans-self are expressed through terms such as otherworldly transcendence, and beyond-ego. (Hartelius et al. 2007)

I.3.2 Accounting for the Divine Feminine: Feminist Spirituality, Theology and Healing Rituals

In the Western canon, discussions of the divine feminine are known as feminist spirituality (Barnes, 2006; Reid-Bowen, 2007, Ruether, 2005). Feminist spirituality is often coined with women’s expeditions into their own spiritual experiences within social, cultural, political and religious traditions, rooted in women’s experiences (Coholic 2003). Finding

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expressions in diverse movements such as the women's spiritual movement, ecofeminism, and the Western goddess movement, there is a consensus amongst them where they share reverence for the Earth and all creation, valuing women's bodies, seeking connections with all life and emphasizing rituals. (Neu 1995)

According to Goetz (2010), religious images and rituals can hold a transformative power and promote healing, but when modern women fail to find such resources in patriarchal traditions, they will look for other spiritual communities. Reilly (1995) further adds that what contributes to the spiritual wounding of girls and women are being marginalized as growing up females in a male dominated religion. The latter excludes them from recognition, playing roles of authority, or connection with a masculine God figure. By the same token, Goetz (2010) argues that "contemporary women have deep spiritual needs that are not being met by mainstream religious traditions". (148). Thus, religion has a vital relation to fill the spiritual void within them, and by this act of filling emptiness healing occurs, however, women have difficulties absorbing the energies and the teachings of a religion that marginalizes them and portrays them as eternally sin figures. Let us not take the arguments of Goetz (2010) as merely targeting religion itself, as he also addresses men as the dominant figures of religion and thus society. As a consequence, women lost faith in them as much as in themselves.

In North American culture, there has been a persistent religious history that portrays a male God as supreme, and the predominant images of the Divine as masculine. In this sense, many women feel that in order to reclaim their wholeness, it is vital for them to be able to re-image the Divine as feminine (Ruether 2005). Similarly, Goldenberg (1979) asserts that "A culture that maintains a masculine image for its highest divinity cannot allow its women to experience themselves as the equals of its men." (22)

Bolen, a feminist-spiritual scholar highlights, at the end of her memoir *Goddesses in Everywoman: Powerful Archetypes in Women's Lives* (1984), particularly, in the

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acknowledgement section, she encourages the reader to continue reading till the last page of her work, where he is directly addressed with the Hindu greeting ‘Namaste’ (I bow to the divine in you). Bolen writes: “if you have taken the words in my book to heart and felt what I have described, let us have this greeting as we pass: ‘The Goddess in me beholds the Goddess in thee’.” (278), to be seen spiritually is the greatest validation of all. This is what drove Bolen (1984) to use such an artistic twist in her memoir, she urges women to transcend with their spirits, to contact each other with a Goddess language, a language only spoken by women, as a suggestion for them to create their own sacred feminine space, where it functions according to their own terms and rules, a territory fully injected with matriarchal healing instruments. Bolen (1994) argues that for the body to be considered sacred once again, the Goddess must return, because it is through a Goddess consciousness that matter can be apparent as containing a sacred dimension. Bolen further explains in her book *Crossing to Avalon: A Woman’s Midlife Pilgrimage* (1994) the consequences of suppressing the feminine side of the psyche when she states:

What I did, men routinely do. They sacrifice the anima (the feminine, softer, vulnerable, and emotional aspects of themselves) [...] in order to be successful in the world, in order to become kings. When being productive and taking care of business is what matters, work occupies mind and time. The daily grind takes its gradual toll, and once spontaneity and emotionality are stifled, the child and maiden archetypes in us are gone, consigned to the underworld. If we lose and do not develop soul connections with people or lose touch with soul-renewing places or activities, we will gradually find that we are inhabiting our own wasteland. (qtd in Ioland 128)

This quotation explicitly denotes the psychological outcomes resulting from connecting to our spiritual feminine anima. She also points fingers of accusation at men, who according to her are responsible for suppressing the anima, the one within them besides that of women. Another critique is that of Hooks (1989), where she suggests that as women, we must broaden

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our discussion on feminism, moving on from being the victims of patriarchal culture to bring intersectional concepts such as race and class into the mix. She states:

Feminist thinkers engaged in radically re-visioning central tenets of feminist thought must continually emphasize the importance of sex, race and class as factors which together determine the social construction of femaleness, as it has been so deeply ingrained in the consciousness of many women active in feminist movements that gender is the sole factor determining destiny. (467)

A valuable emphasis on the importance of women's search for meaning through exploring the Goddess is depicted in Downing's memoir *Goddess: Mythological Images of the Feminine* (1996), in which she explains how these spiritual journeys can be a gendered search. She writes:

I soon discovered that my search was not mine alone, that in recent years many women have rediscovered how much we need the goddess in a culture that tears us from woman, from women, and from ourselves. To be fed only male images of the divine is to be badly malnourished. We are starved for images which recognize the sacredness of the feminine and the complexity, richness, and nurturing power of female energy. We hunger for images of human creativity and love inspired by the capacity of female bodies to give birth and nourish, for images of how humankind participates in the natural world suggested by reflection on the correspondences between menstrual rhythms and the moon's waxing and waning. (4-5)

Downing's (1996) repetitive use of the pronoun 'we' in various statements like 'we are', 'we need' or 'we hunger,' suggests she is addressing all women as a collective group. And she mentions the three circles of the moon which is a symbol of femininity and womanhood. Hence any representation of the moon in this study will in an attempt to portray it as a direct link to the feminine.

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Theologians believe that by incarnating an eternal divinity in the biological vessel of a woman, it will dramatically modify the socio-cultural stereotypes of women. In her book *Theology and Embodiment: the Post-Patriarchal Reconstruction of Female Sacrality* (1996) Raphael writes: “Conceptualizing the divine as ‘female’ allows a direct relation between divine generativity and its manifestations in women, a relation which has systemic political effects.” (09) Currently, women hold the derided and disrespectful reputation in the West: they are often seen as carriers of a ‘sin’ and seduction, and their bodies along with their natural functions are humiliated and covered with shame. So, by juxtaposing the divine with a ‘feminine’ image, the ‘female’ body will allow it to possess potentiality to be transcended into a sacred state, consequently making them viewed as beings to be worshipped and esteemed, initiated by self-estimation when women begin to consider themselves as worthy of respect and well-treatment. (Iolana 61)

Hence, transcending to a Goddess status, where women’s bodies and their natural rhythms and cycles are honored and respected is a path towards psychological healing. In this sense, Raphael (1996) claims: “For me, the “return” of the Goddess marks a vision of the decline of “masculine” modernity and its desacralisation of “female” materiality. In this, the Goddess is perhaps more a symbol of hope than of celebration, a hope towards healing.” (Raphael 14)

Analogous to her colleagues Bolen (1994) and Downing (1996), Kidd (1997) had her own experience in writing memoirs. *The Dissident Daughter: A Journey from Christian Tradition to the Sacred Feminine* (1997) is her non-fiction book that maps her spiritual journey to discover her inner divine (sacred) feminine, she argues that:

The symbol of the Goddess gives us permission, She teaches us to embrace the holiness of every natural, ordinary, sensual dying moment. Patriarchy may try to negate body and flee earth with its constant heartbeat of death,

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but Goddess forces us back to embrace them, to take our human life in our arms and clasp it for the divine life it is...If such a consciousness is set to loose in the world, nothing will be the same. It will free us to be in a sacred body, on a sacred planet, in a sacred communion with all of it. ... we will discover the Divine deep within the earth and the cells of our bodies, (Kidd, 1997. 140)

In the hope that it could be provocative enough to trigger some existential questions targeting the feminine consciousness, questions like who is this ‘She’ that is lying within us, and like Bolen (2014) and Downing (1996), Kidd (1997) is also targeting women as a group, urging them to discover the Goddess within themselves, according to her, this will improve how they look to themselves and consequently will force men and patriarchy to respect them as they are. Moreover, Kidd (1997) speaks about the power of myth as an aid and ‘way of knowing’ of their archetypal experiences with the Goddess. The three ladies are strongly affected by the Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung; they found reconciliation and a great amount of answers to their troubles in his works.

Accordingly, Jung (1922) defines the archetypes as being models of people, behaviors, or personalities. He claims that they have strong ties with our psychological status and suggests that the archetypes were an inherent tendency within the individual, more like instinct-based behaviors .C.G Jung notes in his book *The Structure of the Psyche* (1922) that “All the most powerful ideas in history go back to archetypes.”(17) He believes that the archetypes are universal, have existed for ages, and that they have a strong relation to the character of a person.

Additionally, Jung refuses the concept of ‘tabula rasa’, or the idea that the human mind is a blank page at birth that needs to be filled solely with experience. He believes that our ancestors retained unconscious, inherent aspects of personality in our minds. Each individual possess these mythic characters that embody these archetypes as a symbol to timeless human

values. He claims that each archetype had a significant role in shaping personality; however, he suggests that an archetype may dominate over another, according to the person's age, experience, and societal influences. He further adds that any repression against one of those archetypes will lead to certain psychological disorders such as depression, because this will create chaos within a long-rooted universal balance. The main factor that leads to this sort of repression is society (Iolana 113).

