

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background to the Study

Early twenty-first century witnessed the emergence of new voices in Nigerian literature, especially, the novel genre. These voices whom Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton have labelled “Third Generation,” may have consciously adopted the German *Bildungsroman* tradition. The style of exploring the moral and psychological growth of the main character has become ubiquitous in most contemporary Nigerian novels. In his *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M.H. Abrams defines the *Bildungsroman* as: “the development of the protagonist’s mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences and often through a spiritual crisis into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one’s identity and role in the new world” (193). Despite Abram’s broad illustration of the form, most critics continue to question its existence and viability within and beyond German literature. The genre’s flexibility allows for varieties across cultures and gives it a universal appeal. *Bildungsromanis* believed to originate from Germany in late eighteenth century, spread to various Western countries in the nineteenth century, and to other parts of the world in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Germanist and non-Germanist scholars continue to debate over particular texts as prototypes, main thematic and narrative features, and its consideration as a literary genre or subgenre. Susan Gohlman opine that “there is no agreement on what constitute a *Bildungsroman* or which novels belong to the tradition” (228). Franco Moretti writes that: “If history can make Cultural forms necessary, it can make them impossible as well, and this is what the war [WW1] did to the *Bildungsroman*” (229). Moretti thinks that the

form ended with the world wars. He argues that the world wars impacted negatively on the development of the *Bildungsroman* and observes that modernism became the framework of artistic expression after the wars.

Modernism rejects traditional ways and embraces new ideas. Modernist fiction emphasises the individual rather than society. It deals with the condition of man. The classical *Bildungsroman* follows the development and integration of a male protagonist, but the modernist hero refuses to be assimilated because he has lost faith in the society. James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* appeared at a time when many scholars regard the *Bildungsroman* as a phase that has ended. *A Portrait* narrates Stephen Dedalus's journey from childhood to the years of maturity. It concentrates on Stephen's spiritual liberation from the bonds of family, nationality and religion. Dedalus experiences the theme of alienation, exile and estrangement that mark the novel as a modernist *Bildungsroman* (Mahadin et al 17).

Modernist studies further expanded the scope of the *Bildungsroman* in order to accommodate non-western narratives. Some of the best narratives on the form appeared during the modernist period. Tobias Boes, a modernist critic, agrees that the form has expanded from its traditional roots when he says that:

The rise of feminist, post-colonial and minority studies during the 1980s and 90s led to an expansion of the traditional *Bildungsroman* definition; the genre was broadened to include coming-of-age narratives that bear cursory resemblance to nineteenth-century European models. In the wake of this expansion, scholars of modernism began to see their period as an

era of transition from metropolitan novels of formation and social affirmation to increasingly global and fragmentary narrative of transformation & rebellion (231).

This development, in turn, has had profound effect on the reception of modernist novels as critics began to reconceptualize the modernist era as a period of transition from metropolitan, nationalist discourse to post-colonial and post-imperial ones (Boes 240). Second wave feminist movement and leftist ideologies popularized the form among women, gay, lesbian, working class and postcolonial groups. Feminist critics further extend the genre by introducing gender perspective into the *Bildungsroman* criticism.

The Nigerian third generation variant makes up some of the additions. Third generation Nigerian *Bildungsromane* is theoretically linked to the tradition. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that it prioritises the Nigerian experience, Nigerian setting, protagonist and growth process. German scholars accuse English Department of using the form far too widely that it has become divorced from its ancestral home. English scholars claim that Goethe is not the primary model for the English *Bildungsroman*; and that, outside the German tradition, the form exists. Twenty-first century authors, especially females and minority novelists have rewritten the genre in order to account for their distinct experience. This study attempts to read the selected texts as unique examples of post-colonial Nigerian *Bildungsromane*. It proposes a defining criterion for reading the selected texts as variations of the extended model.

*Bildungsroman* in this context is a fictional narrative which follows the maturation or growth of the main character (male or female) from naivety to experience. The growth is not just physical or psychological, but involves awakening to limitations and the

attainment of cognition, change and awareness. This variant differs from the European model that sees marriage, adulthood and social integration as its end point. The study argues for the transformation of the protagonist (male and female) from childhood or childlike ignorance to maturity. It concentrates on identifying characteristics of the *Bildungsroman* in selected third generation Nigerian novels. The structure the novels under study will show that growth is a continuous process, this is why the novels lack complete denouement.

The social-cultural background of each novel determines the growth process of the protagonists. This implies that the environment plays a vital role in the maturation process of the protagonist and quest for self autonomy. Consideration of the social-cultural background of each text will create room for its classification into political, ethnic, female and feminist *Bildungsroman*. The selected texts are Chris Abani's *Graceland* and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* categorise as male *Bildungsroman*. while Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* fall under the female *Bildungsroman*.

The research also shows that contemporary Nigerian novelists have re-conceptualised, re-written, and indigenised the *Bildungsroman* form to account for the political and socio – economic challenges of the era in which they live, which is a particular period of Nigerian history, precisely, the General Babangida and late General Sani Abacha eras. The import of this study lies in the fact that the journeys of each protagonist is a unique contribution, and example of variations in third generation Nigerian *Bildungsromane*. The protagonists grow from childhood or childlike features to a more mature understanding of their world and situation.

For instance, Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* examines the challenges faced by writers and journalists under harsh regimes of military dictators. Chris Abani focuses on the effects of multicultural, hybrid society, which Nigeria has become, on the development of the individual shortly after the civil war. Sefi Atta and Kaine Agary write on the female experience, but their appropriations of the form differ. Agary follows the coming of age of her protagonist from a more radical perspective. The socio-cultural background of each narrative creates room for variations within the study of the *Bildungsroman* in Nigerian literature. Thus, we can discuss the texts above under political *Bildungsroman*, ethnic *Bildungsroman*, female *Bildungsroman* and feminist *Bildungsroman*. The study carries out a textual and intertextual reading and analysis of the purposely selected texts. The texts are written by Nigerians. Characters are from the Nigerian environment and the novels conform to the pattern of the prose genre such as setting, plot, characterisation, introduction, complication, climax and denouement. Regardless of gender differences, novels labelled *Bildungsroman* in the Nigerian context are essentially those of becoming.

### ***Bildungsroman* in Literary Scholarship**

Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* is viewed as the literary prototype of the *Bildungsroman*. This fact is obvious, since the term remains untranslated in the English vocabulary. German critics exercise monopoly of the form, disqualifying even *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* from its list. Fredric Jameson dismisses the *Bildungsroman* as a "natural form" (145). Marc Redfield calls it a "phantom formation," a mere construct of aesthetic ideology. Many critics, even in the English quarters acknowledge that the genre originates in Germany. The term *Bildungsroman* was first used in 1819 by a German

philologist, Karl Morgenstern in one of his university lectures to describe some German novels of which Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* is the literary model. Etymologically, the *Bildungsroman* is German. *Bildung* connotes "formation", "portrait", "education, or "development" and "roman" means novel. The form has been translated by some English scholars to mean, "novel of development" or "novel of education". However, it still remains untranslated in some quarters and most English critics retain the word in its original form, capitalised or italicised for both singular and plural. Others use "Bildungsromans" or "*Bildungsromane*" for plural. In this article, the italicised form "*Bildungsroman*" will be used for singular and *Bildungsromane* for plural.

*Bildungsroman* encompasses *Eziehungsroman* (novel of formal educational development), *Ertwicklungsroman* (novel of general growth and development), and *Kunstlerroman* (novel of artistic realisation). These narratives terminate in a reunion and harmony between the individual and society. Recent studies on the *Bildungsroman* point to Christoph Martin Wieland's *History of Agathon* (1766- 1769) as the first example of the form, and that it had long existed in Germany before it was given prominence by Goethe. However, it is generally accepted, even among scholars who contest the genre, that Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, published in 1795, is the archetype of the German *Bildungsroman*. According to Pertu Golban, "it has indeed become a critical cliché to consider the term and type of novel known as "*Bildungsroman*," one of the most valuable contributions of German literature to international letters" (17). The novelist creates a situation that allows the reader to see the young protagonist grow and experience struggles with the transition from childhood through formal education,

personal experience and various encounters. The reader follows the protagonist's difficult journey to physical, psychological or emotional maturity, and learn from it.

After *Morgenstern*, the word fell out of use until it was resurrected and popularised by the German philosopher and sociologist, Wilhelm Dilthey, first, in 1870 and later in his 1910 essay, *Poetry and Experience*. Dilthey stressed the chronological progression of a masculine maturation process which is related to an awakening, refinement, cultivation, and mobility. He also acknowledged *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* as the first example of the German *Bildungsroman*. Dilthey's use of the term gained popularity among German philosophers such as Sigmund Freud, Max Weber and others. The word "*Bildungsroman*" entered Encyclopaedia Britannica for the first time in its 1910 edition. Since then, the term has become well established and generally used for novels of development, education or formation of the protagonist. It is essential to note that before the nineteenth century, it was conceived as a process of giving form (formation). *Bildung* originally refers to the external form of an individual. Eighteenth century pietist conceived of this *Bildung* as God's active transformation of the passive Christian. The concept underwent changes in late eighteenth century when individuals began to develop their own potentials through interaction with their environment. The influence of the environment on the development of the protagonist becomes the focus.

Thomas Carlyle introduced the form into the English vocabulary by translating the entire novel of Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, into English, and wrote a parody on the *Bildungsroman*. Many prominent British authors of the time were inspired to write in imitation of Carlyle. However, German critics like Jeffery Sammons observe

that English *Bildungsromane* cut ties with the traditional model in that it possesses a more confessional quality. The theme of religious doubt is prevalent and the end is less optimistic. Susanne Howe's comprehensive essay on the genre, titled, *Wilhelm Meister and his English Kinsmen* defined the *Bildungsroman* on the basis of 'Apprentice pattern'. She finds examples of the form in both German and English novels. Howe's definition includes formal and informal developments, achieved with the aid of selected mentors. The protagonist also proceeds from innocence to experience. Susan Fraiman observes that Howe characterised the form purely on male terms and argues for a wider tradition that will include female protagonists (6). However, Jerome Hamilton Buckley's *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickson to Golding*, presents a broad taxonomic defining criterion of the English *Bildungsroman*, which is also significant to this study:

A child of some sensibility grows up in a country or provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, proves doggedly hostile to his creative instincts or flight of fancy, antagonistic to his ambitions, and quite impervious to new ideas he has gained from un-prescribed reading. His first schooling, even if not totally inadequate, may be frustrating in so far as it may suggest options not available to him in his present setting. He, therefore, sometimes at quite an early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also relative innocence), to make his way independently in the city (in English novels, usually London). There, his real education begins, not only his preparation for a career but also and often more importantly his direct experience of urban life. The latter



involves at least two love affairs or sexual encounters, one debasing, one exalting, and demands that in this respect and others, the hero reappraises his values. By the time he has decided, after painful soul searching, the sort of accommodation to the modern world he can honestly make, he has left his adolescence behind and entered upon maturity. His initiation complete, he may visit his old home, to demonstrate by his presence the degree of his success or wisdom of his choice (*Season...17 – 18*).

This differs from German novels, where a text is labelled a *Bildungsroman* if it represents a specific German ideology. According to Ellen McWilliams, Buckley's study "made a powerful case for the existence of the canon of *Bildungsroman* in English" (12). Buckley has deliberately deviated from the German *Bildungsroman* tradition in his focus on the pursuit of self-cultivation.

Feminist critics began to examine the phallogentric approach of both the traditional and English novel that deal with *Bildungsroman*. An elaborate essay on female writing edited by Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsh and Elizabeth Langland introduce a new approach to the *Bildungsroman*, not a shift as Gregory Castle had observed. Abel, Hirsh and Langland's collection challenged the existing canon of male hegemony and established the issue of gender often termed "Fraueroman". In the introduction of this ground-breaking anthology, the editors show Buckley's taxonomic definition of the form neglected women, and led him to a questionable conclusion that George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* is not the *Bildung* of the central character who is a female (Boes 234). *The Voyage In*, considered issues related to the exclusion of female development in previous studies on the *Bildungsroman*.

The English *Bildungsroman* varies from novel to novel, but its features are similar. The protagonist is often a poor orphan whose aim is to become a cultured gentleman of means. To achieve his desire, he moves from his rural home to an urban setting. Susanne Howe specifies that travel is a necessity in the *Bildungsroman* narrative: “No one can learn everything at home” (1). The English *Bildungsroman* displays autobiographical features, where fiction is interwoven with facts. Novelists sometimes incorporate their own childhood experiences into the narrative.

Many English *Bildungsroman* portray conflict with parents, or fatherless protagonists. Esther Labovitz says that “the family must be hostile to the child’s ambition and new ideas” (11). Absence of parental figures motivate the protagonist to search for a substitute. Education also forms part of the hero’s maturation process. Education involves challenges and various tests. According to Buckley, the child leaves his home for the city where he undergoes both formal and informal education. As he grows, he comes to a realisation that urban environment is not always a pleasant one. Nevertheless, he remains in the city where he struggles to achieve his goals.

Themes of the novels all explore the issue of identity formation, coming of age or apprenticeship. Since apprenticeship is tied to the process of learning, the hero learns formally or informally alongside adults who act as mentors; some he emulates, others he rejects. Physical movement to the city initiates changes as he encounters tests and challenges. Love affairs and the search for meaning in life is prominent. What differentiates the *Bildungsroman* from similar narratives is the formation and focus on the main character. Elaine Hoffman posits that “the education of the hero is brought to a

high level through series of experiences” (355). Buckley sums up the hero’s quest in three short words – apprenticeship, journeyship and mastery.

In addition to English appropriation of the form, narrative structures similar to that of the *Bildungsroman* have been shown to exist in some African oral narratives. Scholars have also read Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, and *No Longer at Ease*; Ngugi waThiongo’s *Weep Not, Child*; Mongo Beti’s *Mission to Kala*; and Cheik Hamadou Kane’s *Ambiguous Adventure* as early African *Bildungsromane*. For early Francophone narratives, the policy of assimilation in French colonies prompted the colonised to search for self or individual identity. David Mickelson defines the *Bildungsroman* from the black perspective to mean a novel in which “a single youthful protagonist moves from naïve idealism (ignorance, innocence) to a more pragmatic consciousness of possible consequences within a particular social context” (418). He examines how some early Francophone African novelists have inherited the German model and merged it with indigenous forms of writing and “throwing into itself the conflict between the traditional and the inherited and how the resulting mixture challenges European forms of writing” (418). Mickelson further adds that the major themes of early African novels on the *Bildungsroman* are on the conflict of cultures in which a young (man) struggles to achieve balance between colonising education of the colonial power and the traditional culture of his forefathers (418). Mickelson lists Mongo Beti’s *Mission to Kala*, Camara Laye’s *The African Child* and Cheik Hamadou Kane’s *Ambiguous Adventure* as early examples of African novels where African fictional characters explore the growth process of the African and links them with the colonial experience. The novels celebrate coming-of-age that hardly fall into the category of *Bildungsroman*. This is because African writers

are not intentional writers of the form. The protagonist of Camara Laye's *The African Child* can neither assimilate the culture of his society nor exemplify them, as he is torn between two cultures. This tension is exemplified in the crisis between modernity and traditionalism.

