CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSION

Having analyzed both the inner and the social conflicts in Edwidge Danticat’s *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, in this chapter, I am going to draw a conclusion.

I find three social conflicts between Sophie and Martine. The first social conflict is about Sophie’s education. Martine is of the opinion that Sophie should pursue her education and become a doctor. According to Martine, education is the only thing that make people respect them and that can raise their family status. On the other hand, Sophie does not like going to school because she is afraid of being accused of having AIDS. Sophie’s mother insists on Sophie’s going to school and becoming a doctor for the reason that it is good for her future. Because of that, Sophie does not dare to have a dream of her own although deep down she does not want to be a doctor. Besides, when finally she thinks about her future, she knows that she wants to become a secretary. In the end, after she is married, Sophie does become a secretary and by her becoming a secretary is accordance with her desires, the conflict is resolved.

The second social conflict between Sophie and Martine is about Sophie’s boyfriend, Joseph. Joseph is as old as her mother, but Sophie’s love for him is
unconditional because for Sophie, age does not matter. Sophie also does not mind the fact that Joseph is a musician. Sophie is very happy and she feels that her life is more interesting after she meets Joseph because Joseph breaks the monotony activities between school, home and prayer. But, Sophie’s mother does not allow Sophie to have a relationship with Joseph because Martine wants Sophie to have a boyfriend from a good family background and with a steady job. Martine also thinks that Joseph is too old for Sophie. Finally, Sophie decides to meet Joseph secretly while her mother is working. This conflict is unresolved because their relationship becomes worse when Martine finds out about their relationship and this conflict leads to the third social conflict below.

The third social conflict between Sophie and her mother is about the virginity testing. Virginity testing is a common practice done to every woman in their family. After Martine knows that Sophie and Joseph are in a relationship, Martine starts to test Sophie. On the one hand, Sophie hates the testing because it hurts her and it is humiliating. On the other hand, according to Martine, doing the testing is her duty to protect her daughter’s virginity before she is married. It has been a tradition. Sophie’s mother has also been tested by Sophie’s grandmother who wants to keep her from pre-marital sex or to get pregnant at a young age. Furthermore, loosing one’s virginity is a disgrace. In the end, Sophie breaks the hymen by pressing a pestle into it in order to stop the testing. As a result of Sophie’s action, Martine concludes that Sophie has been having sex with Joseph and she asks Sophie to get out from the house. Sophie has no place to go so she goes to Joseph and agrees to marry him. After that, Sophie and her mother have never met and talked to each other. In my opinion, this conflict is unresolved.
I also find two inner conflicts that happen to Sophie. The first inner conflict is about her relationship with Joseph. Sophie is confused whether to continue her relationship with Joseph or not. On the one hand, Sophie knows that Martine disagrees to their relationship and she would not approve of seeing him. On the other hand, Sophie likes Joseph from the first time they met. Sophie is happy when she is with Joseph. As Sophie’s love is unconditionally and she loves Joseph very much, in the end Sophie marries Joseph even though it is not with Martine’s blessing, so the conflict is resolved.

The second inner conflict experienced by Sophie happens when her grandmother asks Sophie to greet her mother first when they finally meet again at Dame Marie. On the one hand, Sophie thinks that the younger should obey the older, she knows that as a daughter she should come and greet her mother first. On the other hand, because her mother does not reply all the letters and never answer the phone from Sophie after her marriage, Sophie does not want to greet her mother first. Sophie also still remembers what Martine has done to her, the testing and everything so she is unable to greet her mother. But in the end, as Sophie’s grandmother becomes angry and makes Martine looked uncomfortable and almost scared, Martine decides to give in to Sophie. She walks to Sophie and kiss her cheek. In my opinion, as Sophie does not reject her mother, this conflict is resolved.

After analyzing all the conflicts, I find that all the problems lie in the relationship between a mother and a daughter in the novel. The author portrays how Martine is trying to be the best mother that she can be in her own way because she wants her daughter to go further in her life than she does. As we
know, Martine’s life and dream is ruined because she is raped in her young age. Moreover, the incident leaves a traumatic experience in her, so she does not realize that she forces on Sophie too much and she likes to control Sophie, not only about her education but also about her personal life. Unfortunately, Martine never explains the reason why she tries to control Sophie’s life. In my opinion, it is a mother’s obligation to give all the best for her daughter but Martine’s past experience and her being bound by tradition make it hard for her to act differently.

Sophie as a daughter feels that she is not free to choose or to decide what she wants. She also never shows or expresses what she wants and what she feels to her mother. In my opinion, every child has their own dream. Not only that, Sophie is also a grown up child. I think she will not always follow her mother’s desire.

In my opinion, Sophie and Martine have no communication at all. Not to mention that Sophie and Martine have been living separately and thus they have not known each other well. If Sophie understood her mother’s past experience and family tradition, they might be able to solve the conflict between them.

Finally, I am of the opinion that Edwidge Danticat is a great writer who succeeds in creating a good story which makes the readers feel satisfied after reading the novel. She also succeeds in creating inner and social conflicts which support the story and make it interesting to read.