Amongst other archetypes, the anima archetype is of much relevance to this research. According to Jung, the anima is a feminine image in both female and male psyches. Jung believes that the development of gender roles and identities were stimulated by physiological changes and social influences. Jung suggested that the anima archetype was similarly influenced in this process. This archetypal image is based upon what is found in the collective unconsciousness². The latter may contain teachings about how women should think, act, and behave. Carl Jung's interest in the archetype was not restricted to the Anima archetype alone, he borrowed mythological characters to help him classify human behaviors - characters such as the Goddess triad, or the Maiden, Mother, Crone archetypes (Iolana144).

I.3.3. The Concept of the Triple Goddess: *The 'Moon Cycle'*

The Triple Goddess archetype locates its origins in the most ancient mythologies, all the way back to the Great Goddess who gave birth to all the Great Gods and the Moon Goddesses represented by the phases of the moon. Moreover, several goddesses appear as a triad, three separate beings who always appear as a group, each age and civilization shaped its own interpretation of the Triple Goddess, but they share mostly the same qualities (Sjöö and Mor 17).

² The collective unconsciousness: Jung believes the collective unconscious functions autonomously and brings to consciousness everything the individual needs on a psychic level. It is based on Socrates' Theory of Forms and Plato's 'Perfect Forms'. He also states that "the content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of *archetypes*." (Jung 1968)

In the most ancient descriptions of Triple Goddesses, they are depicted as separate deities performing different functions. In other words, in the Triple Goddess myth, there were three goddesses serving three separate roles, as they formed a triad of goddesses. Each Goddess plays a specific role in relevance to either a phase in a person's life or a time of the month, a role that is set in accordance with the position of the moon (Sjöö and Mor 43).

Therefore, the moon has an everlasting entanglement with the myth of the Goddess, since the time of the Great Goddess legend, where she was sometimes manifested as being the Moon herself. In his work *the White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (1966), Graves gives a detailed description of the Triple Goddess myth, he divides the Goddesses according to the three phases of the moon; the new moon, the full moon and the old moon. "The New Moon is the white goddess of birth and growth; the Full Moon, the red goddess of love and battle; the Old Moon, the black goddess of death and divination." (Graves 70). Hence, these goddesses evolved into the Mother, the Maiden and the Crone. They are divided this way to fulfill the main phases of a woman's life: white representing her early stage of innocence and youth, then red representing love and protection, and finally black representing death and old age, rather than the different phases of the moon in the nighttime sky. For this reason, the three goddesses revolve around the three visible phases of the moon, and the latter is the symbol of femininity and womanhood (Sjöö and Mor 50).

I.3.3.1. The Maiden Aspect of the Goddess: The Waxing Moon

According to Graves, in the Triple Goddess archetype, the primal phase of a woman's life cycle is the Maiden. In this sense, the phase is initiated when she begins to witness signs of growth, as from being a child into a woman, for example, puberty. However, her innocence and energy of youth are still retained. She is frequently associated with whiteness to symbolize her purity and innocence. Another view of the Maiden is that she is a calm figure. Her actions demonstrate consistent respect and compassion towards her

surroundings, whereas she feeds a desperate urge within her to break away from the traditions of her society, for the sake of creating a space that fits her own identity. Positively cursed with an endless thirst for knowledge and adventure, she seeks to learn from others as well independently. Unfortunately, she is seen as an unreliable individual by others, because she lacks experience in comparison to the other two goddesses (Graves 60). Two major Maiden examples found in mythology, the first one is Artemis /Diana: Greek/ Roman virgin goddess of the hunt, the moon, the animals, and the woods. The second one is Persephone: the Greek Goddess of Spring, daughter of Demeter and Zeus, and the wife of Hades, king of the Underworld (Sjöo and Mor 57).

I.3.3.2. The Mother Aspect of the Goddess: The Full Moon

Typically, the following manifestation of the Triple Goddess is the Mother, a phase in which she is faced with a transition from being a maiden to developing into a mother. The transition upgrades the woman from an overwhelmed state of innocence and purity to own other roles like providing love, shelter, and guidance. She is likely nominated to be the leader of her own matriarchal community, but with power there great responsibility. The same context is applied to motherhood, as if a heroine's instinct is unleashed by the inevitable desire to protect those she cares for the most. The mother figure is viewed to be a law unto herself; she is the connection between the Maiden and the Crone. In her the absence, the Maiden and the Crone will probably fail to function together, for they stand on opposite edges of the archetype. The Mother is a source of love, but rough, woman when compared to the Maiden and demonstrates little restraint in comparison with the Crone (Graves 64). One main example of the Mother is Demeter/Ceres: Greek/Roman goddess, personifying fertility, love, and protection, she is the mother of Persephone. (Sjöo and Mor 65).

I.3.3.3. The Crone Aspect of the Goddess: The Waning Moon

The last phase of the Triple Goddess concept is the one that stands for old age and death. The Crone archetype, or the hag, represents a woman who has passed through the Maiden and the Mother stages and ended up an old and often bitter woman. She is depicted as a lonesome figure who wears black; the color of death. Typically, the Crone is the oldest of the three. She is the wisest, performing with a serious attitude her daily routines. She takes for granted that her rich experience in life allows her to enact with a sense of superiority around her. Moreover, she troubles herself less with formalities when interacting with people, since she believes she knows better than others to explain herself. She has no time for patience. She demands respect from the people around her and she intimidates ordinary people. The Crone can be a malicious character, and being around her will likely be viewed as an unpleasant experience (Graves 68). One interesting example of a Crone is found in the Greek mythology, Hecate: The Greek Goddess of the Dark Moon. She was the queen of ghosts and of the crossroads (Sjöö and Mor 69).

I.4. Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the theoretical context that draws upon both the trauma theory and the divine feminine. The first section of the chapter have attempted to provide a brief history to the theory, its integration to literary studies by Cathy Caruth, discussing its main concepts, mainly trauma narratives and memory narratives of healing; the discussion will allow us to provide a clear diagnosis to the protagonist of the case study later in the second and third chapters. After, the discussion flows smoothly through the second section of the chapter, wherein this time it has been given accounts to the divine feminine from two standpoints: from a psychological perspective, where the so-called transpersonal psychology has been dealt with. In this context, this research fits into the realm of transpersonal

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psychology because it explores the divine (the sacred) feminine as a transcended state of consciousness, which eventually and supposedly will prevail to heal the trauma located at the level of the feminine self (the anima), which it includes identical discussions to the notion of the divine feminine. Furthermore, the discussion is taken further to include theology and Feminist Spirituality, here, the discussion restricts itself amongst three major figures of the movement; Bolen, Downing, and Kidd, whom they share their influence with the psycho-cosmological and mythological interpretations of the Swiss scholar Carl Jung. Finally, a brief description to the three components of Triple Goddess concept is relatively given importance, since they reflect the three phases of the moon, the most prominent symbol to femininity, with extracting related examples to ancient Greek and Roman Goddesses; Jung argues that their archetypal characteristics are kept recurring from an age to another. Hence, the next chapters will interrogate whether or not the characteristics of those ancient Goddesses fit with the three Boatwright sisters, and whether their inherent healing and nurturing powers will provide to the protagonist of *The Bees* a healing atmosphere.

Chapter Two

Exploring Trauma, Divine Feminine Symbolism in Kidd's *The Bees*

II.1. Introduction

“She was all I wanted. And I took her away”

(Kidd 08)

Although Kidd's novel *The Secret Life of Bees* (2002) is relatively recent, it is set during 1964 in the American South, the heart of the Civil Rights conflicts against blacks and women, who were both marginalized by the white man's authority and injustices. The novel has drawn a lot of academic attention, in Bachelor, Master and PhD studies. It is indeed a referential novel in terms of exploring trauma theory (Puchko 2018), since the protagonist, Lily Melissa Owens, is constantly haunted by the gloomy memory of her mother's death, a death which she accidentally caused when she was four years old. This is a terrible fact that has stalked her through the entire tenorship she spent with her father T. Ray, an abusive father who turns her life into misery. He adds to her already tormented life being a motherless young girl. T. Ray treats his dog with much better warmth than his own daughter: he repeatedly devalues Lily, making her feel detested. As a result, Lily recognizes she has a wound on a feminine level. The novel is also rich with feminine spirituality. Symbolism then is a key tool to unveil the secrets of the novel. Hence, this chapter functions as a medium between the theoretical framework and the analytical part.