Cultural prejudice against women influenced literary production on female *Bildungsroman* in African literature. Novels of female development emerged with the second generation of Nigerian female novelists such as Buchi Emecheta and Zaynab Alkali who explore the growth process of their protagonists. However, Wangari wa Nyatetu-Waigwa's essay on Francophone African novels as *Bildungsromane*, titled: *The Liminal Novel: Studies in the Francophone Novels as Bildungsroman*, seems to be the first critical work by an African on the *Bildungsroman*. Nyatetu-Waigwa suggests that "reincorporation or assimilation into the society assumes the existence of a community to which the protagonist can return" (15). She locates the novels within the African *Bildungsroman* tradition and states that the form varies according to time, space, social context and gender. Her contribution to *Bildungsroman* scholarship is the establishment of the existence of the form in African literature. Early African *Bildungsromane* differ from the contemporary form in narrative structure, content and socio-political context. Third generation Nigerian novelists write mostly from diaspora because they see the world in a new light. Thus, they illustrate various characteristics of the traditional *Bildungsroman*. Unlike their European counterparts, the protagonists challenge the values of their societies rather than personify them. Since this research is based on the *Bildungsroman* in novels by a group of Nigerian novelists and how their

emergence has broadened the scope of the *Bildungsroman* in Nigerian literature, it becomes crucial to consider the history of their emergence.

### **Brief History of the Emergence of Third Generation Nigerian Novelists**

Nigerian literature, at its inception, reflected the Nigerian sensibility which began as a counter- discourse against the West. Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka, among others, wrote anti-colonial literatures that debunk derogatory portrayal of the African people in European novels. Charles Nnolim observes that “the thematic pre-occupation of this generation is to promote the dignity of blackness” (*Issues* 53). Following Nigeria’s independence in 1960, it fell into the hands of corrupt leaders, at first, dominated by the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group, until it was overthrown in 1966. Since then, the country has witnessed several successful and unsuccessful military coups, different republics and a civil war that lasted for three years.

Harry Garuba commented on literary events after the civil war. According to him, “New narratives have been constructed and new explanations proffered” (58). Nnolim adds that post- civil war Nigerian novelists “revel in the depiction of the pathetic circumstances of the poor masses in the society” (*Issues*58). The never-ending political turmoil that has tormented Nigeria since independence, is as a result of the cracked frame of the nation, which began with the amalgamation of the protectorates in 1914. Relatedly, OgagaOkuyade declares: “Military dictators began to launch endless transition programs that brought them back into power while others ensure their metamorphosis from military dictators to democratic autocrats” (“Washing” 7). Literature captures all these transitions and also reveals the plight of the poor helpless masses in the midst of plenty. Erstwhile Nigeria Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida, nullified the election believed to be

the fairest and freest in Nigeria's history. Chief Moshood Abiola, the acclaimed winner of the June 1993 election, was arrested and imprisoned. According to Clement Nwankwo, "The General Abacha-Babangida junta was marked by gross human rights abuse, outrageous executions, and imprisonment of human rights activists, including Ken Saro-wiwa. Many intellectuals were either executed or driven into exile" (157). In the oil rich Niger – Delta region, underdevelopment and devastation of the people's source of livelihood have led to kidnappings of some expatriates and a strong determination by the people to protect their environment.

As a result of the harsh environment in Nigeria at the time, there was mass exodus of Nigerians to different parts of the world, to the extent that the Nigerian government launched an advert of "Andrew". (Enebeli Elebuwa who died in 2012) who had become fed up with the Nigerian situation and wanted to "check-out". It turned out to be a vain attempt at assuring Nigerians that their problems would soon be a thing of the past. Since then, many "Andrews" have left the shores of Nigeria, and have had children and grandchildren, without any hope of ever returning to their motherland. More so, since the Nigerian situation seems to be getting worst. Okuyade observes: "it becomes glaring that literature cannot escape contemporary history which furnishes it with raw materials" ("Weaving" 138). A literary renaissance began with Nigerians who left the country during the regime of military dictators, especially, the Babangida and Abacha governments, and Nigerians who were born abroad and still living in diaspora. They heeded the call of Charles Nnolim for a new image of African personality which will be fashioned along with the needs of the twenty-first century: "our writers in the new -epoch

of globalisation dominated by technologically oriented new world must create a new Africa.” (“African” 3).

Nigerians that were born after independence in 1960, with similar social-political experience, and influenced by western ideas, form part of this literary renaissance. Failure of both military and democratic rules in Nigeria since independence created the room to shift their themes to the life of young or adolescent protagonists. Consequently, from the early 1990s, most Nigerian novels appear to deal with the theme of coming of age or growth of the protagonists. Oluwole Coker observes that the setting of their works is the Nigerian environment. Their literary production forges a thread of globalisation of themes and ideas as writers, either resident in Nigeria or based abroad or constantly moving in and out but are exposed to similar realities (“Theorising”). Consequently, most Nigerian novels of the late twentieth century exhibit features of the *Bildungsroman*. According to Chijioko Uwasomba, third generation novelists “are more globalised than their predecessors, not focused on nationalism but not entirely negate national discourse” (196). Okuyade adds that they do not distance themselves from their predecessors; only the political atmosphere from which they write differ. (“Weaving” 134). They derive their thematic preoccupation from the society they have experienced. Third generation Nigerian novelists have embedded the Western *Bildungsroman* tradition into their writing, especially, since most of their protagonists are young, naïve and journey from inexperience to experience. No wonder, Okuyade associates their works with “a badge of ‘Newness’ and ‘Nowness’” and also gives them a discrete position in the evolutionary process of the African novel (“Weaving” 138).

### **Features of Third Generation Nigerian *Bildungsromane***

Some peculiarities of third generation Nigerian *Bildungsromane* include re-visiting the events of the Nigerian-Biafra war which the novelists may not have experienced. The journey of the protagonist is a continuous unending process of becoming, in which he/she willingly migrates to the United States of America or transits with existing authorities in order to achieve another *Bildung*. Beside the theme of growth, some of the novels read as autobiographies, but are not, in the real sense of it. Apollo Amoko sees a considerable correspondence and areas of convergence between the factual and the fictitious in African novels in terms of context, content and form. He argues that the *Bildungsroman* is a fictional account tracing, usually in the third person, the spiritual, moral, psychological, or social growth of a fictional protagonist, typically from childhood to maturity while an autobiography documents real life of a person who serves as the narrator and protagonist (Abstract). Narrative form varies in social and gender context, and the structure of the novels differs from the European model in both the male and the female variants. Novelists chosen for this study are mostly diasporic Nigerian writers, who seem to be narrating the tortuous periods of their childhood. This is why Ebele Eko states that “they narrate the events of their growing up years” (45). Notable among them are UnomaAzuah, Chris Abani, Sefi Atta, Chika Unigwe, Helen Oyeyemi, Okey Ndibe, Uzodinma Iweala, Ike Ogunne, Biyi Bandele-Thomas, Kaine Agary, Jude Dibia, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, ChineloOparanta, Lola Soneyin, AdaobiTraciaNwaubani, Helon Habila – (The list seems to be endless as more writers continue to join the ranks of these novelists).



Third generation Nigerian *Bildungsromane* lack harmonious reconciliation of the protagonist with society, but emphasise that economic and socio-political factors prevent the protagonist from achieving self-realisation. The novelists equally question the idea of nationhood, national identity and challenge of belonging to a geographical region. In most cases, the protagonist is from a marginalised group, for which he/she struggles to claim identity. This is why the number of female novelists of the form keep increasing and the list is seemingly endless as more females are joining the ranks of these novelists. A thorough evaluation of Chris Abani's *Graceland*, Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* will show that they have extended the *Bildungsroman* model. Each of the novels create its own unique feature, no matter how similar they may look. Thus, each text will be treated as a unique contribution to the study of *Bildungsroman*. The four novels are classified and explored in terms of their representations of the Nigerian variant of the *Bildungsroman*, but the quest of the protagonist is unique and will be analysed within the context of cultural features, individual characteristics, geographical features and other variables. All the novels deal with challenges of growing up in post-independent Nigeria. Themes such as education, sexuality, role models or mentors, relationships, and the journey motif are common features in the novels. However, there are remarkable gender differences; the themes of patriarchy and gender inequality play an important role in the female *Bildungsroman*. The search for identity runs through the novels. The growth of the protagonist parallels that of the nation. Thus, Fredric Jameson see all third world texts as national allegories(69).

One study that motivated this research is Ogaga Okuyade's articles on the *Bildungsroman*. He argues for an African female postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. His works point to the idea of revisiting the form as a whole, with the extent to which young males and females in this contemporary era respond to their peculiar needs.

To some extent, Okuyade's vision can be tied to the idea of reading third generation Nigerian novels against the background of a globalised, multicultural, multinational set up. Studies in this vein also include: "Autobiography and Bildungsroman in African literature" by Apollo Amoko, "Suspended City: Personal, Urban, and National Development in *Graceland*" by Sarah Harrison, "Re-writing postcolonial *Bildungsroman* in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" by Nilima Meher, "Struggling with the African *Bildungsroman*" by Ralph Austan, and *Narrow Nationalism and Third Generation Nigerian Fiction* by Meredith Armstrong Coffey. These critics mainly highlight the developmental trajectory of the female *Bildungsroman*, which inspired the researcher to look at characters and voices, from male and female narratives without gender bias. Okuyade defines the paradigm and develops an understanding of what constitutes a *Bildungsroman* in postcolonial African female novels into four distinct phases:

First, there is an awakening from which the character becomes aware that her condition of life is a limitation to her aspiration for a better future. She begins to display tendencies of resentment and discontent for her geography, which she hopes to transcend. Second, the main character gains self-awareness through a network of women, who guide and support her in becoming self-reliant in a patriarchal society. Third, the character

explores her femininity and begins to redefine her identity as she journeys into adulthood. Finally, as the character reaches the point of maturity and independence, she takes control of her transition or journey of self-discovery (“Weaving...” 146)

Okuyade plays down the male perspective in his analysis. This may be due to Pius Adesanmi’s observation that “Women are central in what is going on in recent African literature and this, in my view, presents something extremely unique in modern African Literature” (*You’re not* 108). Ebele Eko sees the experience of growing up as a key element in third generation Nigerian novels when she states that “they are actually describing the world around them, the events of their growing up days” (45). Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi explores the didactic nature of the *Bildungsroman* and states: “it educates while narrating the story of another’s education” (15). Nigerian *Bildungsromane* feature fictional characters who could either be males or females. Therefore, the researcher chose to write on *Bildungsroman* with male and female authors/protagonists. Third generation novelists seem to be content with the Africanness and extension of the genre, with modifications and variations to reflect the reality of postcolonial Nigeria as a failed state; and represent the experiences of people in different geographical and socio-political spaces.

Some of the novels employ double protagonists. *Purple Hibiscus*, *Everything Good Will Come* and *Yellow-Yellow* relate the coming of age tales of more than one character. This corresponds with the community-oriented nature of African society. The protagonist begins with an effort to be assimilated into the society, but eventually refuses to be confined to societal order. The traditional *Bildung* is male,

white, middle class, while the Nigerian variant could be a male or female, black, colonised, subject that must deal with identity crises and similar issues in a hybrid setting. The journey of the traditional *Bildungsroman* begins from childhood and lasts until he achieves social, personal success in marriage and having of children. Third generation novelists present protagonists whose journey may be physical or psychological, from childhood/ignorance through adolescence, early adulthood, to adulthood/cognisance. Buckley states that the protagonist finds constraint and leaves home for a life of independence in the city (17), an option, not open to the female. Third generation Nigerian female is independent and active. She leaves home like her male counterpart. However, the protagonists, could not locate their places in the society. This is why they need another journey.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There are several discussions on the third-generation novel but only a few studies exist on third generation *Bildungsromane*. No book seems to have investigated the male and female voices together. In addition to that, little attention appears to have been paid to male and female trajectories in the indigenised model or portray how the *Bildungsroman* has been Africanised and still reconciles with the traditional form. Consequently, this study examines the male and female characters' maturation process across geographical, social and societal boundaries. Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and Chris Abani's *Graceland* as male voices; Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* as the female variant, provide tools for serious academic attention.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the novels under study convincingly fall into the *Bildungsroman* tradition. Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, Chris Abani's *Graceland*, Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* provide tools for analysis of male and female novels of formation. It is argued that the *Bildungsroman* has found its way into Nigerian narratives as a way of addressing the political and socio-economic realities of the time. It also examines how third generation Nigerian novelists have re-worked and domesticated the German genre to account for peculiar historical periods in Nigeria and trace features of the *Bildungsroman* in selected novels by investigating ways in which the novels follow or deviate from the traditional form.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study highlights both masculine and feminine perspectives in the study of *Bildungsroman* in third generation Nigerian novels. It establishes the fact that the *Bildungsroman* has been domesticated within the broad range of third generation Nigerian novels. It also brings to the fore the entrance of *Bildungsroman* as a ubiquitous element in Nigerian literature of the twenty-first century. The selected texts for analysis may be few, but they adequately form a comprehensive study of the *Bildungsroman* outside the European model. They emphasise the Nigerian experience, environment and protagonists. This study equally establishes the existence of a distinct *Bildungsroman* category that is still in "communion with its ancestral home" but differs slightly from the original model.

The study has contributed to knowledge as it highlights variations within the Nigerian *Bildungsroman*. The study will equip new researchers with the knowledge of looking at the *Bildungsroman* from other perspectives such as LGBTQ and multiple protagonists.

### **Methodology**

The study is based on analytic method. It is devoid of field work and experimentation. It offers a close reading of primary texts and critical works on the *Bildungsroman*. The study also involves assessing different libraries and use of relevant materials from the internet, especially for theoretical framework and literature review.

