

ABSTRACT

**A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF THE
BLACK FEMALE-AUTHORED
NOVEL OF DEVELOPMENT****Paula Eleanor Morgan**

This dissertation examines the interplay of formative elements in the developmental process of black protagonists from Africa, North America, Central America and the Caribbean. The fictional portrayals, the majority of which have a strong autobiographical component, define the protagonists' coming of age or deferred maturation within multiple jeopardies created by their race, gender and class. Novelists chosen for detailed study are Buchi Emecheta (Nigeria), Tsitsi Dangarembga (Rhodesia), Jamaica Kincaid (Antigua), Zee Edgell (Belize), Myriam Warner-Vieyra (Guadeloupe), Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker and Paule Marshall (United States).

Given the breadth of the canvas and the complexity of the historical and socio-political determinants, no single developmental objective emerges. The protagonists are journeying women poised at varying points in relation to tribal cultures, village communities, urban recreations of the folk commune and the metropolitan promised land/void. There is a consistent drive towards freedom, but the primary developmental goal of each protagonist is shaped by her most immediate oppression. Her avenues of liberation can therefore appear contradictory in terms of the parameters established by western feminists. The novels of development also define the quest for a mode of being and/or voice, which is variously shaped by bonding with or rejection of mothers, othermothers, diaspora spirit mothers, and motherlands.