II.2. Witnessing Narratives of Trauma in Kidd's *the Bees*

The Bees (2002) can be located within the body of trauma fiction, for it contains number of traumatized characters, the reader can distinguish a wounded character from its narration, trauma narratives, as discussed largely in the previous chapter, can be distinguished through its non-linearity, that is to say, the traumatized is constantly living in the past, where he finds remedy and he constantly looking for answers to his past and to the traumatic event. Finding

those answers will mostly contribute to his healing. This is the case in *The Bees* (2002), Lily Owens is in a constant search for any clue that may unlock the secrets behind her mother's death and past, and the protagonist was four when she accidentally shot her mother, so she has few memories of her. Lily is the main narrator in the novel, the fact that will help us to a great extent to posit her diagnosis as a trauma victim.

II.2.1. Lily's Wound: A Mother's Loss and a Father's Brutality

Lily is very intelligent and very observant for a fourteen-year-old girl. She is a writer; in fact, she wrote a number of interesting articles and thrilling short stories for her school magazine. Lily shows a calm attitude within her society although she is being repeatedly mistreated by some bullies outside, and her brutal father in the house. Lily's physiological needs fit with those of normal healthy growing children. She is getting food, water, and sleep sometimes, but often feels unsafe. Safety is an essential element for a child to function effectively and move on to the next levels of development. Lily lives in a patriarchal society, in a time of intense slavery, in which women of both races were in different methods of enslavement. If black women were experiencing physical enslavement, white women on the other hand were enslaved through their minds by men. Lily and her black nanny Rosaleen are one example of these two types of slavery. However, this study restricts its scope on analyzing Lily's psychology under this patriarchal pressure. The absence of Deborah, Lily's deceased mother, who loved and cared for her the most, made her sad and depressed. Lily turns to her black nanny for motherly comfort, Rosaleen, her stand in mother who cooks and cleans after Deborah's death. Rosaleen was a large woman with a "big round face" and was "so black that night seemed to seep from her skin" (Kidd 02). She had no children of her own, so for the past ten years, Lily had "been her pet guinea pig" (Kidd 02). Though Rosaleen acts as if she doesn't care whether or not Lily gets stung by one of the bees in her room, Lily has

discovered that Rosaleen's heart is "more tender than a flower skin" when she buys Lily an Easter chick dyed purple. When T. Ray yells at Lily about her bird droppings on the floor, Lily realizes Rosaleen must love her "beyond reason" when she stands up to T. Ray and defends her pet. Hence, the notion of the 'beyond' finds itself within the teachings of transpersonal psychology. Rosaleen loved Lily unconditionally, although she preferred to hide it but her actions always exposed the truth. This love kept her surviving in the patriarchal society of Sylvan, and later in the story Lily is amazed and healed with the enormous 'beyond reason' love and care she receives in the matriarchal community at the Boatwrights.

T. Ray further mocks at Lily's intellectual aspirations; T. Ray calls her "Miss Emily-Big-Head-Diction" and "Miss Brown-Nose-in-a-Book." (Kidd 16) As a consequence, Lily considers applying to a beauty college as a reaction to her father's patriarchal oppression, and suppresses her intellectual aspirations. Her English teacher brings her back to her senses and tells her: "Please, Lily, you are insulting your fine intelligence. Do you have any idea how smart you are? You could be a professor or a writer with actual books to your credit. Beauty School. Please." (Kidd 16). Here, the teacher stands for the female support that women give to each other. In this way, Lily is oppressed by the negative views against women's intellectual aspirations, by her father; the latter symbolizes the patriarchal masse in her society that regards women as inferior to men, by that they restrict her roles on housing, fashion and beauty.

At the beginning of the novel, Lily identifies Rosaleen as a protector, someone who is willing to create a safer environment, something Lily needs desperately for her emotional growth. When Rosaleen comes to the house the day before Lily's birthday and finds Lily's knees red and swollen from kneeling on grits, her face and words show that she's upset and angry with T. Ray and she then consoles Lily, "Look what he's done to you." (Kidd 25)

Rosaleen's reaction to T. Ray's physical abuse as wrong makes Lily feels validated and important to someone; this fuels her resentment against T. Ray. Thus, Lily acts out against the harsh circumstances she's living with her careless father the following day as she accompanies Rosaleen to register to vote in town. Rosaleen is attacked and brutally beaten by three local racists for pouring her snuff on their shoes because they verbally insulted her, and is then unfairly arrested. Although Rosaleen is petrified about the coming injustices that lie ahead of her in jail, she demonstrates inner strength by calming Lily on their ride to prison in the police car.

Unfortunately, once the jailer allows these three racists to beat Rosaleen further in jail, injuring her head badly, the roles for Lily and her reverse. Irritated by her father who tells her that "her sorry mother ran off and left [her]," and calls her a "little bitch" for her behavior when she is called a coward for not saving Rosaleen. Lily decides she and Rosaleen must flee Sylvan (Kidd 39), which suggests that she is severely wounded, and that her repressed anger appeared when her only source of safety disappeared. Now Lily stands up for Rosaleen and saves her, and they escape from the hospital to prevent further abuse against Rosaleen, and ask a kind black farmer to give them a lift to Tiburon, South Carolina, the address written on the back of a black Madonna picture among Lily's mother's belongings.

Lily wants to save Rosaleen from the harm of these racists, one of whom T. Ray believes is actually mentally unstable enough to kill her. A while after their escape, Rosaleen realizes that a black woman with an injured head, wandering with a young white girl seems very suspicious to the masses, and out of fear for their safety, she doubts Lily's motives. Rosaleen insists that the real reason behind leaving Sylvan was so Lily could escape her abusive father. Lily, who had just risked her life to rescue Rosaleen, does not appreciate being called self-centered and tells Rosaleen that she can "find her own way from now on," (Kidd

54) Yet, Lily is still largely dependent on Rosaleen as a substitute mother. She searches desperately for her after their quarrel, and begins to pray to God that she is not gone, telling herself "Mother, forgive," as if she felt guilt again by pushing away another mother: "I felt the same old grief I'd known every single Mother's Day...Rosaleen, where are you?" (Kidd 54).

A few moments after, Rosaleen and Lily meet in the stream, which takes Lily a step further in her coming of age. Without pretense and in the dark water of the stream, naked, they are the same: two people, hurting, desperately needing the love and forgiveness of the other. Rosaleen's keenness to forgive Lily's hurtful statements reminds Lily that forgiveness is an essential part to any relationship. Lily feels the need to protect and honor her. This is because Rosaleen's love for Lily creates a deep, enduring loyalty in her (Kidd 24).

Lily's constant search for clues about her past and her mother is a way of finding meaning in life through thinking and reasoning and sometimes arguing. Life at a certain point has become pointless and meaningless. At one point she expresses the desire to die in order to be with her mother in heaven. She asks herself about the meaning of life and she prefers death over life to free herself from her sorrows and traumatic feelings resulting from the abuse by her father. Lily says, "That night I lay in bed and thought about dying and going to be with my mother in paradise." (Kidd 04). Later, she utters feelings of guilt when she asks her mother's forgiveness through, as usual, fantasizing a conversation with her beloved "Mother, forgive. Please forgive" and she would kiss my skin till it grew chapped and tell me I was not to blame." (Kidd 04)

Lily Melissa Owens is the protagonist's triple name, in etymology; Owens means 'born with a desire' (Online Etymology Dictionary), using this particular naming for the protagonist would suggest that Lily desires something that she would never have, maybe her mother. Broken and abused, Lily is in desperate need of a mother, a figure which existed only in her

memory. Her father constantly refused to talk about her or to give her more details and souvenirs to fill the void inside of her, however, she had a few things hidden in the peach orchard and she connects with her sometimes through those items. She often opens conversations with her asking her for forgiveness, because, when she was four years old, Lily had shot her mother accidentally in an attempt to give her a gun to protect herself from T. Ray when was beating her. She also talks to her mother about how T. Ray is mistreating her. Lily misses her mother's smell and she remembers the little details with her.

II.2.2 Lily's Trauma Narratives: Living in the Past

Throughout the novel, we feel that the protagonist is stuck in the past and tries to retrieve her best moments with her mother by praising her beauty and recounting their few moments together. On a daily basis, Lily keeps going to the perfume store to look for a perfume that smells like her mother Deborah's. Lily says "the moment she lifted me, I was wrapped in her smell. The scent got laid down in me in a permanent way and had all the precision of cinnamon. I used to go regularly into the Sylvan Mercantile and smell every perfume bottle they had, trying to identify it."(Kidd 03)

Though Lily remembers the smallest details of her mother, such as her scent, she fails to recall properly the traumatic event when she accidentally shot her; however, she manages to retrieve some blurred flashbacks of the accident but in a fragmented order. This is one important feature of traumatic cases. Lily describes the scene of her mother's death and says:

She lunged away from him towards the closet, away from his grabbing hands, scrambling for something high on a shelf. When I saw the gun in her hands, I ran toward her, clumsy and falling, wanting to save her, to save us all. Time folded on itself then. What is left lies in clear yet disjointed pieces in my head. The gun shining like a toy in her hand, how he snatched it away and waved it around. The gun on the floor.