The research involves a close and careful interpretation and analysis of selected texts. Karen Horney's psychoanalytic social theory offered relevant perspectives in the approach of the *Bildungsroman* concept in third generation Nigerian novels. The study is divided into five chapters. Chapters one and two are a historical overview of the *Bildungsroman* and the emergence of variants within the form. Chapters three and four, each highlight the features of the *Bildungsroman* in male and female third generation Nigerian novels. Chapter five concludes the research. Finally, the study makes use of the 8th edition MLA style sheet for reference documentation.

### **Scope of the Study**

The research is restricted to four novels. The choice of these novels is to create a balance. The texts selected are Chris Abani's *Graceland*, Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*, and Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*. The study examines these novels in relation to the *Bildungsroman* tradition.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT SCHOLARSHIP

#### Conceptual Framework

The *Bildungsroman* is dynamic and adaptable to all cultures, space and time, that it is difficult to give a holistic definition that would serve all categories. From Germany through France to the English variants, there is no doubt that there are various ways to interpret the concept. Although, the form originated in Germany, it achieved more popularity in English literature. Karl Morgenstern, who originally coined the term, defines the *Bildungsroman* thus: “We may call a novel *Bildungsroman*, first and foremost on account of its content, but it also represents the development of the hero in its beginning and progresses to a certain state of completeness, but also, because the depiction promotes the development of the reader to a greater extent than any novel” (644-45).

Wilhelm Dilthey defines the form as:

a novel that portrays a young man of his time, how he enters life in a happy state of naiveté, seeking kindred souls, finds friendship and love, how he comes in conflict with harsh realities of the world, how he grows into maturity through diverse experiences, finds himself and attains certainty about his purpose in the world (qtd in Swales 1991).

Susanne Howe, Jerome Buckley, Hugh Hoffman, Franco Moretti and others also proffer definitions of the *Bildungsroman* on the ground that they find the existing one

inadequate. However, most of these scholars agree that the *Bildungsroman* originated from Germany, and that *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* is the literary prototype. Hugh Hoffman's definition is similar to that of Dilthey. He argues that the development of the hero is a critical element in the *Bildungsroman*. However, Michael Beddew and Ann Ferguson fault Dilthey's definition. Beddew considers the components of the *Bildungsroman* more important than its developmental process (*The Fiction 2*). Susanne Howe wrote the first elaborate essay on the English *Bildungsroman*. Howe defines *Bildungsroman* as having a straightforward pattern, a generally optimistic form of development and informal education, achieved through various guides and counsellors. The narrative charts the development of the protagonist from ignorance to experience. She concludes that the *Bildungsroman* in English literature differs from the tradition in German literature.

Thomas Saine argues that *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is a novel about *Bildung*, although it is not a *Bildungsroman* in the sense in which the term has come to be used by critics and scholars. Saine is concerned with novels classified under the umbrella of *Bildungsroman*. Francois Jost makes a distinction between early English and German *Bildungsromane*. He noted that *David Copperfield* is the same as *Wilhelm Meister Lehrjahre* in content because the hero is an underprivileged juvenile youth. Jost is of the opinion that a concept that involves universal phenomenon of growth should include both the rich and the poor protagonist. Ashley Susan Gohlman reacts to Goethe's definition in which he places the individual rather than society at the centre of the *Bildung*. She states that "any novel containing a young hero, with a wide range of experiences and a sense of ultimate practical value of these experiences in later life can



be said to belong to the Bildungsroman” (4). She argues that, “There is virtually no agreement on either what constitute a bildungsroman or which novels belong to the tradition” (228). The conceptual confusion is associated with the proximity of the form to other similar literary forms. *Bildungsroman* is basically a novel that deals with growth of a fictional character. The distinct characteristics that identify the form as a universal literary mode is still in contention. Saine agreed that “what a Bildungsroman actually is and how many of them are in German literature or in world literature at large, are questions still under discussion and probably unsolvable” (119). Hence, we can conclude that there exist several variants of the form that exemplify the social, cultural, and political atmosphere of the society and age they represent. Thus, we have German, English, French, Female, Black, Minority and African *Bildungsromane*.

Jerome Buckley not only proffers a definition, but also mentions several key elements of the English form. The protagonist is a child who moves to a more accommodating and tolerating environment in the city, where “his real education begins”. He finds a career, falls in love as he experiences urban life. In the end, he is accommodated into the society (18). Buckley further states that conflict with the father moves the hero away from home. This is not applicable to the female and minority class. The female variant addresses mother-daughter conflict which does not fit into Buckley’s outline. Similarly, the motif of sexual awakening is missing in many novels of female development.

Martin Swales and other scholars have criticised Buckley for his broad characteristics. Swales states that Buckley’s typical features fit only the Victorian realist novels. Jeffery Sammons refer to Buckley’s work as one of the most “uncontrollable

arbitrariness” found in the *Bildungsroman* (“The Mystery” 36). Sammons proposes a definition of the term which limited it to a specific locale, and time period, while Marianne Hirsch opposes Buckley for his emphasis on autobiographical elements.

Bakhtin states that the “happy ending” that characterises the *Bildungsroman* should, instead, be of reconciliation or integration. Bakhtin’s definition is crucial to the study of third generation novels as *Bildungsroman*, since the protagonists in the novels under study are in a perpetual state of becoming. Esther Labovitz lists some characteristics of the female novel of development which include: self-realisation, inner and outer directedness, education, career, sex roles, attitude towards marriage, philosophical questions, spiritual crises, autobiographical elements and of role model (8). She adds that “shedding” gives the heroine the opportunity to remove excess baggage which may include marital ties, inferiority complex and male domination.

Todd Konje interprets Dilthey to mean that the hero “engages in a double task of self-integration and integration into the society” (12). He questions the lack of harmonious denouement in the English *Bildungsroman* and also argues that:

In novel after novel, the protagonist fails to mature into self-confident, autonomous individual, expected into an affirmative society, (leading) to alienation from an acceptable reality. A number of critics have questioned whether *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* really fits into Dilthey’s definition of a true *Bildungsroman*, emphasising both the degree of resignation involved in Wilhelm’s maturation and the oppressive nature of the society(12).

Michael Beddew agrees with Konje and questions Dilthey's emphasis on the development of character. He claims that the *Bildungsroman* must focus on what makes "men and women" (255). Beddew's focal point is on the components of the *Bildungsroman* hero. The German *Bildung* reflects the essence of German-ness, which represents unique German ideas, cultural heritage and ideals. However, there is a general consensus among English and German critics and scholars that Goethe's novel a supreme example of the form.

According to Matins Swales, it was after the publication of Wieland's *Agathon* in 1767 and Brandenburg's *Essay on the Novel* in 1774 that the genre became established ((*Irony*xvi). James Hardin also affirmed that Dilthey first brought the term into literary vocabulary and identified Goethe's novel as its prototype, calling it the "Wilhelm Meister school" (*Irony* xvi).

In his *Reference GuidetoWorldLiterature*, Ehrhard Bahr writes that:

*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* had a great influence on the Romantics and the history of the German novel. It provided, so to speak, the blueprint for all subsequent German novels. Early commentaries on the novel occur in correspondence between Fredrich Shriker and Goethe, in the letters by Wilhelm von Humboldt and Christian Gottfried Korner, and in Fredrich Schlegels' 1798 essay "on Goethe's Meister". Goethe's novel became prime example of Romanticism. (3)

The first discourse on the English *Bildungsroman*, *Wilhelm Meister and his English Kinsmen*, was published in 1930 by Susanne Howe. She outlines some

distinctions between the German novel of formation and its English variant. Howe defines the form as “The all-round development of self-culture” (6). She gives a clear defining characteristic of the apprentice novel. Her definition brought together the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional development of the hero thus:

The adolescent hero of the typical “apprentice” novel sets out on his way through the world, meets with reverses usually due to his own temperament, falls in with various guides and counsellors, makes many false starts in choosing his friends, his wife, and his life work, and finally adjusts himself in some way to the demands of his time and environment by finding a sphere of action in which he may work effectively.

(*Wilhelm Meister* 4)

Franco Moretti, in the first edition of his essay on the *Bildungsroman* observes that the English *Bildungsroman* protagonist is a child while the German *Bildungsroman* privileges youth, although age limit is not a defining criterion. Moretti sees youth as a negative period which the hero must endure and come out of unchanged. He stresses that the English *Bildungsroman* value classification, which involves maturity, happiness, stable identity, order and rejection of modernity. Moretti uses the term “modern” here to contrast with the old. Modern society is marked by industrialisation, social mobility, democratisation, and a decline in traditional values, structures, represented by family system and cherished values and religion. Howe, Buckley and others centre their discussions on male novels and male protagonists, but this is not the only tradition of the form. Female contemporaries of male novelists of their time who wrote excellent *Bildungsromane*, were not recognised until the 1970s.

Lorna Ellis observes that:

The female *Bildungsroman*'s roots are the romance tradition. From the romance, the female *Bildungsroman* adopted the interest in what constitutes female power, and specifically how that relates to the power of the gaze. The female *Bildungsroman* generalises how the gaze is used, so that gaze emphasises moves from a more literal gaze to the power involved in understanding how subjectivity is constructed by appearances.

(87)

Ellis further asserts that social forces and power relations between men and women militate against the development of the female *Bildungsroman*. According to Susan Rosowski, "the female protagonist's growth results typically not with an 'art of living', but instead with a realization that for a woman such an art of living is difficult or impossible: it is an awakening to limitation" (49). The critical text of Elizabeth Abel, Marianna Hirsh and Elizabeth Langland expands the *Bildungsroman* to include the "female novel of development" (vii). Abel, Hirsh and Langland note that female development or formation differs from that of the male because she must embark on her journey "after conventional expectations of marriage and motherhood have been fulfilled and found insufficient" (7). The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries woman cannot leave home on an exploration mission or access formal education like her male counterpart. The female's developmental process is inhibited by gender bias, different psychological features of women's maturation ... and can be described most dynamically in terms of recurrent narrative structure and thematic tensions (ii). Abel et al distinguish two narrative models of their time – the chronological, which follows the linear plot pattern of

male narratives, showing a continuous development from childhood to maturity, while the second portrays a break, not just from parental authority but also from marital authority which is termed novel of adultery (12).

The feminist critic, Rita Felski observes that early narratives on female development differ from contemporary ones in that the heroine's self-development is halted as she identifies with her husband as her mentor and centres her life around his. Recent novels challenge existing societal norms. The heroine must struggle to free herself from male dependence and subordination. She considers forms of the *Bildungsroman* in contemporary writing. In her book, *Feminist Literature and Social Change*, she suggests emancipation narratives, narratives of self-development or feminist *Bildungsroman*. She uses the term feminist *Bildungsroman* to relate to feminist movements which represent liberal and socialist feminism. It embraces a narrative in the model of history and progress, emphasising the activist and participatory dimension of politics as well as the necessity of engagement in a public sphere (127). There is the novel of awakening that relates to a more radical form of feminism. Felski adds that the protagonists in the two models experience a form of "psychological transformation" which is similar to religious conversion or a gradual metamorphosis through a steady accumulation of insight into the structure of power governing relationship between men and women (131). The female novels under consideration fall into the two different categories of Felski's classification. Sefi Atta's protagonist, Enitan, joins a group of female activists who are advocating for the rights of women, while Kaine Agary's Zilayefa follows the course of more radical feminist ideas, through the process of awakening and examples of self-liberated role models whom she tries to imitate.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopted the psychoanalytic theoretical approach, with emphasis on Karen Horney's social theory. Stephen Thornton says that, Sigmund Freud is considered the father of psychoanalysis. He discovered the scientific method by which the unconscious can be analysed. Freud argues that the people could be cured by making their unconscious thoughts and motives conscious. He presented a circle in which ideas are repressed, but remain in the mind, removed from the conscious, yet operative, then reappears in the consciousness under certain circumstances. Freud believes that the unconscious always plays a leading role in art. Life as well as literature represents the dark recesses of the human mind that are beyond conscious understanding, and psychoanalysis is the study of human mind and its processes (Tan 322). Psychoanalysts try to analyse the dark regions of human psyche. What psychoanalysts put forth in theories, writers convey through artistic presentation

Freud devised many techniques to find out the unconscious and argued that human behaviour is a result of the interactions among three components of the mind: Id, Ego and Super ego. He viewed the work of art as a way the author gratifies secret, forbidden yearnings, especially childhood desires that are repressed. His contribution to literature is the theoretical basis of understanding questions and issues connected with changes in human personality. Since the psychoanalytic approach goes beyond childhood experiences which Freud copiously explored, Karen Horney's psychoanalytic social theory which interprets human behaviour in terms of its function within the present psyche, rather than infantile bearings will also be useful to this study.

Karen Horney, a German psychologist, who was one of Freud's early students and critics, placed little attention on childhood desires as a way of assessing a literary character. While she agrees with Freud on the concept of the unconscious, she does not explain adult behaviour only through its relationship with early childhood experiences. Horneyan psychoanalytic social theory is built on the assumption that social and cultural conditions are largely responsible for shaping personality. She emphasises the role of cultural and social forces in shaping man's behaviour. People who grow up under favourable conditions will put their energy into self-realisation and turn out to be responsible human beings. Those that do not have their needs for affection satisfied during childhood, become alienated from real self and develop basic anxiety. Horney states that basic anxiety arises in a child when he/she senses hypocrisy of persons around him or her. She observes that anxiety can be combated by adopting three fundamental styles of relating to others which are: moving towards other people, moving against people and moving away from people (*Neurosis*18). As a result, we find ways to cope with people and manipulate them with minimal damage (*New Ways*219).

According to Horney, a neurotic character develops in early childhood. This development depends primarily on the child's home environment and the way he/she is treated by his/her parents. She states that: "psychoanalysis has not only a clinical value as a therapy for neurosis, but also a human value in its potentialities for helping people towards their best possible further development" (*Self-analysis* 37). Bernard Paris, a notable Horneyan critic, observes that "the character structure of the adult has its origin in early childhood, but it is also the product of complicated evolutionary history, and can be understood in terms of the present constellation of defences."



(*Imagined Human Beings*9). This implies that healthy development of an individual depends upon the surrounding conditions. Horneyan approach to psychoanalysis will shed more light on the conflict in the lives of characters as well as the author, and give an insight into the moral choices of the protagonists in the selected texts, especially, why they choose to rebel, and develop outside societal moral codes. Horneyan psychoanalysis will also show the relationship between the world of art and the life of the author.