Bending to pick it up. The noise that exploded around us. This is what I know about myself. (Kidd 06)

Hence, Lily's whole life became centered on this terrible and traumatic event. The death of a parent in front his/her child can be sufficient to disturb him emotionally a great deal, yet losing him in front of and because of the child is just devastating and intolerable. Typically, these excesses of behavior are common among people who present traumatic issues. They tend to live in the past rather than narrating what happened in a consistent and logical order. They fail to do so because they feel that the event is not logical in itself; they tend to question everything and everyone. Still, by narrating what they have in mind, they recognize the process of time and that life goes on anyway. Nevertheless, when time stops, the narrating process is disrupted, and the victims automatically repress the traumatic event in order to forget, and allow him to avoid remembering those painful memories.

This is exactly what happened to Lily. Throughout the novel, we feel that she is wise and smart enough to construct a coherent narration that eventually would lead her to heal from the event, but suddenly she plunges again into sadness and despair, only to remind us that she is just a little girl, and children have their moments of happiness and those of sadness during the course of their childhood regardless of the circumstances they are facing. Lily attempts to create some sort of physical interactions with her deceased mother through her items, a photograph of her mother, a pair of white gloves and a picture of a wooden black Mary with an address at the back. She keeps them hidden from her father in a box buried in the orchard, and at night she heads into the farm. Lily says: "I undid the buttons on my shirt and opened it wide, just wanting the night to settle on my skin and opened it wide, and that's how I fell asleep, lying there with my mother's things."(Kidd 12). Those few items were her only spiritual doorway to create a contact zone with her mother's soul, for the purpose of feeding her increasing hunger for a mother figure. Later that night her father discovers that she is

absent and he goes out looking for her. Lily tells us, "I woke to the sound of someone thrashing through the trees. T. Ray! I sat up panicked, buttoning my shirt. I heard his footsteps, the fast, the heavy pant of his breathing...unable to think what to do, where to hide them" (Kidd 12). This indicates how much fright and panic T. Ray strikes at the little girl's heart.

Lily further says, "I had dropped the tin box back in its hole, "Lileeee!" he shouted, and I saw his shadow plunge toward me across the ground..."who were you out here with" he shouted. I couldn't look long at his face, how large and blazing it was, like the face of God." (Kidd 13), Lily assimilates her brutal father with God, as a sign of his judgmental and punitive attitudes towards her, like she'd committed a sin and she must be sanctioned, which in fact happened when he takes her back home and he forces her to sit on Martha White grits, his typical punishment when he feels she did something unpleasant. Lily says, "I'd been kneeling on grits since I was six." (Kidd 13) T. Ray demonstrates his injustice, and illustrates the nature of the sexist society against females when he says "I expect this out of boys, Lily—you can't blame them-- but I expect more out of you. You act no better than a slut."(Kidd 13) This is quite enough to cause severe psychological damage to any young girl, destroying her self-esteem by comparing her to a slut, as well as creating an ethical dilemma in her mind by telling her that it would be acceptable for males to cross societal and religious standards, whereas, it would be totally banned and inappropriate for females to do so.

II.3. Reading the Bees as a Goddess Text

Briefly, Goddess texts are featured with related symbolisms to Mother Nature, symbols referring to femininity, fertility, and powers of rebirth and renewal (Sjöö and Mor 37). In *The Bees* (2002), the moon is referred to several times. For instance, in the scene of Lily and Rosaleen's escape to Tiburon. After falling in sleep, Lily dreams: "I could see a huge; round

moon in the sky ... I saw the moon crack apart and start to fall. I had to run for my life” (Kidd 54). Here, the reader may associate this with the hopelessness of her subconscious longing for her mother being the annihilated moon in Lily's dream.

Besides, the falling of the moon in her dream may be interpreted as the wounds in her femininity, since the moon is a common symbol that stands for womanhood and femininity, and Lily herself. Again, the moon emerges in the scene of May's sudden disappearance: when Lily, Rosaleen, August and June are searching for her, Lily says: “A night bird was singing from a tree branch, just singing its heart out, urgent and feverish, like it was put there to sing the moon up to the top of sky” (Kidd 189). Also, August Boatwright tells Lily that the Virgin Mary considers seashells as her “favorite items, next to the moon” (Kidd 262). Finally, Kidd refers to the moon when she concludes the novel with a hint to this symbol. Lily tells us: “All these mothersThey were the moon shining over me” (Kidd 302).

Another feature of Goddess texts is water, since the moon manipulates the tidal swell, rivers, water and rain. Symbolically, rivers generally suggest the sense of a journey and of constant change. Actually, Kidd tackles this idea in her blog about the novel, stating:

Rivers typically suggest the stream or current of life that one follows on a winding passage that will eventually flow into the sea (or symbolically, into an even larger eternal life). In college I took a humanities course in which I read this line by Plato: "*You cannot step twice into the same stream...*" He was speaking of life. He was saying that the stream is always changing and flowing, that it is never the same moment to moment, and that life is this way. (Hunterdone HS blog 2006)

However, these symbols can be interpreted with relative attention to the sacred feminine aspects of their nature. Water is the most significant source of life: it nourishes crops, it cleanses, and it revives. In its absence, humans disappear from Earth in a relatively short

period of time. The idea of moisture also correlates with that of lactation and nursing young. An example of this concept is found in a Nigerian Yoruba prayer in Dr. Andrew Wilson's *World Scripture: a Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts* (1991). It reads, "O Mother who arrives majestic and offers water to all!"(89) When Rosaleen and Lily are making their way to Tiburon, they stop in the night to take a break next to a stream and clean up. Their night-time bath takes on an interesting significance as Lily says, "Water beaded across her shoulders, shining like drops of milk, and her breasts swayed in the currents ... I wanted to go and lick the milk beads from her shoulders ... I wanted something. Something, I didn't know" (Kidd 55). Here, Lily desperately craves for a love that only a mother can give, and in this situation; Rosaleen manifests a Mother Nature aspect offering nourishment of an emotional sort, though Lily is unaware that this thirst is the seat of her desire. Rain and rivers are intimately associated with the concept of baptism, as well. As a result, one could extrapolate the thought that Lily is being born again by baptism of mother's milk. The concept of rain and rivers as lactation is not a new factor.

Turning attention to another fascinating feature of these texts, bees would be related symbol to clear our understanding of the work, their existence has so many interpretations, and one significant interpretation is their association to the overall essence of healing. Judith Hebb discusses in her work *Conflict and Closure: Bees and Honey as Metaphors for Healing in the Bees* (2006) two significant ideas in the novel. She tackles interesting ideas like the great "insight into our own personal conflicts and the hope for spiritual healing" (179) that both Lily and Rosaleen are exposed to in the territory of the bee-keeping sisters.

According to Hebb (2006), honey is known for its healing powers, and she claims that honey was the "elixir of physical, emotional, and spiritual healing."(180) for Lily as much as for all of the wounded characters in *The Bees*. In the pink house, honey was present

throughout the plot and it was used for different things, from the women getting up in the morning for a spoonful to healing cuts and scrapes, to sweetening food, and to offering a coat of protection of the black Madonna statue during the May Day rituals. When Lily and Rosaleen first arrive in Tiburon, August encourages them to stay in the honey house, which offers them a figurative spiritual safety as they come to grips with their inner conflicts. Rosaleen more quickly than Lily is healed by the honey house's assuaging effects and is able to move into the pink house shortly after arriving whereas Lily takes her time to heal properly.

Hebb (2006) also claims that Lily was inspired by the bees she gathers in a jar; when the bee flew from the jar, Lily regards it as a sign for freedom, to free herself like they do. After the abuse and traumatic experiences in her father's house that weakened her, Lily thrives physically under the nurturing care of the bee sisters and the healing properties of honey that she ingests every day in several forms which serve to "plump out" her "skinny arms and legs." (Hebb 182). Rosaleen undergoes even more severe physical abuse from the three white racists, who abused and harassed her physically, yet like Lily, she finds solace and healing in the bee house from that abuse. Then, the pink house becomes an emblem of safety and restoration for both Lily and Rosaleen in terms of emotional and spiritual transformation. (Hebb 182)

Under those circumstances, Lily's healing process in the honey house takes much longer because of the depth of the wound she has experienced, and yet, after she decides to live with the 'bee' sisters, because she finds that she "no longer needs the spiritual protection of the honey house" (Hebb 181). Therefore, Lily bonds with the honey house itself, wherein she received nurture and care, and all the possible conditions that helped in promoting her healing and maturation.

II.3.1. The Triple Goddess Incarnation in the Calendar Sisters

The Boatwright sorority is referred to in the novel as the 'Calendar Sisters'. May explains the secret behind their naming when she tells Lily, "our mother loved spring and summer." (Kidd 73). By projecting the example of Demeter/Persephone's mother/daughter relationship on the analysis, it could be of significant relevance to finding a match between the Calendar Sisters and these Goddesses, since Demeter could reclaim her daughter from the underworld during this period. Via establishing this clever association, Kidd has firmly triggered themes and concepts related to fertility, mothers love, and the birth/death/rebirth cycle.