Third generation Nigerian novelists focus on protagonists who negotiate their identities in neo-colonial Nigeria. Adeleke Adeeko notes that the novelists' attention is less on lamenting and resisting the effects of the colonial era than on new approaches to surviving in postcolonial Nigeria, with a corrupt and, often, military-powered government (11). Since the protagonists in the novels under study are representatives of their individual societies in which their growth process also parallels that of the nation, the psychoanalytic literary theory becomes the appropriate theoretical approach for this study. *Bildungsroman* deals with the main character in conflict with himself and his environment, which also includes the working of the mind. In the Nigerian context, it is not just a journey from childhood to adulthood, but transition and complete change in personality of the protagonist and of the reader. The reader also identifies with the experiences of the protagonist and learns from his mistakes. This is why psychoanalytic approach is relevant to the reading of the texts.

The novelists commented in different interviews that their novels reflect their personal experiences. Habila, for instance, states that he used to quarrel a lot with his father. In an interview with Bures Frank, he revealed that the story of Bola is influenced by the loss of his father and brother in a motor accident. This means that novelists may

be shedding their sickness in their works with or without realising it. In conclusion, third generation Nigerian novelists shift the blame of post- independence failure and the actions of the elites and leaders. Looking at the complex structure of Nigeria and its effect on the developmental process of the individual, the psychoanalytic approach is especially suitable for this study.

### **Literature Review**

This Literature review portrays the trajectory through which the present study finds its place among other relevant works. Many scholars and critics around the world have contributed to the dialogue on the *Bildungsroman*. Before the twentieth century, German scholars guided the form jealously and define it on account of its structure and narrative pattern. Martin Swales stresses that “the *Bildungsroman* in theory and practice is little known outside Germany” (36). He argues that the *Bildungsroman* is a highly self-reflecting novel, one in which the problem of *Bildung* or personal growth is a narrative discursive self rather than in events which the hero experiences (4). Swales points out that the German *Bildungsroman* focuses on transition and change; while English novelists such as Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy and James Joyce are essentially concerned to find a certain practical accommodation between the hero and the social world around them (34).

Todd Konje insists that “novels outside German studies undermine the national connection and stress the genres close styles to modernity in general” (112). Most English novelists of their time such as John Cleland, Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne who developed the plot of their narratives in line with the pattern of the *Bildungsroman*

may not have known about its German roots. Thomas Carlyle translated Goethe's novel into English in 1842, and wrote a novel on it. By this development, the *Bildungsroman* has become wide, loose and inclusive. Numerous novels today can be categorised under a wide range of the novels that trace the growth of the protagonist. The form has grown from its German origin and expanded to include a list of alternate terms such as novel of self-development, novel of socialisation, novel of youth, novel of transformation, novel of adolescence, novel of awakening, novel of self – culture and novel of development. The common strand that binds these variations is the theme of growing up and coming of age.

Boes observes that because of the versatile nature of the *Bildungsroman*, most literary critics have erroneously labelled all novels that celebrate the growth of the protagonist in its slightest form as the *Bildungsroman* (230). Jeffery Sammons notes that “This loose application of the form would create uncontrolled arbitrariness into the usage of the form, that raises the question why we should retain it at all” (35). He suggests that “*Bildungsroman* should have something to do with *Bildung* which is the development of the individual. It does not matter if the *Bildungsroman* fail or succeed” (41). The classical *Bildungsroman* is a linear progression of the (male) hero from youth to adulthood. As the hero grows, he must overcome obstacles and undergo training under a mentor (usually not the father but a father figure) and at the end of his journey, he has constructed his own identity. Morgenstern, who coined the word remarks that the journey of the protagonist in Goethe's novel deal with “inner aspect of the human and soul, reveal the intimate endeavours, battles, defeats and victories .... [It presents the reader with] German life, German thoughts and the morals of our time through its hero, its scenery and environment” (655).

Morgenstern sees two heroes in his definition of the *Bildungsroman*. The reader follows the hero's developmental process, gains insight into his disposition and learns from his mistakes. The *Bildungsroman* goes beyond a narrative that develops a fictional character; it develops the reader who gets fully cultivated into his society. The ultimate goal of the hero is majority. The eponymous hero of Goethe's novel undergoes a journey of self-cultivation and development. The plot shows a regular development with the individual fitting into the society (Boes 232).

The nineteenth century popularised the form in English literature. Realist novels such as Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* emphasise the main character's development. However, the process of development differs from the classical German novels. Themes of "childhood, conflict of generation, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love, the search for vocation and a working philosophy" (Buckley 18), contribute to the denationalization of the genre. *Great Expectations* describe Pip as both immature and romantic, with a desire to improve himself and attain social, moral and educational advancement. Pip is trapped in two worlds, each with its own "great expectations. "Pip is an example of a true *Bildungsroman* hero: his journey begins in childhood, passes various tests with guidance of mentors and reaches maturity. Martin Swales' book on the German *Bildungsroman*, *The German Bildungsroman from Weiland to Hesse* posits that "the English novel of adolescence... is essentially concerned with finding a certain practical accommodation between the hero and the social world around him" (34). This demonstrates that the *Bildungsroman* is constantly adjusting to social and historical setting.

According to Susanne Herder, “*Bildungsroman* denote all-round self development. A *Bildungsroman*, is most generally, the story of a single individual’s growth and development within the context of a defined social order.” The application of Herder’s description is that the *Bildungsroman* is not just the story of a child’s growth, but development that passes through tests and reaches maturity. The protagonist and process of formation are reshaped and adjusted to a historical period where psychological studies and literary transformation were noticeable. Franz Kafka and James Joyce are prominent modernist writers. Themes of Kafka and Joyce’s novels set the pace for minority, post colonial writers.

If the male *Bildungsroman* is about a boy’s journey to manhood, the female contradicts the form. Before the appearance of feminist criticism, the genre was regarded as a novel of male development. Notable critical literatures that contributed to the *Bildungsroman* criticisms such as Susanne Howe’s *Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen Apprenticeship to life*, Jerome Hamilton Buckley’s *Seasons of Youth: Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golden*. fail to examine gender, class and race. Early female *Bildungsromane* is about the heroine learning to conform to gender norms rather than discovering the self. Lazzaro-Weis writes that 19<sup>th</sup> century female novelists portray the “suppression and defeat of female autonomy, creativity, and maturity by patriarchal gender norms” (17). Female development is restricted because of social constraint. Charlotte Bronte wrote the first known female *Bildungsroman*, *Jane Eyre* under the pseudonym Currer Bell. The first-person narrative depicts the moral and spiritual experiences of the eponymous heroine, her growth from childhood to adulthood and marriage to rich, weak, Mr Rochester. This is atypical of the growth process of early

female novels of development. Jane's struggle for participation in a defined social order keeps her from defining herself in her own terms. In the end, she does not challenge but uphold the values of the society, and conform to marriage. Bronte's classic paved the way for female writers to explore female experience. Themes such as nostalgia, loss, home and community and the generation gap between mothers and their daughters are common in early female *Bildungsromane* (Lazzaro-Weis 21)

Contemporary female writers create women who are not constrained, but have the possibility to explore like the men. A few differences are observed in male and female novels. Firstly, most females do not receive formal education like the male. The few involved in education do not expand their options, but learn to consolidate their female nurturing roles rather than to take active part in the shaping of society (Abel et al). Secondly, the male journey begins in childhood, while most female begin when the protagonist is older and is already married. Thirdly, the male have the possibility in his quest for independent life in the city, an option not available for the female. Fourthly, love affairs outside marriage is not an option for the female. Lastly, the hero reaches the end of his journey as a mature man; by then, he has decided to accommodate to the world or rebel against it. In contrast, the female development is internal rather than engaging with the society.

Female *Bildungsroman* in contemporary literature is not constrained by social norms. Some components of their stories include love, travel, exploration and self-realisation. Joshua Esty's article "Nation, Adulthood and the Ruptures of the Bildung: Arresting Development on *The Mill on the Floss*" draws from the works of Bakhtin, Moretti, and Lukas, Esty argues for a new understanding of the genre. He contends that

strong commitment to historicism-the idea that different epochs are irreducibly different” (147). leads to irreconcilable break from the traditional novel of formation. Although, the focus is a Victorian text, he shows a narrative shift from an evolutionary to a revolutionary register. Attention on the *Bildungsroman* studies gradually moved towards minority and postcolonial writings. Avant-garde novels such as Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight Children*, Hanif Kureishi’s *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Chin Ce’s *The Visitor*, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, demonstrate that the form can be adopted to modernist and post-colonial narratives. As a result, Maria Helena Lima’s study of Jamaica Kincaid’s, novel, *Lucy*, using Marc Redfield’s critique of aesthetic ideology, concludes that the “traditional *Bildungsroman* requires a constructed harmony between external and internal factors, to provide, according to Franco Moretti, a “homeland to the individual,” Kincaid novel of development expose the impossibility of such as fictional harmony” (860)

Claudine Raynaud focuses on the minority. He observes that “in African American narratives...the discovery of American society’s racism is a major event in the protagonist’s development and in his education.” (106). Geta Leseur also covers the experiences of African-Americans and their experience of slavery. She reveals that these novels are *Bildungsroman* even though they contrast with the traditional form. The journey of the protagonists begins from childhood roots and he/she discover the truth about himself/herself and home in order to make a viable protest that is almost always about race, slave history and white establishment (1). Sandra O’Naele argues that more critical feminist critics such as Rosowski coined new terms for female growth. Rosowski supports the use of “The Novel of Awakening,” which many female critics have also adopted. She further states that black women in general struggle either with gender and

racial identity or both and that the black female protagonist differs from the traditional variant in four ways:

- The protagonist's 'ripeness' for the process occurs at an older age.
- She must relinquish the hope of assimilation into black spheres in order to attain discovery, growth and wisdom.
- She has no mentors to assist her.
- Once the struggle is over, she has no 'tribe', no support community, initiators to join (25 – 27).

Susan Fraiman observes a noticeable difference between the hero and heroine on the issue of marriage. The hero marries when he is mature and finds his place in society. He marries to "symbolize his gratification" (120). For the female *Bildungsroman*, marriage generally hinders her self-development. Labovitz remarks that "nineteenth century novel which began as and then faltered in its attempt to trace a heroine through the various stages of development...truncated female Bildungsroman"(6). The difficulties faced by the female according to Gilbert et al, is described from the reading of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* thus: the problems encountered by the protagonist as she struggles from the imprisonment of her childhood towards an almost unthinkable goal of mature freedom are symptomatic of difficulties. Every woman in a patriarchal society must meet and overcome: oppression(at Gatehead), starvation(at Lowood), madness(at Thornfield and coldness(at Marshend)...(338-339).

Labovitz investigates some twentieth-century female *Bildungsroman*( Dorothy Richardson's *Pilgrimage*, Doris Lessing's *Children of Violence* Simone de Beauvoir's



*Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, and Christa Wolf's *The Quest for Christa T*) in order to create a distinct female category. The heroines begin with "a search for a self lost with childhood." Their place in the larger society and the way it affects them are significant features in the genre. They also show characteristics of the rebellious woman, those that challenge their place in the society, raising issues of gender equality (251). Ellen Morgan describes the *Bildungsroman* as the most salient form of literature influenced by neo-feminism, because "neo-feminism conceives of her as a creature in the process of becoming, struggling to throw off her conditioning, the psychology of oppression" (185-86).

Early examples of African *Bildungsromane* closely linked to the colonial encounter in which the protagonist contrasts colonial education with the traditional form. Wangari wa, Nyatetu-Waigwa's thesis on the Francophone African *Bildungsroman* seems to be the first critical analysis that adopted the *Bildungsroman* theory in African narratives. She argues that even though the protagonists in the novels did not become an epitome, the novels still fall into the *Bildungsroman* tradition that exists in a specific environment. Waigwa employs Victor Turner's style for rites of passage which distinguish three stages in the development of the protagonist: separation, threshold and re-in-cooperation. Moretti and Swales had earlier disputed the claim that all novels under the *Bildungsroman* must possess a harmonious end. Lack of complete denouement and ambiguous conclusion are dominant techniques in third generation Nigerian narratives.

The emergence of third generation novels further expanded *Bildungsroman* scholarship. Okuyade comments on these novelists: "Third generation novelists feel a demand to construct their own identity and values from the only material available to

them -the events of their personal lives.” (“Weaving” 141). A major problem facing the *Bildungsroman* is that of the defining criteria. More so, the term lacks appropriate English translation. John Maynard decries the various versions of the *Bildungsroman* which have become even more confusing. Critics have used the term interchangeably with the novel of growing up, novel of growth, novel of education, novel of development, novel of youth, novel of initiation, novel of self – education, novel of socialisation, novel of formation, novel of adolescence, novel of culture and novel of personal ordeal. However, none of these terms can accurately replace the original form. Buckley’s expanded essay enumerates all the common characteristics of the English *Bildungsroman*. He states that any novel classified as a *Bildungsroman* must adhere to some defined rules. Golban adds a more recent criterion which cuts across various periods and movements that produce novels of formation:

1. A child (sometimes orphaned or fatherless) lives in a village or provincial town.
2. The child is in conflict with his actual parents (trials by older generation).
3. The departure is determined by various external or internal stimuli.
4. The child leaves home to a large society (usually London).
5. He/She passes through institutionalised or self-education.
6. A young person now, the protagonist seeks for social interaction and inter- human relationship.
7. His/Her experience in life is now a search for relation and social accomplishment and, above all, a working philosophy of life.
8. He/She has to undergo an ordeal by society and embark on a professional career.
9. He/She has to resist trial by love and embark on a sentimental career.

10. He/She passes through moments of spiritual suffering and pain.
11. How in his or her manhood / womanhood, he or she experiences epiphanies that lead to his/her final initiation and formation (complete or relativistic, or not existing at all-that is to say that the final stage of the formative process implies the dichotomy, success/failure, or a third possibility of parental success/partial failure) (*AHistoryIntroduction*).

He adds that “the thematic essence usually remains unchanged and that the novel could be in the form of a biography or autobiography .... biological and intellectual development, from childhood to early adulthood” (*AHistory5*).

Harder identifies four items that occur in stages to enable the reader follow, properly, the growth of the *Bildungsroman* hero. These items include:

1. The growth process which has at its roots, a quest story, has been described as both “an apprenticeship to life” and a search for meaningful existence within society
2. To spur the hero or heroine on their journey, some form of loss or discontent must gear them at the early stage away from home or family setting.
3. The process of maturity is long, arduous and gradual, consisting of repeated clashes between the protagonist’s needs and desires and the views and judgements enforced by an unbending social order.
4. Eventually, the spirit and values of the social order become manifest in the protagonist who is then accommodated into society. The novel ends with an assessment by the protagonist of himself and his new place in the society. (8)

Pin -chia Feng, in an essay on “The Female *Bildungsroman* by Toni Morrison and Maxine Hong Kingston: A Post-Modern Reading”, examines some characteristics of the female *Bildungsroman*. First, there is a chronological apprenticeship which adapts to the linear structure of the male *Bildungsroman* (11), and then there is an “awakening” in the later part of the heroine’s life. Both males and females share the view that there is a “coherent self, faith in the possibilities of development, insistence on a time span in which development occurs and emphasizes on social context” (12). Feng, Harder and Golban’s classification is unique in that it records the absence of gender divide.

Martin Swales notes that a novel need not have a harmonious end in order to be considered an example of the form. Swales stresses that the structure of the genre makes it very difficult for the author to portray completely successful development. He criticises Dilthey and German critics for their claim that a harmonious development of the hero leads to fulfilment. James Hardin gives a short feature of the *Bildungsroman* in the introductory parts of his essay. He reacts to the loose classification that considers every literature that describes the formative years of the protagonist as *Bildungsroman*. Hardin states that the protagonist must rise up to the limitations of his existence and react in order to transcend his limitation. The protagonist and the reader must pause to reflect on the development of mind and soul (*Irony...xiii*).

Another critic, Randolph Shaffnar, provides a list of features for what he calls “Apprenticeshipnovel”. Shaffnar studies some *Bildungsroman* texts from German, English, and French novels, and identify three stages in the development of the hero which he calls an initial release from bondage of self-delusion, reintegration into the community and deflections on the metaphysical problems of death. He states that no

single work combines all three phases. (18). Mark Stein's study of the British *Bildungsroman* performs a dual function. It is about the formation of its protagonist as well as the transformation of the British society and cultural institution (22). Just as it is in Chris Abani's *Graceland*, the protagonist not only changes with the world, the world also changes with and through him. In her work on four twentieth century female *Bildungsroman*, Esther Labovitz's classification may not totally apply to all categories of women as Ellen Morgan asserts that "the female *Bildungsroman* is influenced by neo-feminism which canvases the female as a creature in the process of becoming, struggling against her condition, the psychology of oppression" (185). Abel et al, Anis Pratt and Etan Martin all favour the term "Novel of Awakening" as the female alternative to the term, *Bildungsroman*.

Harden argues that the difficulty in translating the form and the "slippery" nature of the *Bildungsroman* is its existence in different cultures. He identifies the influence of modernism on the scholarship on *Bildungsroman* which has led to a lack of consensus regarding the genre's demarcation (x –xx). However, Feng gives a loose definition of the black female *Bildungsroman* thus: "I regard any writing about the identity formation of an ethnic woman, whether fictional or autobiographical in form, chronologically or retrospectively in plot, as *Bildungsroman*" (15). Jeffery Sammons, in the same vein, says that *Bildungsroman* is any novel that has something to do with the *Bildung*. From the review, it is clear that critics have not come to an agreement on the issue of a common definition of the form. Debates and controversies regarding the development and features of the- *Bildungsroman* are still on. This study, which considers both male and female gender perspectives will highlight what previous studies have neglected. We also come to

discover that third generation Nigerian novelists have expanded the scope of the form in order to include their peculiar experience.

*Bildungsroman* in the Nigerian context is conceptually tied to the tradition, It has not received much critical attention on what constitutes typical plot elements that differentiate it from the Western *Bildungsroman*. African critics and literary scholars have paid little or no attention to what should constitute the African *Bildungsroman*. They are contented with just indigenisation and modification of the form. Ogaga Okuyade, Ebele Eko and Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi have listed some features of third generation female *Bildungsromane*. Okuyade explores character growth and development and emphasises change as a dominant feature of post-colonial female *Bildungsroman*. Eko sees growth as a key element of the form, while Ogunyemi argues that the form is didactic. While these models will be of immense importance to this study, we will also rely on critical sources from Labovitz, Buckley and Bakhtin.

### **Empirical Studies on the *Bildungsroman* in Third Generation Nigerian Literature**

Hannah Deroo examines *The Aspects of Bildungsroman in Tsitsi Dangaremba's Nervous Condition and The Book of Not*. She discusses how Dangaremba reworked the conventions of the form in ways which relate to alternative models of the *Bildungsroman* such as the feminist and ethnic *Bildungsroman*. The investigation of the thematic and formal aspects of both novels determine how Dangaremba blurs the boundaries between autobiography and fiction, recasting the conventional, formal and thematic limits of the *Bildungsroman* in order to form a response to colonialism and racism. The result is that Dangaremba broadens the scope of the *Bildungsroman* by creating a communal, feminist

experience of confession, mourning, healing and inspiring change for black young women in Zimbabwe.

Gabriel Okonkwo Kosiso examines the *Bildungsroman Tradition in Selected African Prose Fictional Works*. The selected texts are Eghosa Imafien's *Fine Boys*; Gladys Namukasa's *The Deadly Ambition*; Alaa AL Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building* and Lilia Mompote's *Neighbours: The Story of a Murder*. The texts were subjected to literary and critical analysis in order to identify the trend in African writing. The findings showed that the selected texts share a common feature of growth of the characters involved.

Julia Tigner investigates Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, and Michelle Cliff's *Abeng*, as representatives of females' coming of age, to see how female protagonists negotiate the complexities of hybrid identities and attempt to harmonise two opposite cultures. Her findings are that female novelists use the *Bildungsroman* as a form of cultural expression, not only to transform a cultural patriarchal view, but also describe what it means to be a woman in a colonial culture.

Wilhelm Jacobus Smith examines *Becoming Third Generation: Negotiating Modern Self in Nigerian Bildungsroman of the 21st century: Theory of Allegory of Natural Feminine Gender*. The study tracks ways in which the *Bildungsroman* or novel of formation serves as a vehicle through which identity is articulated and how the identity reshapes the convention of the classical *Bildungsroman*. The result shows that a new identity is negotiated in the silent domestic space, religious-cultural and hybrid communities.

Doris Ann Ike investigates Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Kaine Adary's *Yellow-Yellow* as representatives of the female *Bildungsroman*. She identifies character formation, religion, culture and education, as factors affecting the heroine. She adopts the *Bildungsroman* framework in her analysis. She finds that adopting the feminist theorisation of *Bildungsroman* to rework character formation is viable in understanding how basic issues like familial relationship, socio-cultural, educational and psychological formation of the protagonist can intervene with innate potential of a character.

Ogaga Okuyade investigates "Weaving Memories of Childhood: The New Nigerian Novel and the Genre of *Bildungsroman*." Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Unoma Azuah's *Sky-High Flames* are the focus in the article: "Weaving memories of Childhood: The new Nigerian Novel and the Genre of *Bildungsroman*". are novels that fit well into the category of female *Bildungsroman* in the Nigerian context. He defines the paradigm and develops an understanding of what makes up female *Bildungsroman* into four characteristics, which are used to analyse the novels. His findings are that the two novels are eloquent examples of the African Female *Bildungsroman*. However, both writers employ different narrative approaches to describe the shared feelings of disorientation, conflict and revolt.

In another article, "Narrating Growth in the Nigerian Female *Bildungsroman*", Okuyade examines how third generation female writers subvert and alter the *Bildungsroman* in an African context to articulate the fact that growth, as a universal human experience, differs according to context, and space. Okuyade's focal text was *Purple Hibiscus*, but he made a passing remark on Unoma Azuah's *Sky-High Flames* and



Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*, to demonstrate how these novels belong to the same tradition.

Okuyade also examines the shift that occurred in the artistic curve of the African novel which establishes the fact that a new generation of Nigerian novelists exists. The study focusses on the *Bildungsroman* as a narrative of growth or development in which the protagonists grow, learn and change in order to take their place in society. He observes that the Nigerian *Bildung* differs from its European counterpart in that it traces the development of the protagonist from ignorance to cognition. The texts used for the analysis are UnomaAzuah's *Sky-High Flames*, and Chimamanda Adichie's *PurpleHibiscus*. His findings are that female novelists have achieved numerous goals by exhuming an almost forgotten genre to make a constructive and empowering statement. But most importantly, the form has become a postcolonial index for calibrating the growth and development of the African continent with that of the protagonists of these narratives.

NilimaMeher investigates "Re-writing Postcolonial *Bildungsroman* in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*." The focus is on the protagonist's physical and psychological journey from the political and historical backgrounds of the texts. The results portrayed change, maturity and independence in Kambili as she frees herself from the clutches of everything which acts as barrier to her development.

OgagaOkuyade examines "Traversing Geography, Attaining Cognition the Utility of Journey in the Postcolonial African *Bildungsroman*." Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *PurpleHibiscus* is the focus. He contends that travel is an essential catalyst in

the process of personal growth which many studies in the African *Bildungsroman* neglect. His findings demonstrate the functionality of journey metaphoric implications, and its structural utility in Adichie's narrative.

Moussa Thiao investigates "The Transnational *Bildungsroman*: A New Perspective in Postcolonial Coming of Age Narratives" Thiao observes that *Bildungsroman* as an experience of multiple cultures through various media and social networks as well as complicated identity formation as adolescents find new ways of socialising within and across borders, sketch social connectedness marked by multiple allegiance or lack of it thereof, and identifies a new type of *Bildungsroman* which is transnational in nature. Her findings is that the transnational *Bildungsroman* represents a narrative that challenges the narrative structure and meaning of the classical *Bildungsroman*.

Matas Herrero examines "Challenges of Coming-of-Age: Similitudes and Divergences of Contemporary Instances". He compares two female *Bildungsroman* (*Perpsepolis* and the *House of Mango Street*), studying their similitudes and challenges. The findings obtained from the analyses prove that contemporary women-centred *Bildungsroman* distances itself from some traditional notions, and applies an unprecedented perspective to the coinciding traditional features inside the genre of the *Bildungsroman*.

Ralph Austen investigates "struggling with the African *Bildungsroman*." He observed that since the 1980's, the *Bildungsroman* came to use among critics of African Post-Colonial Literature. The genre's individualistic development and ultimate socio-

political integration is inimical to both collective values of Africans, their understanding of themselves and their position within the order of Global state and global capitalization. His findings are that the African version is a reflection of the possibilities of self formation through inherited culture, formal education and more autonomous Bildung with a specific set of historical contexts.

Mellisa Gellinas's article 'Contemporary Narratives of Building: New Directions' distinguishes "narratives of Bildung" from alternative terms such as *Bildungsroman*. This introduction traces the paradigm shift that has allowed for thorough examination of the globalization and diversification of the *Bildungsroman* over the past years. She argues that the new novels open new ways of conceptualizing the intersections of *Bildungsroman* and linguistic diversity, hybridity, mobility, in betweenness, and feminist interventions. She finds that the new direction responds to the changing social demand and norms that shapes contemporary narratives of *Bildungsroman*.

Anniken Telnes Iverson's article "Towards a Polythetic Definition of the Bildungsroman: The example of Paul Auster's *Moon Palace*", proposes a multi-factorial and polythetic approach of the definition of the Bildungsroman genre with which she reads Paul Auster's novel, *Moon Palace* (1989) as a Bildungsroman. Her findings are that the Bildungsroman is marked by continuity from its late eighteenth century beginnings up to our own times.

Billigen Akman investigates two Maghrebian novels written in French that share features of the Bildungsroman. The contemporary novels are as shown an example of an evolving genre that utilizes the elements of the Bildungsroman. The findings are that,

despite being part of a new novel from the French language, Marghebian novels have adopted the symbolic nature of the traditional *Bildungsroman* genre.

### **Summary**

This literature review offered several contributions to the scholarship of the *Bildungsroman* from previous works, but particularly extended the borders of the form from German and English scholars like Morgenstern, Dilthey, Buckley, Moretti, Boes and Bakhtin. Although the form is a contested genre which is still undergoing some literary changes, Buckley's taxonomic definition of the *Bildungsroman* is frequently cited and best known. Many empirical studies related to the present study were reviewed. The review showed empirical evidence that the *Bildungsroman* exists in Nigerian literature. What is noticeable from the studies reviewed is that none of them examined the *Bildungsroman* in male and female third generation novels. Also, none of the studies traced the male developmental trajectories in critical works. These works have created gaps, which this study intends to fill. In Nigerian writing, OgagaOkuyade seems to be the only scholar who has studied some female *Bildungsromane*. We suggest that Bakhtin's contribution to the scholarship on the *Bildungsroman* fits well into the area i intend to explore. Bakhtin describes the hero "In the image of a man (or woman) in the process of becoming" (*Essay* 19). The novels are all narratives of growth which may be from childhood to adolescence or maturity or from innocence to cognition. In the Nigerian *Bildungsroman*, the readers are left to speculate on possible conclusions, since the novels lack completion. The controversies surrounding the *Bildungsroman* continue as scholars have not agreed on a definition of the term. Different opinions on the correct translation

of the *Bildungsroman* are still an issue of debate. Some critics are contented with a loose classification of the *Bildungsroman*, while others want more limiting demarcations.

As noted previously in this essay, novels that fall into the same genre, they differ from one another in character development. They are varieties of the Nigerian *Bildungsroman*. Thus, it is difficult to apply a strict categorisation to such novels. The aim of this study is to identify features of the *Bildungsroman* in Chris Abani's *Graceland*, Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*. The study also pays attention to ways in which these novelists have written the *Bildungsroman* through the use of character, setting, explanation of the Nigerian experience and language. It also traces the coming of age of the protagonists across cultural, social and societal boundaries with consideration for both male and female gender perspectives. We come to a conclusion that the *Bildungsroman* is ubiquitous in Nigerian literature, as it is in other cultures and that this variation differs markedly from the original form, but it is still in communion with its tradition.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### ***WAITING FOR AN ANGEL AND GRACELAND: THE MALE BILDUNGSROMANE***

##### ***Waiting for an Angel: The Political Novel***

In order to understand *Waiting for an Angel* as a political *Bildungsroman*, it is important to examine a brief history of military rule in Nigeria from independence to the eras of General Ibrahim Babangida and late General Sani Abacha, spanning between 1985 and 1998. Military rule in Nigeria began six years after independence. Habila, in the “Afterwards” of *Waiting for an Angel (WFA)*, states that the military first entered Nigeria as messiahs, claiming to save the people from squandermania and ethnic rivalries of civilians (225). According to Max Siollun, “five Igbo majors” (Web), led by Major General Chukwuma Nzeogwu overthrew the civilian government put in place by the British colonial masters. The coup saw northern leaders like Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Sir Ahmadu Bello and other prominent northern politicians killed. General Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi foiled the coup and emerged as the new Nigerian leader, but could not prevail on the restless Hausa people who saw the coup as a targeted on their leaders. Ironsi’s efforts to abolish the federal structure in the country led to a counter coup, this time, by northern soldiers.