II.3.1.1. The Embodiment of the Mother by August Boatwright

During the overall portion of the novel, August Boatwright is clearly the Mother aspect of the moon cycle. In an interview about the novel, Kidd says: "The inspiration for August came mostly from a vision I carry inside, of feminine wisdom, compassion, and strength. I just kept trying to imagine the woman I would've wanted to find if I'd been in Lily's complicated situation." Throughout the novel, August exercises her feminine independence by excluding men from her life. She does not want to limit her feminine freedoms because of a male's authority over her. Like a typical Mother archetype, August leads a group of black women worshipers, including her two sisters, and they call themselves the Daughters of Mary, in a matriarchal religion, where they worship a black Madonna.

As a medium between her sisters, August is the voice of reason for her cold-hearted sister June and her emotionally disturbed sister May. These descriptions fit perfectly with the descriptions of the Mother aspect of the Goddess tackled in the first chapter, a fact that nominates August to embody 'Her' par excellence. Finally, to infer that August chooses to be

a mother figure to Lily fits her role perfectly because she provides a physical and emotional shelter for Lily to her lifetime chaos, and eventually encourages Lily to live in the safety of the bee sister hive.

II.3.1.2. The Embodiment of the Crone by June Boatwright

June is the eldest sister of the Boatwrights, a fact that nominates her to settle in the position of the Crone in the trio. Throughout the plot she is constantly associated with death. In Lily's words, "She played music for dying people ... to serenade them into the next life ... Maybe she was around death too much" (Kidd 86), and at May's funeral, "June played ... as if May's spirit getting into heaven depended solely on her. You never heard such music, how it made us believe death was nothing but a doorway" (Kidd 201). June is the eldest sister of the Boatwrights in *the Bees*, taking for granted that she is the representative of the archetypal Crone aspect of the Triple Goddess. According to Sjöö and Mor (1991), the Crones represent wisdom, repose, and death. The Greek goddess, Hecate; embodies all these notions and she is considered as the best personification of the Crone's character, since she was the representative of the dark side of the moon and the goddess of the afterlife and the underworld. (117)

Throughout *The Bees* (2002), June constantly refuses the marriage proposals of Neil simply telling him, "because I can't" (Kidd 123). A mundane reader would assume, superficially, that it could be because of her sense of responsibility toward her sisters, since they are living alone in the pink house. However, when examining her role as a Crone, accepting Neil's marriage proposal would be a total contradiction of her responsibility as the farrier of souls into the afterlife and dismember herself from her triad relationship with her sisters. This could be the core inspiration for Kidd when she sleekly rounded the passions of

June within death; June played her role of the Crone as she played the cello for souls to guide them cross over to the afterlife.

II.3.1.3. The Embodiment of the Maiden by May Boatwright

Since both August and June perfectly situated themselves within the traits of the Triple Goddess, this leaves the Maiden aspect left open for May. May is the youngest sister of the Boatwrights, and her twin sister, April, committed suicide at the age of 15 (note here that she is practically the same age as Lily). Since then May started to show odd behaviors, behaviors like high sensitivity and hysteria, psychologists diagnosed her with near-autism. In fact, there is also an interesting relationship with May when we study her empathic abilities and the death of her twin sister. One could assume it is the dual twinship separation effect, however, one should consider also what inspired Kidd to use a twin connection for May, especially when August clarifies to Lily, “When April died, something in May died, too ... It seemed like the world itself became May’s twin sister.” (Kidd 97). Here, from death, we have a transformation resulting in May bonding herself to the pain and heartache of the world.

Accordingly, Jack Holland discusses in his book *Misogyny: the World's Oldest Prejudice* (2006) the idea of oneness, the two halves forming a whole; the sense that these principles are right in the part of sacred feminine values is intense. According to him, women’s suffrages and goddess worships were familiar with dualism too, and it has been at the heart of both for a long time. One illustration of this is the Virgin Mary, who was equally expected to be a woman capable of giving birth and still remain a virgin. In this sense, Holland states, “The old dualism of body and spirit, threatened by the belief in Incarnation, reasserted itself with the cult of the Virgin Mary” (Holland 103). Therefore, May’s state of being a twin engages itself within this notion of dualism, while in fact, she is a member of the threesome.

Holland takes the discussion on dualism even further when he claims, "Taoism holds that the world is kept in balance between the interaction of two forces yin (female) and yang (male). This interaction gives rise to change ..." (171) Thus, May's twinning could be linked to the Taoist duality of yin and yang. Then, the character May includes both the concept of a Triple Goddess and the nature of duality; both are considered as profound hints to divine feminine principles. In taking Artemis as the mythological example of the Maiden aspect, and then projecting it on to May's character, a similar view to the notion of dualism emerges again, in the second half of Homer's *Odyssey* (1965), Penelope asks Artemis to give her the peace through death, and stab her heart with a golden arrow and ease her pain (Homer 202). Here, one could make a note of the dual function of death that life and at the same time gives way to life.

There is something powerful in the position of Artemis as rescuer. Here she is not a mere protectress or mother as in Artemis Eileithyia³; here she overlaps the boundaries between life and death. She transcends death to make it an act of mercy. Therefore, the duality between the active healing which gives life and the active slaying which takes life is what makes Artemis singularly significant within the Greek Goddesses.

II.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have brought into analysis how Lily's reality of her being the reason behind her mother's death, along with the brutal treatment of her father, who reflects the patriarchal society of Sylvan contributes to increase and emphasize her trauma. The protagonist's narration is non-chronological, and lacks coherence, the fact that confirms and locates her as a trauma victim, who prefers to live in her traumatic past rather than a healthy

³ Artemis Eileithyia: The Greek Goddess of childbirth and the Queen of Heaven, she is the healer, the Protectress, and the Savior.

Chapter Two: Exploring Trauma, Divine Feminine Symbolism in Kidd's the Bees

linear time flow, which will allow her to bring balance to her life. This chapter also tackled the author's use of Goddess texts symbolisms, namely, those related to the Mother Nature, female power, nurture and healing, the fact that leads us to assume the existence of a healing environment established by the rulers of the Boatwrights' matriarchal community in Tiburon, this in turn, lead us to examine the characteristics of the Calendar Sisters' triad and see whether or not they fit with the ancient descriptions of the Maiden, Mother, and Crone archetypes. The analysis showed that Boatwrights (the Calendar Sisters) serve a function much like to the myth of The Triple Goddess; while they are divisible by individual parts, the threesome is at the same time a whole entity performing a single function or operating toward a common goal, which is to guide Lily's self-actualization, growth but ultimately and more importantly towards healing, their influence will be described in details in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

Reclaiming the Goddess: Healing Lily's wound

III.1. Introduction

The Calendar Sisters, the Daughters of Mary, the black Madonna, and Rosaleen's influence prompts Lily to be aware of her self-worth and teaches her to stand up for herself, and face her father's abuse, and later physically shuffle to as a safer environment. Rosaleen helps Lily arrive at safety. Nevertheless, as Lily steps into the pink house, she faces more challenges, which Rosaleen has been unable to help her deal with: guilt over killing her mother, desire for another's love, and now the uncertainty over whether her mother abandoned her.

While Rosaleen continues to remain an important part of Lily's journey to healing through her support, she figuratively hands the torch to August and the black female community for the next and final stages of Lily's healing. August's sisters, June and May, although not as significant as part of Lily's coming of age as Rosaleen and August, are still unique black women who guide Lily in her expedition to discover important aspects of her identity. Thus, Lily's maternal trauma sets the stage for her racial interactions, in which she gets healed, and provides her with the opportunity to challenge the social norms of racial and gender classifications in search of belonging, love, and eventually healing.

III.2.A Faith-Healer in a Beehive: The Exclusion of Patriarchy in favor of Matriarchy

The novel tackles an interesting question in an extraordinary way; a white girl's healing and self-actualization is made possible through her integration into a group of black women.

Throughout the plot, Lily discovers the female strength in a group of black female community, and we witness the individuation⁴ process that is associated with her healing.

Since T. Ray, Lily's biological father, cares less about her development, then he fails to fill in the void of the mother figure, and impels the protagonist to look for a substitute source of family's warmth. Lily's golden ticket to begin her journey towards healing and survival is when she and Rosaleen flee Sylvan and head to Tiburon. In other words, Lily's distancing from T. Ray is the result of the lack of an emotional bond between the two, which paves the way for their leaving an oppressive environment to another setting that later turns into an apprenticeship without borders, where she learns lessons essential for maturation and form an independent identity for almost ten years after being exposed to both physical and spiritual melancholy.