Ironsi and many high-ranking Igbos were assassinated along with thousands of Igbo indigenes residing in the northern part of the country. The massacre led to migration of over two million Igbos from the northern part of the country. General Yakubu Gowon’s regime succeeded Ironsi and declared the civil war in Nigeria during the

secession of the Igbos and the declaration of Federal Republic of Biafra, headed by Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. The civil war which lasted between 1967 and 1970 ended in favour of the Nigerian government. Although, General Gowon declared that “There is no victor, no vanquished,” the Igbo people continued to face marginalisation and agitation for more representation in the nation’s politics, which has continued up to the present time. The regime of Gowon was accused of bribery, drug trafficking and corruption. A bloodless coup in 1975 brought Murtala Muhammed into power. Muhammed ruled Nigeria for only six months. His assassination on the 13th of February 1976 ushered in yet another military regime headed by General Olusegun Obasanjo. Obasanjo handed over to a duly elected civilian government led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the N.P.N in 1979.

General Muhammadu Buhari ousted Shagari in 1983 and ruled the country until 1985 when yet another military regime by General Ibrahim Gbadamosi Babangida emerged. During the early period of Babangida’s rule, he restored freedom of the press, released all political detainees and promised to hand over to a duly elected civilian government in 1990. However, Babangida extended his rule to 1993. The entire nation went into uprising, including university students, all trade unions, and the public sector. Finally, Babangida bowed to pressure and conducted election on June 12, 1993. The election was annulled and the supposed winner, Chief M. K. O. Abiola, was arrested and detained. After general protests from both Nigerians and the international community, Babangida finally handed over to Chief Ernest Shonekan’s interim government. General Abacha did not allow the interim government to transit to an elected government. He announced the coup that brought himself into power in November 1993. General Abacha

ruled for five years which formed a remarkable period in the history of Nigeria and Nigerians. In (*WFA*), Habila writes: “when people refer to military years in Nigeria, what they mean is the Abacha years” (227).

General Abacha’s security system was accused of several human rights abuse including infringement on freedom of speech, assembly, association, travel and violence against innocent citizens. Adekunle Olowonmi describes the era as “the worst period of crises and military dictatorship in the entire post-independence period” (58). The dream of peaceful independent rule had become an illusion. Habila states that Abacha ruled Nigeria with:

Plain old fashion terror ... There were more official killings, arrests and kidnappings ... Traditional rulers were deposed, newspapers were shut down and publishers arrested or killed ... most intellectuals had only three options: exile, complicity, or dissent. But with the killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa, the world was scandalised. The sanctions mounted, internal and external, anti-military struggles became strident... Abacha had to go (*WFA277*).

Abacha continued with endless looting of the national treasury without any strong opposition. Anyone who tried to oppose was ruthlessly crushed (*WFA 244*). Many intellectuals had no choice but to flee the country and remain in perpetual exile. Habila points out that Abacha jailed many journalists and writers for dissidence. Achebe and Soyinka went into exile, while Ken Saro-wiwa and eight Ogoni activists were hanged. The more Abacha persecuted journalists and writers, the more they increased numerically



and the louder their voices grew. Ngozi ChumaUdeh explain the effects of Abacha's rule on the lives of the masses when she says that:

rulers in the country became hideous monsters, vampires, seeking to devour any form of opposition. The government became unfathomable, inaccessible enigma, offering nothing but pain and sorrow to the masses. It was during an epoch in which the average Nigerian suffered "internal disintegration of humanness", resulting from the struggle to survive the intense suppression of dictatorship (361).

The anger of third generation Nigerian novelists came partly from this history of repression and uncontrolled violence against the rights of the Nigerian people. However, on June 8 1998, Abacha died of heart attack, giving Nigerians hope for rebirth. Habila describes Abacha's demise as a "dues ex machina, which is needed to effect a suitable denouement" (*WFA* 228).

## **Plot**

*WaitingforanAngel* maps out the psychological growth of the major character, Lomba, from ignorance to awareness by exploring actual historical accounts of Nigeria under Babangida and Abacha dictatorships. Habila erases the gap between fiction and fact, interweaving two notable periods of military rule in Nigeria into one single interrelated narrative, depicting the effects of harsh military rule in the lives of people of all social backgrounds in Nigeria. Habila takes the reader through the plane of history, especially the period of Abacha's rule which is marked by gross human rights abuse, political killings, imprisonment of intellectuals and revolt on the part of the masses.

Writers, the political class and organised civil society were all victims of the state police (WFA 128).

According to Ikechukwu Asika, “Habla expresses the situation of terror, anguish, victimization, molestation and slavery meted on the citizens of Nigeria during military era in politics” (283). Habla’s narrative moves from history to fiction with ease, incorporating the imprisonments and deaths of Chief M. K. O. Abiola, Dele Giwa, (the Editor of *News Watch Magazine*) and the killing of writer/human rights activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa. (WFA 175). The story, told in a matter of fact way, educates the reader in numerous ways. Habla presents the story through the eyes of multiple protagonists in the independently interconnected narrative. Most of the characters are optimistic, sticking stubbornly to hope. They await a bright future in the face of a seemingly hopeless situation. Lomba desires freedom from prison which he tries to achieve through the cryptic messages he sent through the superintendent to his lover. Nancy, the girl working for Kela’s aunt, awaits her lover’s return. Rachael waits for God’s will to be done after losing her husband to the activities of the military. Brother waits for a time when he will tell “Oga poverty, I go say, we don finally reach the end of the road, we don dey together since I was born, but time don come wey me and you go part” (WFA 98).

Habila is not re-writing history, but providing details which places his work within a recognisable period of Nigerian history. Many characters in the novel are tired of the oppressive regime, waiting for either the angel of death or salvation. They have reached the level where they wished to die fighting for freedom against oppressive military regimes. The editor of *TheDial* knows that in Nigeria, “there cannot be a peaceful demonstration, the troops will always come, there will be gunshots, and perhaps

deaths” (WFA 193). *Waiting* is a chronologically disjointed multifocal narrative of seven different but interconnected short stories featuring “Lomba”, “The Angel”, “Bola”, “Alice”, “Lomba”, “Kela” and “James”.

Dina Yerima points out that “the characters not only demonstrate the cultural diversity which is found in Lagos, but their struggles depict the hardship and prevalent spirit which permeated the nation during military era” (8). The names represent chapter divisions. Part of the story is narrated by the dynamic protagonist, Lomba himself, others by a third person voice, and Kela, a fifteen-year-old youth who is caught by his father smoking marijuana in his car, after failing his examination. Kela is sent to Lagos, where he assists his aunt and studies for his examination. Joshua, his teacher, is in love with his former student turned prostitute. It is from his aunt’s restaurant that he learns about all the inhabitants of Morgan Street. Although the story is told by multiple characters, all the events centre around Lomba, the protagonist. Other characters are related to him as friends, neighbours and school mates. What connect them together are the harsh effects of military rule on the masses who are deprived of basic amenities; whose dreams are never realised. Bola, a character in the text, informs Lomba that “The military have turned the country into one huge barrack, into a prison. Every street out there is crawling with them; people lock their doors, scared to come out. They play with us as if we are puppets” (WFA 50). The general mood in the text is a very gloomy and pessimistic one, but Habila does not leave his characters without hope.

The section with the title of “Lomba” begins with Lomba, detained in prison for two years without trial. Lomba tries without success to defend himself: “I did not

organize a demonstration. I went there as a reporter” (WFA15). The only hope for Lomba is stated by the superintendent thus:

Twenty years I’ve worked in prisons all over the country. Nigeria. North. South. East. West. ... Sometimes it is better that way. How can you win a case against government? Wait, Hope ... maybe there’ll be another coup, eh? maybe the leader will collapse and die. He is mortal, after all. Maybe civilian government will come. Then there will be amnesty for all political prisoners. Amnesty. Don’t worry. (WFA 15)

Lomba is denied visitors and access to a lawyer, except for the superintendent who questions Lomba in his half literate English: “You are a journalist. This is your second year here. Awaiting trial. For organizing violence. Demonstration against. Anti-government demonstration against the military legal government” (WFA 14). Lomba and some other prisoners learnt survival strategies in the face of incessant harassment by the prison warders. While some hide money in their anus, others hold cigarette inside their mouths without wetting them. Having come to self-realisation as a political journalist, Lomba revolts through writing and keeping a secret diary. In his first entry, he writes:

Today, I began a diary to say all things I want to say, to myself because here in prison, there is no one to listen. I express myself, because it stops me from standing in the centre to the narrow cell and screaming at the top of my voice, it stops me from jumping up suddenly and bashing my head repeatedly against the wall. Prison chains not so much your hands and face as it does your voice. I express myself, I let my mind soar above these

walls to bring back distant, exotic brick with which I seek to build a more enduring cell within the cell – prison. Dis un prison, see? I write my state in words of decision, aiming thereby to reduce the weight of these walls on my shoulders, to rediscover my nullified individuality (WFA3).

The excerpt above supports Oluwole Coker’s view in the article, “Between Law and Literature: The Quest for Justice in Post-Independent Nigeria,” he argues that: *Waiting for an Angel* as a prison memoir that “revisits the genre, which works like Wole Soyinka’s *The Man Died* and Ken Saro-wiwa’s *A Month and a Day*, represent” (66). Lomba is caught, beaten, and sent to the solitary confinement. The superintendent discovers Lomba’s talents from his confiscated diary and visits him in prison, seeking knowledge (WFA 13). He begins to use Lomba for his personal purpose, engaging him as a secretary to write poems which he passes as his own to his educated mistress, Janice. Secretly, Lomba adds clues that will link the poems to him and enhance his release from captivity. He appropriates lines from Edgar Allan Poe, John Donne and the Greek poet, Sappho, with repeated messages: “Save my Soul, a prisoner” (WFA28). Lomba’s revolt is tucked into his poems. The traumatic experiences of prison life that drown Lomba’s voice and suppress his anger become a language of resistance put in writing the poems, the superintendent could not interpret them as dangerous.

Janice quickly recognises Lomba’s S.O.S. messages and seeks audience with him. She utilises the superintendent’s love for her as a weapon to secure his release. “How can you be so unfeeling, put yourself in his shoes... I want you to contact the people. Give them his name, if you can’t do that then forget you ever knew me” (WFA 30). Janice sees the superintendent’s unwillingness to give Lomba’s name to amnesty

international as an act of wickedness. Lomba's salvation comes through a woman who appreciates the power of the poetry which Maftau, the superintendent, had thought to be harmless. "I read them All. Poems, letters. Poems, no problem. The letters, illegal. I burned them. Prisoners sometimes smuggle out letters to the press to make us look foolish. Embarrass the government. But the poems are harmless. Love poems and diaries" (15-16).

Lomba's poems are protest poems and show his power of superiority over the ignorant, love sick superintendent who wants to impress his mistress. Psychologically, he hates working for the superintendent because other inmates regard him as an informer (*WFA* 23). Lomba describes his helplessness in strong terms: "I desire to recover my dignity. Now I realise that I really had no self to express, that self had flown away from me the day that chains touched my hands" (*WFA* 23). Although Lomba achieves psychological liberation through the power of expression, we do not know if the superintendent actually effected his release.

Habila uses Lomba's imprisonment to comment on the deplorable state of Nigerian prisons, the fate of journalists, political detainees, and the Nigerian judicial system as a whole where prisoners wait endlessly without trial. The narrative moves further backwards to Lomba's university days. The part with the title, "Angel" recounts Lomba's journey with an unnamed friend and his roommate, Bola, to Badagry slave resort. Halfway through the tour, tired of the guides' tales of chains and locks, Lomba and his friends wander around the beach and stumble into a fortune teller. Lomba learns that he is fated for prison. The unnamed friend wants to know the date of his death. The fortune teller tells him that he will see Isafael, the angel of death on the day he is to die

(*WFA* 40). Following a military coup, Lomba's unnamed friend defers the order of soldiers to vacate the bar. He is killed for attacking and struggling with one of the military men.

The narrative moves further backwards to Bola, Lomba's friend and roommate in the university. Bola is described as an aspiring happy young man with a promising future. He introduces Lomba to his family as "my northern friend" (*WFA*58). Lomba begins to spend his vacations with Bola and his family. He states that "I have found a home away from home" (*WFA* 58). Bola participates fully in the demonstration against the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida before waking up from a nightmare of dead bodies and fire. He runs home, only to find out that his entire family has been crushed to death by a stationary military vehicle packed by the side of the road. Bola becomes mad, repeating Sankara, the student union president's speech: "The military has failed us; I say Down with khakistocracy! Down with militocracy! Down with kleptocracy!(*WFA*...68). He is arrested, and systematically beaten before he is dumped in the psychiatric hospital. Lomba gives a graphic description of Bola's condition thus: "Every inch was coined with thick, punctured weal. He had been systematically beaten from his face down to his legs. One arm was fractured. It lay by his side in a thick plastic" (*WFA* 75).

When Lomba returns to his hostel, he discovers that the military had interrupted the students' peaceful demonstration, evacuating all the students. Female students are raped. Lomba's room has been ransacked. His poems and short stories are destroyed and scattered on the floor all over his room. Lomba expresses his frustration thus:

I felt the imprint of the boots on my mind; felt the rifling, tearing hands ripping through my very soul .... I put my bag down and began to collect my poems and stories from the floor. I just couldn't leave them lying around like that, my own creations. My eyes filled with tears as I watched the pages' curl and blacken in the flames (WFA 74). Lomba is forced to leave the university. He moves to Morgan Street where he hopes to express his talents and earn a living as a writer. Bola and Lomba represent frustrated Nigerian youths during the period of military dictatorship. Lomba informs James Fiki that when the university was becoming a sort of prison, he left. (WFA 107)

From the section labelled "Alice", the reader encounters the beautiful daughter of an army general. Lomba first meets her at Dr Kareem's office. The love affair between the duo is cut short by the intervention of the military in the students' peaceful demonstration. The school is shut down afterwards. Lomba drops out of school while Alice continues her degree course. Lomba meets Alice again many years after at the Mercy hospital where he went to cover an event for *TheDial*. Alice loves Lomba, but she is already in a relationship with an older military man who pays for her mother's cancer treatment. She tells Lomba, "It is the money ... My father left us over a year now. He is in Abuja with his new wife. Ngai pays for everything – everything, including this dress I am wearing" (WFA 100). Alice leaves Lomba due to the economic reality of the time, since Lomba cannot afford to care for her and her ailing mother's medical expenses.