III.2.1. The Black Madonna symbolism: Universal Motherly Figure

In her essay *Teaching Cross-Cultural Texts* (2008), Grobman Laurie discusses Kidd use of "blackness, specifically, the image of the black Madonna, to heal Lily, both emotionally and spiritually." (14) Grobman, then, believes that through Lily's interactions with the black Mary does her "deeply felt loss of her mother [begin] to heal," (14) She also explains the moments in which Lily prays to Mary, asking her to fill the motherless void in her heart. Grobman argues the motives behind Kidd's use of the black Madonna figure "in an attempt to honor the strength of black women". So, this serves as a sort of honoring "blackness," and since the black Madonna symbolizes a divine feminine figure and Kidd chose a black figure to portray it, in an attempt to demonstrate the universality of the divine feminine and how it transcends earthly conflicts and classifications, such as race. This was achieved by observing the protagonist begin her healing process through the aid of a black feminine divine, therefore

⁴ Individuation: In his *Path of Individuation*, Jung relies on mythology to provide explanations for his patients to achieve psychic wholeness (individuation) state of being.

her relationship with the black Mary statue functions as a medium for self-actualization, and later her healing from her earthly wounds.

Later in her essay, Grobman suggests teaching *The Bees* (2002) to students at school in order to help “provide a roadmap for all students who struggle to engage respectfully with cultures other than their own.” (16) Hence, the novel is an example par excellence for teaching love and acceptance, accepting and embracing the ‘other’, a female, a black, and the list goes down till it reaches bees, the smallest and yet the strongest female unit on Earth.

The significance of Kidd's use of the black Madonna is also examined by Catherine B. Emmanuel in her paper *The Archetypal Mother: the Black Madonna in the Bees* (2002). Emmanuel believes this aspect of the novel is a key force in Lily's journey, positing that it offers “solace and spirituality” to the young protagonist (115). According to Emmanuel, Lily's relentless search for a mother, her “quest for psychological identity” takes on a religious significance, expanding to become a “quest for a religion that offers some reflection of herself.” (115). As an archetypal mother, the Black Madonna offers Lily the religion she seeks, enabling Lily and the diverse female characters in the novel to access the “mother, or God-force within them” (118).

Emmanuel goes on to say that the black Madonna is an exemplar of the “psychological archetype of an indomitable spirit” (118) showing as it does a “soul not defeated by the persecutions of slavery” or in Lily's era, by a white patriarchal society responsible for gross injustice towards and oppression of women and black Americans. Lastly, the process of introspection Lily begins through her worship of the black Madonna is analyzed by Emmanuel. This “inward divinity... involves coping with imperfection” allowing Lily to absorb the reality of her mother's imperfections, and come to terms with her loss in a more mature and reasoned manner (120). Her daily visits to black Mary keep her cognizant of the “muscle of love” (Kidd 302) and the inner strength she depicts.

III.2.2. The Daughters of Mary Sunday Rituals: Sharing the Traumatic Experience

Though the publication of *The Bees* (2002) was a long time after the civil rights movement, it seems to revitalize ideas about black women during that period. Lily is fascinated with facts regarding the black women she encounters through her healing journey, facts such as how August runs such a successful honey business, and how she leads a group of women. These women meet each Sunday to worship a statue that is a “God who looks like them” (Kidd 141) where they narrate their stories together as a black, feminine group, stories like the myth of the Black Mary and the prophet Obadiah. August’s knowledge also fascinates Lily, what amazes her most is that she knows random facts like “thirty-two names for love in one of the Eskimo languages” (Kidd 140). The protagonist is also impressed by the fact that June is a history /English teacher and plays the cello in funerals. In addition to Lunelle, a member of the Daughters of Mary, who makes hats for a living “without the least bit of shyness” (Kidd 106).

Under those circumstances, Lily finds it absurd how “colored women had become the lowest ones on the totem pole” when all what it takes is to have “look at them” to notice how special and how like “hidden royalty” they were (Kidd 209). Part of this royalty emanates from their worship of black Mary. In this vein, royalty here works hand in hand with the notion of the divine feminine. Kidd was inspired by a Mary statue at a Trappist monastery and immediately considered that she “was Lily’s mother, a powerful symbolic essence that could take up residence inside of her and become catalytic in her transformation” (Penguin Readers 10). Here, we encounter another explicit integration to the notion of the divine feminine and that of the Goddess. Each woman holds an essence of royalty, which enables her to surmount any traumatic, difficult situation.

This is what Bolen (1984) meant by choosing ‘Namaste’ as a current salutation amongst women, to recognize each goddess within. women needed to be reminded of the healing powers, this is the effect of the bee community in Tiburon, they helped her recognize

her femininity, and her royalty, and most importantly, they showed her that she is loved and worthy of being loved, a privilege that she did not have back in her former patriarchal society with T. Ray.

The black women in the novel and Mary serve as a vehicle for change in Lily's life, a change towards psychological development and eventually towards healing. Since Lily finds finally what she have been longing for a motherly presence, so she keeps reminding herself: "All these mothers... more mothers than any eight girls off the street." (Kidd 302) Also, by the novel's end, Lily has been designated officially as an affiliate of the Daughters of Mary with an "old-fashioned beehive" hat that Lunelle made exclusively for her (Kidd 300) This act strengthened her feelings of belonging to a feminine community.

By projecting the aspects of memory narratives of healing on the rituals of the Daughters of Mary shares a lot of healing characteristics together, which Caruth (1996) confirms by stating: "trauma may lead...to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another wound." (Caruth 1996, 50) in total harmony with Caruth, when Lily participates with the daughters of Mary and she keeps listening to the story told by August of 'Our Lady of Chains', and how she helped the black community to stand against their master, who used to persecute them, only by touching her heart, healing narratives, then, reflects people's wounds and explains how people managed to heal and live their lives in a healthy manner after a certain traumatic event.

In this vein, people in the same situation may find some relief, consolation and comfort in telling their stories to each other. They are able to speak and to hear from persons that appear to be suffering from traumatic feelings like theirs, which establishes a kind of intimacy and solidarity between people with the same symptoms, knowing that they are not facing life's challenges alone. Hence, Lily finds a sense of belonging with the black community who they seem to understand and validate her feelings much better.

III.3. The Protagonist's Journey within the '*Moon Cycle*': From a Healing to a Living Narrative

The Calendar Sisters along with the Daughters of Mary are capable and willing to take care of and shelter Lily and Rosaleen. Kidd writes that even back in 1964, a period of racial persecution, she would “find a kind of redemption” that stands for all the black women and men she watched being mistreated. Lily is protected by these women in an attempt to shed some light on the marvelous sympathy, intelligence, and spirituality in the black community. (Penguin readers 4)

However, Lily finds some difficulties with her acceptance of these grand women at the beginning her residency in the honey house. These difficulties were because of the stereotypical background she brought from her patriarchal environment. She explains that she feels she belongs, but she kids herself that she could have “been in the Congo,” (Kidd 33) staying in a “colored house with colored women, eating off their dishes, lying on their sheets” (Kidd 33) The situation makes Lily feels alienated at the beginning, especially with the rude treatment of June. (Kidd 78)

Lily gets an education on a seldom seen or understood black culture. She learns that race and gender are merely fuel for the human ego. This ego leads to conflicts, sadness, and death, and in order to overcome all the negativity that came along with it, she must transcend all these shallow classifications that are based on racial, or gender segregation, and deepen her view to people till she “touch her heart” (Kidd 57) This expression was in a scene where August convinces Lily to touch the heart of the Black Madonna or as the sisters calls it ‘Our Lady of Chains’, the action of ‘touching’ her heart supposedly and figuratively will give her strength to face all of her sorrows and stand up for herself, and later to achieve healing. By touching each other's hearts and souls, rather than focusing on superficial interactions such as

skin color or a person's gender will definitely allow people to upgrade humanity and promote healing.

III.3.1. Lily's Bond to the Mother: Narrativising Lily's Memories

Motherhood, in harmony with the concept of the Triple Goddess, is a primary issue and a central theme in the novel. Searching for a maternal figure is the core of Lily's entire journey to Tiburon, as well as unveiling the secrets of her mother's past, Lily knows from August, that she was an unwanted pregnancy, she became furious out of her mother and she refuses to touch her items again, the news hurt her deeply, it is indeed frustrating for a person to know that he was unloved by both parents. However, August tells her: "Even if we already have a mother, we still have to find this part of ourselves inside ... not only the power inside you but the love ... to persist in love." (Kidd 288-289)

Previously in the novel, Lily describes her first worship service with the Daughters of Mary, telling us, "When August began, it didn't sound like August talking at all but like somebody talking through her, someone from another time and place," (Kidd 107) As a Mother representative, August demonstrates leadership, her use of transcendentalist methods in telling the story of Obadiah is of means to perform a healing ritual for Lily, August's high spiritual sense of others allows her to take a look inside of their souls and psyches, which will helped her create better communication scenes with the protagonist, at least better than her two sister. In this sense, August recognized Lily from the first beginning, she knew that she was Deborah's daughter, despite the fact that Lily lied about and hide her identity from the Boatwrights, August keep giving life wisdoms to teach the little girl about life, those wisdoms relate so strongly to Lily's real life, this sometimes makes her wonder if August knew who she truly is. Gradually, August drives Lily to tell the truth about her past, and this in return helps Lily to let go of her bitter past, and step by step she recognize that her past remains in the past.