The narrative returns to Lomba, now a resident of Morgan Street. He locks himself up in his one room apartment for two years, trying to write a novel without success. He also teaches literature in a preparatory class. Frustrated, he thought: "I should return to my bed, take a dose of Valium and sleep. Let the world go without you. Nobody



will miss you, they never really do” (WFA105). He decides to get his life back by going to the editor of *TheDial*, James Fiki. Lomba recalls that James published his article on “The Military in Politics” two years earlier, unaltered (WFA 107), with a promise to offer him a job after graduation. James gives Lomba a trial test which involves writing on the atmosphere of Nigeria at the time: “The general disillusionment, the liturgy” (WFA109). When Lomba insists that he is not a political person, James helps him to see the reality of the society they live in and encourages him to write on politics: “You can’t escape it, in this country, the very air we breathe is politics” (WFA 108). Lomba spends the night writing the article, using his street, Morgan Street, renamed “Poverty Street” by Joshua Amuson, the activist and teacher, as his setting:

I use my street, Morgan Street, as a paradigmatic locale. The fuel scarcity as the main theme. The long lines of cars waiting for fuel at the petrol stations and obstructing traffic. I use a thread to weave together the various aspects of the article; in front of the petrol pumps. I placed the ubiquitous gun and whip -toting soldiers, collecting money from drivers to expedite their progress towards the pumps. I place the pot-bellied glaucomatous kids of Morgan Street, with their high-defined ribs, besides the open gutters where they usually play; in the gutter. I place a carcass or two of mongrel dogs worried by vultures. In the shady corners, under verandas and broken trucks, I position winos to pass the day in vinous slumber. For local colour, I bring in the aged and dying to peep through open windows into the streets at youths holding roach communions at alley – months - in their pockets, biding their time. To conclude, I use the

kerosene- starved housewives of Morgan Street. I make them rampage the streets down wooden signboards and billboards and hauling them away to their kitchen to use as firewood. (*WFA* 113)

James did not see Lomba's conclusion as plausible: "Are you not laying it a bit too thick here? Perhaps you should leave that part out" (*WFA* 113). However, Lomba sees his story playing out itself on his way home from work as he witnesses how a group of women with babies strapped on their backs begin to tear down a huge billboard of condom advertisement. The section with the title of "Kela" is told from the eyes of a teenage boy. Kela gives more detail of Morgan Street, its residents, the wretchedness and hopelessness of people like Auntie Rachael, Lomba, Hagar, Brother, Nancy, his teacher and mentor Joshua. According to Kela:

Poverty Street's real name was Morgan Street, one of the many decrepit, disease – ridden quarters that dotted the city of Lagos like ringworm on the beggar's body. My Auntie Rachael's restaurant, God will Food Centre, was at No. 20, Poverty Street( or Morgan Street- This story in a way is about how the street came to be called Poverty Sntreet, and about the people that I met in my one-year stay there, people like Joshua, Brother, Nancy, Auntie Rachael, Lomba, Hagar and all others who through their words and deeds touched my life and changed it irreversibly).The street consisted of a single tarred road that ran through its centre – Egunje Road- and a tributary of narrow, dirt road that led off Egunje Road to the dark interior of the street. (*WFA* 120)

Brother, whose leg is rumoured to have been lost in a fight with a soldier in the riots following the annulment of the June 12 elections, is waiting and dreaming to be rich someday. Nancy, a single mother working for Kela's aunt is also waiting for the return of her lover. Kela's teacher and mentor, Joshua, is waiting to consummate his relationship with his former student turned prostitute. All the individuals in Poverty Street represent Nigerian masses who have been dehumanised by military intervention and dictatorship. Their psychological disorientation is expressed throughout the narrative. At the forefront of a peaceful demonstration of the people of Morgan Street is Joshua. He requests that Lomba covers the demonstration at the local secretariat. Joshua's moving speech paints a graphic picture of the plight of individuals on Morgan Street:

We, the honest, peace loving and taxpaying citizens of Morgan Street, are tired of waiting for the government to come to us. That's why we came. We came to tell you, Sir, that our clinic is run-down and abandoned; we came to tell you that we do not have a single borehole on Morgan Street and we have to go to other streets to fetch water; our schools are overcrowded and our children have to buy their own seats because the ones there have not been replaced since the schools were built ten years ago .... We are here to protest against the neglect (*WFA* 170).

The protesters are attacked by anti-riot policemen, using tear gas. They beat up and arrest the protesters, many of them lose their lives while others are wounded, running away from the police. Hagar, Joshua's love, is killed and Joshua ends up a fugitive. Lomba is among those arrested. The final section of the collection narrated in third

person voice begins on the day of the peaceful demonstration, bringing to a climax all the events in the narrative.

Moving from fiction to historical fact, Habila weaves together and compresses events that took place several years apart into one single story. Dele Giwa was assassinated through a letter bomb in 1986 under the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. Kudirat Abiola, wife of the acclaimed winner of the June 12 elections, was assassinated in 1998 during the administration of Late Abacha; showing that Habila is actually writing fiction. *TheDial's* provocative headline, "ABACHA: THE STOLEN BILLIONS" (WFA199), attracted sanctions from the military as the whole. The building is completely razed to the ground, rendering all the staff jobless and the editor facing a warrant of arrest. The *Concord* and *SundayMagazine* editors are arrested. James takes Lomba to the slave port in Badagry. He shows him why slaves find it difficult to revolt. The fleeing James and Lomba seek refuge from the authorities among a group of poets. Lomba manages to leave the group, and heads straight to cover the protest, knowing fullwell that he might be arrested. Habila states in his "Afterward" that *Waiting* is purely a historical fiction in which he made recognisable historical facts and incidents the fibres with which the larger fictional fabric is woven: Ken Saro-Wiwa, June 12, Kudirat Abiola, the riots, the student demonstrations, and of course, the arrests. All the above events are represented without strict regard to time and place (228).

### ***Waiting for an Angel* asa *Bildungsroman***

The narrative is an excellent example of the dynamic features of the *Bildungsroman*. It follows Lomba, the protagonist, from an unnamed town in the North, to a university in Lagos where his coming to awareness of the relationship between art

and politics begins. It describes Lomba's educational career, university years, his romantic affairs and his journey towards self-realisation as a writer and journalist, through the assistance of a mentor or role model. Lomba is presented as a young, promising, intelligent university undergraduate gifted in writing short stories and poems. One of his articles, "The Military in Politics," was published in *The Dial* newspaper. *Waiting for an Angel* is a political *Bildungsroman* that follows the pattern of the typical form in several ways. As mentioned earlier, the Nigerian *Bildungsroman* deviates slightly from its original form, creating varieties within the tradition.

Buckley requires that the protagonist is a talented child who leaves his rural environment to the city where his real education begins. Habila's protagonist, Lomba, is a university student with talents. He desires to become a novelist. Throughout the narrative, Lomba always states that he is trying to become a writer. *Waiting*, also follows Lomba from political ignorance to political awareness. By creating a talented protagonist who journeys from his home to the city, the novel falls into the category of the *Bildungsroman*. The narrative begins with Lomba in prison, weaving in other characters and ends with series of events that lead to his arrest and detention. *Waiting for an Angel* is a *Bildungsroman* since it follows the psychological development and metamorphosis of the protagonist who is a dynamic character and consisting of features such as (a) Childhood, (b) Education and Career, (c) Family and Friendship, (d) Experience of Love Affairs, and (e) Mentorship (f) The Portrait of Lomba as a Journalist.

### **Childhood**

Habila does not provide the reader with details of Lomba's childhood years, his family or the environment where he comes from in the northern part of the country. The narrative introduces Lomba as an undergraduate in an unnamed university in Lagos. Habila deviates from the traditional pattern that requires childhood experiences of the protagonist as a characteristic of the *Bildungsroman* (Buckley 18). Lomba seems to be an orphan character in the text, since no mention is made of his family background. He is made to seek a substitute family in Lagos where he spends his vacations with Bola and other characters who facilitate his *Bildung*. In this respect, the narrative follows the female pattern whose growth begins from adolescence.

### **Education and Career**

Following the pattern of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, Habila's protagonist leaves his local environment in order to gain formal education in Lagos. Lomba leaves home for a larger society where he encounters real life that is full of challenges. He is an intelligent student who prefers to spend his leisure hours with his old lecturer, Dr Kareem, in his office. He enjoys "discussing his poetry with the old lecturer ... To have his poems discussed and argued; it gave him a kind of vague hope, a sense of place in the larger scheme of things" (WFA 80). The university don acknowledges Lomba's talents as the best student in his class and invites his friend, James Fiki, to listen to Lomba's essay.

The *Bildungsroman* hero is required to leave home due to parental conflict or loss. Habila does not give any details about the reason for the protagonist's migration, except that he is in Lagos to acquire formal education. The university plays a significant role in Lomba's career as an intellectual. He expresses his artistic talents for writing poems and short stories. Lomba's desire to be published is so strong that he tells Alice,

“I’ll become a writer. Novels and poems” (WFA 91). He is forced to drop out in the second year due to military intervention and continual closure of the school. The trauma of the loss of his roommate’s family and the destruction of his literary works by the military facilitate his exit from the university. According to Lomba, “when school began to look like prison, I had to get out” (WFA 107). The fact that Lomba’s university education is incomplete marks a deviation from the requirements of the standard of a typical *Bildungsroman*. However, he undergoes and completes informal education under the tutelage of his mentor and role model, James Fiki, in order to establish the influence of society on his *Bildung*.

### **Family and Friendship**

Regarding family and friendship, Lomba’s best friend is Bola, his roommate in the university. Lomba describes Bola as a person that is so trusting, so guileless and loyal (57). He is not alienated from Bola’s family. He states: “I started spending my vacations with his family after the first semester” (58). He is like an adopted son into Bola’s family, joining in their discussions and arguments in order to demonstrate his intellectual powers (WFA 64). Bola is carried away in the wave of students’ protest against the military government. He joins the other students in the rally organised by Sankara, the president of the students’ union. That night, he had a terrible dream about “dead bodies and fire” (WFA 47). Bola’s personal tragedy only one day after the students’ demonstration affects Lomba. His dream for the future is crushed as he abandons school and chooses a life of solitude in his one room apartment on Morgan Street. Though he retreats into his own world, the narrative entangles him and makes him part of the political struggle against

oppressive domination of the military. Lomba remains in his room for two years, trying, without success, to write a novel.

According to Buckley, the hero is expected to seek a substitute due to loss of actual parents. Lomba is not provoked to seek a substitute family after the loss of Bola's parents. He talks less to his neighbours on Poverty Street except for Nkem, the thief, who visits him only once and the prostitute who informs him that Nkem is a thief (WFA111). Apart from Bola, Lomba's short interaction with Kela encourages him to cover the demonstration. He does not seek advice from neighbours except James Fiki, who influences Lomba to write on political issues. Habila gives little attention to family and friendship in the novel.

### **Experience of Love**

A typical *Bildungsroman* hero must undergo two obligatory love affairs or emotional experiences. Buckley stated that one must be debasing and the other exalting. Love is an important feature of the protagonist's process of maturation. In exploring the theme of love affairs in *WaitingforanAngel*, it is observed that Lomba had love affairs with two different women, Alice and Sariman, who abandon him for other men. Lomba first meets Alice in Dr Kareem's office. Alice is described as the not too intelligent daughter of a General (WFA 83). Nevertheless, she manages to complete her university education. With Alice, Lomba experiences romantic love as stated below:

When she returned to bed, he took her in the arms and kissed her. She sucked on his tongue and laughed when they came up for air and said, 'I thought you were never going to do that. He kissed her again. He had



dreamt of this moment many times. Everything felt real, as if he was in a dream, or watching a film of himself, but in another life, another dimension. (WFA 91).

Their love affair is short and brief, disrupted by military intervention. Lomba meets Alice many years after, while covering an article for *The Dial* at the Mercy Hospital. She still loves him, but she cannot marry him because she needs money to pay for her mother's medical bills (WFA100). Lomba meets Alice a third time while in prison from her wedding photographs, which he found in an old newspaper. Even as Lomba looks at the photographs, all he could see is Alice's pleading eyes, begging and saying: "Lomba, I am sorry, so sorry. You must hate me now. Do you?" (WFA 101). Lomba dedicates most of his prison poems to Alice, just as he had promised. He reflects thus:

Hate you Alice, how could I? You were the idol of my idolatry. And even now, two years later, in my prison cell, as I look at the picture of you beside Ngai, in your wedding gown, all I can think of is the feel of your lips on mine when you kissed me that night before leaving me on the log under the nib tree (WFA 100).

Sariman walks out of Lomba's life, having lived together with him for one year. Like Alice, she abandons Lomba for economic reasons. Lomba also loves Sariman sincerely. He states that he "tries to ignore the pain in the bleeding hollow where his heart used to be" (WFA187). Sariman consoles poor Lomba, "You'll find somebody else, you'll love again" (WFA196). Although Lomba engages in two love affairs, it is debatable whether he has an exalting sexual encounter like the typical hero. From

Habila's portrayal of Lomba's relationship with women, it is difficult to characterise the nature of their relationship. There is no mention of marriage or how the affairs influence Lomba in his process of maturation. His relationship with both women does not help him fit well into the social norms and values of his society; both relationships leave him shattered. When he informs his mentor that "My girlfriend left", he replies, "Don't worry about her, you'll find love again" (*WFA* 271). It is debatable whether Lomba actually has any exalting love affairs like a typical *Bildungsroman* hero. His relationship with Alice and, later, Sariman is shattered by lack of economic sustenance.

In the traditional *Bildungsroman*, relationship with the opposite sex should lead the character to conform with the socially acceptable standard of marriage. When a prostitute tries to entice him, he tells her: "I am impotent, I don't have a gun" (*WFA* 210). Lomba may have decided to lead a chaste life for fear of abandonment. Nevertheless, this short encounter with the prostitute helps him to focus on his career and avoid distraction. It is likely that Lomba's previous experiences of failed love have something to do with his decision to refuse the prostitutes offer. *Waiting* deviates from the standard of the *Bildungsroman* in that Lomba never experience happy love. He idealises Alice and has written several love poems for and about her while in prison chains. The reader gets the impression that Lomba's love for Alice keeps him strong even though it is not reciprocated. Habila's portrayal of two unsuccessful love affairs in *WFA* shows that love affairs are not in agreement with Buckley's standards.