This act of letting go the past is totally matched with Caruth's memory narratives of healing, when the traumatized realizes that he is free from the past that kept haunting him, and from the sorrows that are surrounding his life, he begins his first steps towards healing. August's assistance with Lily's healing and growth is profound.

As a representation of the Lilithian model of preserving knowledge as power, August is perfection. By the same token, Kidd shaped August's career around bees and beekeeping as an allusion to "the original beehive-shaped or domed ovens, found all over the world, could be used only by women; the oven was seen symbolically as the belly of the Great Goddess" (Sjöö and Mor 25). The Great Goddess for her part is the Mother in all of her shapes, the Mother Nature, Mary, the Black Mary, and in *The Bees* (2002), the Calendar Sisters, the black Madonna, and Rosaleen, along with the Daughters of Mary, the female squad play exchangeable roles and manifestations of motherhood towards and for Lily. However, August had a special relationship to the Mother aspect of the Triple Goddess concept, since she plays the role of the mother for many characters besides Lily; she is the Godmother of Zach, and she takes care of her near-autistic sister May. August is a person who gives nurture to the ones in need of it.

III.3.2. Lily's Bond to the Crone: The Death of the Wounded Spirit

Straightaway, and from the very beginning when Lily knocks on the door to the pink house, and it opens by June, a strict and intimidating woman holding a cello's bow in her hand, Lily even considers the possibility she might have knocked on the wrong door. For fear that this woman was not the "African bride" Lily had spotted in her way up to the pink house (Kidd 67) June Boatwright was dressed in black and gave an impression of readiness to hit them with her bow. (Kidd 68)

Henceforth, June is the only rude bee sister; from the moment when Lily steps over the pink house and June shows a clear disapproval of her. Though no one believes Lily's lies about Rosaleen's injury and her background, June is the only one to be straight in expressing her apparent doubts about them, and later she is shocked that August would offer them refuge in the honey house. Assuming that June's reactions at first seems to fit with her personality, which matches totally with the descriptions of the Crone aspect of the Goddess, knowing that a Crone is wise enough not to bring risky decisions that might harm her and her family. At different moments we find Lily wondering how come June never liked her as she does the other female characters, and she shows eagerness to be accepted by her: it becomes a goal for Lily.

Nevertheless, after we discover that June, too, knew Lily's mother, Deborah, actually she was condemned by August's acceptance to take care of her. In view of that, taking care of a white person would be considered as beneath August's intellectual milieu, especially given that August had a college education. So, her attitude to Lily is an extension of her feelings towards Deborah. June is worried that August is going to take care of Lily as she did with her mother Deborah. (Kidd 88)

III.3.3. Lily's Bond to the Maiden: Re-living the Traumatic Event

May, the youngest of the Calendar Sisters, is a highly emotional person because of the death of her twin sister April. She cannot bear the sufferings of the world, and she is capable of feeling the sadness of other people around her, as if she absorbs their sorrows and feels them as if they were her own and happening to her. Whenever she sees a sad situation in front of her, she begins to hum "Oh! Susana." (Kidd 2002)

As previously noted, August takes care of her sister May. For this purpose; she creates a coping strategy for her in order to help her cope with her psychological issues and depression.

She builds a Wailing Wall similar to the one in Jerusalem to discharge her burdens and sorrows. August explains this to Lily saying:

A what kind of wall? Wailing Wall, she said again. "Like they have in Jerusalem. The Jewish people go there to mourn. It's a way for them to deal with their suffering. See they write their prayers on scraps of paper and tuck them in wall. (Kidd 120)

Henceforth, Lily adopts this strategy for herself as a means to help her let go of her own burdens, namely her burden of accidentally killing her mother, and her harsh past ten years she spent with her father. May's high sensitivity and kind humanity influences Lily's personality to push her to prefer becoming like her rather than her brutal father, so Lily contrasts May who is a representative of the matriarchal sphere with T. Ray who in his turn is a representative of the patriarchal one. Lily shows wise attitudes when she balances both sides, choosing the in-between status of not taking any position to the extreme; in other words, not overwhelmed with feelings for others and not cold and careless of them either, in an attempt to inure herself from future harms. (Kidd 39)

As previously noted, May is associated with both the Maiden aspect of the Goddess and dualities; since she is strongly related to her deceased twin sister April. Their relationship, in this context, is regarded as a dual composition like all the existing dualities in the universe, such as male/female, water/fire, ying/yang, and moon/sun. In addition, the idea that no duality can stand alone with itself in the world, for it will bring imbalance and chaos to it and humanity is also explored. Similarly, April's death created an inevitable state of imbalance to May's system. August tells Lily in this regard: "When April died, something died in May too. She never was normal after that. It seemed like the world itself became May's twin sister." (Kidd 40) A few weeks after Lily's arrival at the pink house, May commits suicide, too, like April. When she hears the news of Zach's imprisonment, she cannot handle the situation, and she goes and literally drowns herself in a river, where Lily used to go to connect with nature

and think about life. As mentioned before, rivers are a symbol of continuity and rebirth, thus, May's death is regarded as a treasured attempt of her to follow her second edge of duality.

However, her death was a significant healing twist for Lily. Lily's initial trauma was the day she caused her mother's death and later reinforced by her father's abusive treatment. When Lily witnessed May's death, her subconscious relived the night of her mother's death. Thus, May's death accidentally brought with it Lily's psychological rebirth. In addition, Lily asks August about the significance of the pink house's color, August justifies that it was May's choice and that the color made her happy, so she accepted painting the house in pink so that her sister could live happily in it. August says: "you know, some things don't matter that much, Lily. Like the color of a house. How big is that in the overall scheme of life? But lifting a person's heart, now that matters." (Kidd 59)

From this quotation above, we understand that the house was painted pink under May's wishes and it functions like a womb, wherein Lily gets the chance to rebirth again. In Lily's case, on the one hand, her initial trauma was caused when her mother died, and later emphasized by the abusive treatment of T. Ray, in addition to the unjust patriarchal society she had to endure on a daily basis, whereas on the other hand, when Lily faced again the moment of impact, which is May's death, this time, Lily's second confrontation, the death scene shook her entire system. Lily describes her feelings when August announced May's death in the river and says "I started to shiver. I could hear my teeth in my mouth" (Kidd 78)

After weeks of mourning on May's soul, Lily visits the river and tells us "I wanted the river. Its wildness. I wanted to strip naked and let the water lick my skin...Even May's death had not ruined the river for me. The river had done its best, I was sure, to give her a peaceful ride out of this life. You could die in a river, but maybe you could get reborn in it, too."(Kidd 92) Lily's statement strikes at the heart of the Divine Feminine's principles, which

demonstrates the universal balance of dualities: after each life is taken there is a birth, or in this case, a rebirth, and in fact, it is tightly related to the moon cycle movement.

However, it is blended with the nowadays guidelines for healing psychological trauma. In this context, May's death resulted in Lily's spiritual rebirth and later psychological maturation, which in fact matches Caruth's views regarding the importance of confronting a similar situation where the trauma first occurred.

III.4. Becoming the Queen Bee: A Rebirth of an Heiress

Lily wonders which month would fit her if she was a member of the Boatwright family, she finally settles on a decision: "I picked October ... my initials would be O.O. for October Owens, which would make for an interesting monogram." (Kidd 137) Her choice of this month would trigger a number of ideas, the first being that the letter O bears a resemblance to the shape of the full moon. Besides, Lily learns about balancing sides and dualities of life when she finally settles on choosing October as her significant month, just like the Calendar Sisters who have their months of the year. In cosmology, October is the month standing for Librans, the sign of balance and justice. For illustration; Librans are given the symbol of a scale, which signifies balance and justice. Hence, Lily's choice of this month was not out of the blue. Under the influence of Carl Jung beliefs and his use of the cosmos to provide interpretations in his analytical psychology, Kidd, uses the month to demonstrate that balancing dualities of life is the best solution to all conflicts and sorrows, which later cause trauma in all of its forms, and since the novel's main conflicts are based on race and gender, this takes the discussion as if Kidd is suggesting equality between blacks and whites as much as addressing equalities between men and women.

Throughout the plot, the black Madonna influence Lily to find courage within herself, and August teaches Lily that a queen bee should be respected, loved and glorified, and that

each woman is royalty member, so she begins to love herself and develop better self-confidence and self-esteem. Henceforth, in the novel, the title 'Queen Bee' is a relative term for each woman who transcends the divine level in herself. This notion of royalty is located at the level of the self. August also teaches Lily that "You have to find a mother inside yourself." (Kidd 288). With the teachings of August, Lily knows that the queen bee is the most necessary in a bee community, mostly because she is the one mother of thousands of bees, and all the honeybees in her beehive commonly share their knowledge of this fact, Lily transforms August's apprenticeship knowledge to heal her own wounds of not having a mother, she projects those teachings nearly on each motherly figure she encounters in the pink house, however, she focuses to feed on the energy that the black Madonna figuratively release to her heart, Lily demonstrates spiritual attachment to her when addresses her telling: " I live in a hive of darkness and you are my mother, you are the mother of thousands" (Kidd 234) August's advice locates itself at the heart of women's mysteries and crystallizes the divine feminine principles. Therefore, the protagonist learns the ownership of 'her-self,' and like her black mother figures she encountered in Tiburon, who refused to surrender to racism, and like a queen, she won't "bow down" (Kidd 114) to the Martha grits that T. Ray used to punish her neither with nor to any other form of persecution. As a result, Lily has owned the innate divinity in her being a female, which overlapped in boosting her self-appreciation views, which marks her significant steps towards healing her feminine wound.

III.5. Conclusion

The findings of the third chapter have indicated that the workings of memory narratives of healing were masterfully applied by the '*Moon Cycle*' members, whom they happen to be the Boatwrights in *The Bees* (2002) or the Calendar Sisters as Lily prefers to call them. In this chapter it was highlighted that with the help of August, May, and June, whom Kidd cleverly played with their influential roles towards the protagonist, the author did not

take the position of the Maiden, Mother, Crone for granted. The sisters played each other's roles in an exchangeable pattern, a fact which helped in smoothing her healing process, August, who was the principal archetypal figure representing the Mother, helped Lily to construct a coherent narration of her past, her strategies did not differ much to those of Caruth's memory narratives of healing. Also, the chapter demonstrated the significant influence of the black Madonna's motherly figure, and the storytelling rituals of the Daughters of Mary to assist in Lily's course towards healing. Henceforth, given the hospitability of all these incredible black women, Lily transforms from a traumatized girl, suffering from both of the haunting memories of killing her mother and her father's verbal and physical abuse, to a healed, positive young woman, This transformation of Lily's behavior from a little girl who prefers to live in the past, mainly through her narration, flashbacks, and imagining conversations with her diseased mother to a mature young lady who shows responsible and smart attitudes in dealing with the difficult times of life would definitely prove that the matriarchal society in Tiburon, with all of its feminine portions had helped in guiding the protagonist towards healing and feminine maturation, a need she would have never encounter in her patriarchal society with her father . Her coherent narration in the last parts of the plot, especially, when explaining to her father certain choices she makes shows that she began to let go of her horrifying traumatic past, and that she is willing to move on.

General Conclusion

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This dissertation has explored Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2002) in light of trauma theory and examined the possibility of integrating the divine feminine as a healing mechanism for the wounded, female protagonist of the novel. The novel exhibits multiple faces of harassment against women during the sixties in the American South; however, this research takes into consideration the analysis of the main character, Lily Melissa Owens, who happens to have accidentally killed her mother at the age of four, the fact that upgrades the challenge for the standard healing mechanisms to trauma theory. Thus, and through this study, memory narratives of healing were backed up with special archetypal figures that seem to find their roots in the ancient mythologies of the Greeks and the Romans.

The Triple Goddess archetype proved its effectiveness in providing a healing atmosphere to the protagonist. The matriarchal community they ruled was regarded as a shelter, a healing center for broken females, Lily found in their company everything that contradicts what made her broken, weak, and depressed back in Sylvan. In Tiburon, the Calendar Sisters led her towards healing, maturation, and self-actualization. Each one of the sisters played a significant role in healing her psyche and building her personality.

Yet, what was astonishing is that their influence and healing strategies did not contradict Cathy Caruth's instructions regarding healing trauma victims. We notice that the impact August (the Mother aspect of *the Moon Cycle*) had on Lily contains ideas that relates itself namely in the healing narratives of memory. In the analysis, we find that August urges Lily to communicate with her, and by the end, she helps her to construct a coherent, logical narrative of her past. Additionally, August's life teachings of wisdom help Lily to shape a better portrayal of her future, and the humming of the bees that August takes care of also send relaxing vibrations to Lily's system. August teaches Lily the secrets of their beehive, including how feminine images are sacred, important and needed in the bee community, and

General Conclusion

Lily adopts and absorbs those positive vibes. She is living safe in her present with the Boatwrights; she lets go of her past, and she understands that the future has a lot to offer. Lily's adjustment of the universal time notions helped her find inner balance, a balance once troubled due to the intense patriarchy in her society.

This paper followed Lily's coming of age, this journey was divided into two main parts. The first part depicted the traumatic experiences she faced with her abusive father T. Ray. On the other hand, the second part examined her healing process with the Boatwrights in Tiburon, a journey which made her grow in so many different ways. This is evidence of the significance of a female figure(s) for young women rather than a patriarchal, oppressive figure. At a certain point in the novel, Lily discovers some unpleasant truths about her mother and the image she previously held in her mind about her is negatively shaken, which makes her become depressed. However, the teachings she receives from the female community in the pink house prompts Lily to embrace truths about her past. Lily's telling the truth about her identity to August, unlocking her mother's past, and having the truth about the traumatic event of her mother's death, all helped in her healing process.

Eventually, with the help of the Calendar Sisters, the Daughters of Mary, the black Madonna statue, and her nanny Rosaleen, Lily learns about different women's mysteries and powers, and the '*Moon Cycle*' triad provide her with solid living role models on how a strong woman should be, with each stage of the moon portraying different teachings in an attempt to build and heal her feminine character. Finally, Lily experiences maternal love: she feels belonging, which is one of the fundamental necessities for healing trauma victims, to be engaged in a safe, loving environment. For a fourteen-year-old, Lily has undergone a psychological and spiritual maturation which took her toward self-actualization. She has learned to free herself from her past and embrace the divine feminine within her. By doing so,

General Conclusion

Lily Melissa Owens is remarkably 'healed'. This, then, firmly proves that the notions of the divine feminine can work hand in hand with psychology in order to heal trauma.

Appendix 01

A Brief Summary to *the Secret Life of Bees* (2002)

The Secret Life of Bees, set in the American South in 1964 amid racial unrest, tells the coming-of-age story of Lily Owens, a white 14-year-old girl who is searching for the truth about her deceased mother. She lives on a peach farm with her cruel father, T. Ray, who tells Lily that she accidentally shot her mother, Deborah, when she was four. Lily accompanies the family's black housekeeper, Rosaleen, to town to register to vote. Taunted by white men, she spills the contents of her snuff jar on their feet, is beaten, taken to jail, and later to the hospital. T. Ray reacts by punishing Lily, prompting her to runaway. Back with Rosaleen, she heads to South Carolina to investigate a picture of her mother's on a black Madonna with the words "Tiburon, SC" written on the back. In a store she sees jars of honey with the same picture, leading her to the black Boatwright sisters: August, June, and May, who raise bees and harvest honey, live in a bright pink house, and practice their own religion. Though the sisters provide a loving home for Lily, she's reluctant to ask about her mother. She befriends Zach, a black boy who works with the bees, and witnesses additional examples of racism in the town. Eventually, she learns the truth about her mother.

Appendix 02

A Short Biography to Sue Monk Kidd



(August 12, 1948)

Born in Sylvester, Georgia, USA. Sue Monk Kidd listened to her father's stories growing up in the tiny town of Sylvester, Georgia. Teachers encouraged her to write her own stories and keep journals. Two books which she read at the age of fifteen, Thoreau's *Walden* and Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, had a deep impact on her. She graduated from Texas Christian University in 1970 with a degree in Nursing, working throughout her twenties as a registered nurse on surgical and pediatric hospital units, and as a college nursing instructor. She met and married Sanford Kidd, a graduate student in theology, and had two children. The pull to writing returned, and she took writing classes. She soon began a career as a freelancer, writing personal experience articles, and found immediate success. Her first book was a spiritual memoir describing her advent into contemplative Christian spirituality, *God's Joyful Surprise* (1988). Her second book, *When the Heart Waits* (1990), recounts her spiritual

transformation. *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter* (1997) explores her interest in feminist theology. She enrolled in a graduate writing course at Emory University, and also studied at Sewanee, Bread Loaf, and other writers' conferences. In 1998 she began writing her first novel, *The Secret Life of Bees* (2002). Her second novel, *The Mermaid Chair* (Penguin 2005) explores a woman's pilgrimage to self-belonging, and the inner life of mid-life marriage. Sue serves on the board of advisors for Poets & Writers, Inc. and is Writer-in-Residence at The Sophia Institute in Charleston, SC. Today Sue lives beside a salt marsh near Charleston.

Appendix 03

Demeter/ Persephone Myth:

Zeus decides it's a good idea to give his daughter, Persephone, goddess of spring, as a bride to his brother Hades, god of the underworld. The king of the gods does not bother to tell Persephone or her mother, Demeter, goddess of agriculture, of his decision. After the abduction of Persephone, Demeter keeps looking for her daughter but in vein, the fact that causes her sorrow and she release her anger through using winter as a punishment to Earth, However, Zeus decides to calm her down by asking his brother Hades to let Persephone meet her mother in spring only.

Appendix04

The Obadiah Story:

The sisters share the story of Obadiah, who was a slave. Obadiah found a statue depicting a dignified black woman, which they keep in their living room. Obadiah claimed that the statue spoke hope into his enslaved despair.

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