## Mentorship

The first mentor Lomba encounters is Dr. Kazeem, his old university lecturer. He enjoys the bond he shares with the university don. This relationship becomes very important for Lomba because Dr Kazeem discovers his artistic talents and invites his friend, James Fiki, the editor of *The Dial*, to listen to his reading. James invites Lomba “Come write for us when you graduate” (WFA107). When Lomba drops out of school, he continues to write in the solitude of his one room apartment on Morgan Street. He later turns to James for a job. The military suppress his dream of becoming a writer by destroying his works in the aftermath of student demonstrations. Habila equates the destruction of Lomba’s writings to other forms of military brutality like the destruction of lives and properties, rape, arrest and detention of innocent citizens.

In line with Horney’s tenants, Lomba allows himself to be influenced by James. He realises that he cannot grow in a vacuum, without association with other human beings. James becomes Lomba’s major mentor because he is wiser, more experienced and compassionate. He recognises Lomba’s skills and abilities and plays a significant and influential role in Lomba’s cognisance as a journalist. He helps Lomba see beyond the self, to his role in the political situation in his country. James takes Lomba through series of awakenings. Lomba’s first assignment for *The Dial* requires writing about the deteriorating state of the nation. James tells Lomba: “You write so well, you express yourself so effortlessly, with so much force. I think you will do justice to any subject you care to write on. Tell me, have you ever thought of writing on politics?” (WFA 108). Lomba’s reply reflects ignorance and complete alienation from the outside world: “I am not very political” (WFA 108). James informs him that it is very difficult to escape

politics because “In this country, the air we breathe is politics” (*WFA* 108). Government’s unending transition programmes, coupled with fuel scarcity and political unrest, is what James calls “the general disillusionment” (*WFA* 108).

Lomba looks around his immediate environment, which is Morgan Street. His essay portrays military intervention in everyday living. He states: “I use my street, Morgan Street, as a paradigmatic locale, the fuel scarcity as my main theme” (*WFA* 113). James recognises Lomba’s love for art and places him in the department for arts and culture. But he reminds him: “Everything is politics in this country, don’t forget that” (*WFA* 113). When James instructs Lomba to cover the demonstration by the inhabitants of Morgan Street, he stubbornly insists that “I write on arts and literature” (*WFA* 191). James leads Lomba to see the symbiotic relationship between arts and politics. Lomba had hoped that his popularity as a writer would bring him to the limelight and that he could even win the Commonwealth Prize for Literature. To aggravate his plight, James leads him to realise and accept his limitations: “We are talking theory now, because in reality you won’t find a publisher for it in this country” (*WFA* 172). Lomba experiences complete awakening, recognition and acceptance of his limitations. What emerges is shame and complete silence: “suddenly, he felt ashamed that he has shown himself to be insensitive, even morally wanting. He nods, “I understood ... I am sorry: James is his mentor; the one person he’d choose if he were to choose a role model” (*WFA* 193). He experiences complete change of attitude as he accompanies James to Bagadary slave port. James tells him “sorry I had to be brutal – but you need it. You can’t write with chains in your hands... we are in this together” (*WFA* 193). James urges Lomba to follow his steps closely.

The lesson is direct and effective, like a blow to Lomba's stomach. He comprehends fully the challenges of journalism in a military state. James knows that "there will be a few bruises, even death" (WFA195). But he persuades Lomba to cover the demonstration. He takes Lomba along with him as he attends a writer retreat. Lomba becomes aware that writers are not afraid of arrest, imprisonment or even death. He bonds with known and unknown journalists and writers as they continue to fight against injustice and oppression. He observes that his mentor refuses to heed pleas from Emeka Davis to go on exile. James tells his friends: "I can't live in exile in another country. I'd die ... what dignity would I have, over fifty in some cold, unfriendly capital in Europe, or America, washing dishes in a restaurant to make ends meet?" (WFA 217). Lomba accepts training from his mentor and experiences complete metamorphosis when he states flatly: "I have to cover the demonstration" (WFA 218). Although Lomba is arrested, he does not regret his decision. He continues to write in prison.

### **The Portrait of Lomba as a Journalist**

Although, the Nigerian *Bildung* expresses a number of forces that prevent the protagonist from attaining self-fulfillment, he experiences a complete transformation, which is realised through different forms of identity negotiations, either physical or psychological. In this regard, it is imperative to consider Lomba's metamorphosis from ignorance to awareness. Lomba's development begins as a young university undergraduate who loves to write short stories and poems under the watchful eyes of his old lecturer and friend, Dr Kareem. The narrative voice states that with the university don, "Lomba preferred to have his poems discussed and argued" (WFA 80). It is in one of his reading sessions with Dr Kareem that Lomba encounters the editor of *The Dial*, James

Fiki. James published Lomba's article and promised Lomba a job after graduation from the university.

The military regime destroys Lomba's vision of becoming a graduate and destroys his short stories and writings. He states:

I picked up a paper from the floor, it was a poem, my poem. I picked up another, it was a page from one of my short stories. I looked at the other papers, recognizing my handwriting, scared to bend down and gather them. Most of them were torn; boots had marched upon them, covering the writing with thick, brown mud. I felt the imprint of boots on my mind; I felt the rifting tearing hands ripping through my very soul .... I began to collect my poems and stories from the floor. I just couldn't leave them lying around like that, my own creations ... I followed the trail of papers to the veranda and the courtyard. (WFA 74).

Lomba is too traumatised to return to school. He spends two years in solitary confinement, trying to write a novel without success. Finally, Lomba takes his manuscript to the editor of *TheDial*. James takes advantage of Lomba's naivety on the political state of the nation, tries to make him realise that in Nigeria, everything is politics, when he asks Lomba, Have you thought of writing on politics?... you can't escape it. In this country, the air we breathe is politics. Look out there, see the long queue of cars waiting for fuel. Some have been there for days and we are the major producers of oil. If you care to look, you'll find more: electricity, religion, poverty. One general goes, another one comes, but the people remain stuck in the same vicious grove. Nothing ever changes except the particular details of their wretchedness. (WFA105)

When James insists that Lomba should write on politics, Lomba admits his ignorance on political affairs: “I am not very political” (*WFA 108*). This lack of interest in politics is also observed in his attitude during student demonstrations in his university days. Lomba’s roommate joins other students, shouting and screaming at the top of their voices in reaction to Sankara’s moving speech. Lomba quickly leaves the scene. He declares, “I was not moved, I felt like an impostor”. He moves out of the crowd and stands alone surveying it from a distance. ... “In my room, I buried my head in a novel, trying hard to screen out Sankara’s voice trickling in through the window amidst the static shouts and chants” (*WFA48*).

Lomba’s political awakening comes through education from James, his mentor and role model. The masses have lost faith in government’s endless transition programmes. James asks Lomba to “write on that” (*WFA108*) Lomba returns with the article in which his familiar environment, concludes with women tearing billboards on the streets, gathering them for firewood. (*WFA 113*). Joshua Amusu, an intellectual/activist, requests that Lomba covers the proposed demonstration by the people of Morgan Street at the Local Government Secretariat. Lomba says he knows that such assignment is risky. James tells Lomba:

You won’t find a publisher, not in this country because it’d be economically unwise for any publisher to waste his scarce paper to publish a novel which nobody will buy because the people are too poor, too illiterate and too busy trying to stay out of the way of the police and army to read .... Say you find a publisher to publish your book ... You’d want to enter it in a competition and what is the most obvious competition for someone from a commonwealth country? Of course, the commonwealth literary prize.

But you can't do that because Nigeria was thrown out of the commonwealth of Nations early this morning (WFA192).

James takes Lomba along with him to the slave museum where Lomba realises that if people do not communicate with one another, there is little revolt among them. The slave traders used the mouth locks so that the slaves could not speak or console one another and encourage a spirit of revolt. Further, no two slaves of the same tribe are kept together, "Mandingo was chained with Yoruba, Wolof was chained with Ibo, Bini was chained with Hausa. The oppressor knows that whenever one word is joined to another word to form a sentence, there'll be revolt (WFA195). Ethel Ngozi Okeke asserts that "Badagry slave museum evokes memories of the early seeds of oppression... The mouth-locks, leg-irons, and chains" are symbols of oppression (6). After this visit, Lomba comes to a realisation that he must be part of the demonstration no matter the consequence. He is ashamed of his ignorance of the plight of the suffering masses. He apologises to James, "I am sorry" (WFA 193).

Lomba begins to look beyond the self in order to focus on the aspirations of his society. James inspires him to see that the writer may not be able to fight a physical battle, but could form part of a collective and psychological resistance through writing, because the pen is said to be mightier than the gun. Lomba's *Bildung* is complete when he becomes accommodated into the society of writers. He allows James to mentor him to self-realisation as he follows James to a gathering of poets, where James refuses the offer to leave the country in order to escape arrest or possible death. Lomba observes that James "looks old ...so grey, so wrinkled, so bowed, so tired" (WFA216), but his determination to use his pen as a weapon of freedom against state oppression inspires



Lomba. His contact with poets, novelists and journalists in the residence of Emeka Davis further heightens his determination to cover the peaceful demonstration. These gentlemen of the pen are not afraid of arrest. A female painter advises Lomba, “you really must get arrested, that’s the quickest way to make it as a poet. You’ll have no problem with visas after that, you might even get an international award” (WFA 215). Although Lomba does not want to be arrested, he realises that “it is important to agitate against injustice, no matter the consequences” (WFA127). He goes ahead to cover the demonstration despite the likelihood of arrest, showing that he has come to a self-realisation that the popularity of a writer is tied to his arrest and imprisonment as earlier stated by the female painter. Lomba also notes the defiant attitude of the writers when he informed them that *The Dial* office has been razed. One of the young poets responds, “I’ll write that into my new poem,” while another says that, “I’ll use it as a prologue to my new book, it’s just the symbolism I’ve been searching for” (WFA213).

Lomba has come to the cognition that as a writer, he has made himself an enemy of the state. He decides to answer the call of journalism. Like other journalists, he states, “I have to cover a demonstration” (WFA219). By accepting to cover the demonstration, Lomba recognises his new status which aptly locates the novel within the *Bildungsroman* tradition. Lomba seeks to be arrested in order to gain self-advancement and popularity that might help him, “get out of this fucking country” (WFA 215). Lomba’s arrest and imprisonment remind the reader of the symbol of oppression in the form of the slaves’ mouth – locks. Lomba is not allowed a lawyer, visitors or any means of voicing. According to him, “I have been forgotten” (WFA15). Lomba refuses to be silenced by prison chains; he finds a way of personal expression by keeping a secret diary. In prison,

Lomba continues as a journalist and poet, writing letters and poems to express freedom of his imagination.

Habila directs readers' attention to the fate of political detainees during the Abacha dictatorship. The superintendent compares prisoners to "rats," "insects," "saboteurs," "anti-government rats" (9-10), just to dehumanise them. The superintendent exposes Lomba to further humiliation in the form of beatings and pinning him to the floor, (bending) a tooth at its roots (20). Nevertheless, the superintendent expresses fear for the pen by destroying Lomba's letters. Lomba's poems become his means of expressing the power of the pen for his release. The superintendent assumes that the poems are harmless. The now liberated Lomba uses his intellectual powers against the near-illiterate superintendent. He takes full advantage of his lack of knowledge of poetry and secretly turns the love poems into political messages, which the superintendent's mistress understands.

Janice's intervention provides a great source of comfort and hope for Lomba. We do not know if Lomba's arrest resulted in the expected fame, but the poems form a sort of resistance against oppressive military power which is represented by the superintendent. However, Heather Hewitt asserts that "many critics have observed that a revitalisation of Nigerian literature began... with younger writers who have witnessed the Abacha years of brutality" ("Coming of Age" 74). As stated earlier, the Nigerian *Bildungsroman* traces the protagonist's difficult journey from ignorance to awareness. Habila has modified the *Bildungsroman* in order to draw attention to the plight of political elites, students, masses and the entire people of Nigeria within a specific historical, socio-cultural background, precisely the period of oppressive military rule in Nigeria. Lomba decides to dedicate his

life to journalism and experiences complete metamorphosis at the end of the novel. As regards travel, Lomba does follow the pattern of the hero for whom travel is part of his formal and informal education.

### ***Graceland: The Ethnic Novel***

*Graceland (GL)*, documents the devastating consequences of the civil war on individuals, especially, women and children. The war destroyed millions of lives of mostly Igbo citizens. Through the eyes of one of the characters in the novel, Abani narrates the ordeal of the Igbos thus: “Den the Hausa begin to kill us like chicken, plenty, plenty dead body scatter everywhere like abandon slaughterhouse.” (*GL* 158).

Majority of post –civil war survivors like Elvis’s cousin, Innocent, are child soldiers, who are totally ignorant of the cause of the war, but are forced to join the rebel soldiers. Although, Abani was eighteen months old when the war began, he declared that his traumatic experience of the war, characterised by suffering of individuals from the background of *Graceland*. Apart from trauma, cultural displacement, migration from the war-torn areas and moral degradation were after effects of the war. Elvis’s rural community had become a fertile ground for all sorts of criminal and abominable acts such as rape, incest, homosexuality and murder. *Graceland* indicts both the federal troupe and the secessionists for crimes against humanity. However, it is clear that Abani’s loyalty lies with his people. This is why he states that: “There is only one history: Igbo” (299).

### **Plot**

Abani invites the reader to follow the protagonist, Elvis, from the age of six in the village of Afikpo, Eastern Nigeria, through a steady progression of his adventure in

Lagos to the departure lounge of Lagos International Airport. The novel illustrates the physical and psychological development of Elvis, who begins his sojourn in Lagos as an imitator of Elvis Presley and ends up as Redemption impersonator on his way to Europe. Lagos has the most outstanding effect on Elvis's developmental process. *Graceland* is set between 1972 and 1983. The narrative began just two years after the Nigerian civil war. Themes of corruption, poverty, economic exploitation, military oppression, violence, and the effects of the civil war on the Igbo people run through the narrative. Many of the characters in *Graceland*, like those in Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, are psychologically displaced. The narrative maps their physical and psychological struggles, but mostly, that of the protagonist, Elvis.

The novel is divided into Book One and Book Two. Book One alternates between the protagonist's rural environment in Afikpo where he spends his childhood years from the age of six to fourteen, with occasional flashbacks on the civil war, and an environment where two opposite cultural influences clash. Amanda Aycock points out that the alternating chapters in Book One show the influence from various dimensions on the development of the protagonist (18). Book One terminates with the death of Elvis's mother, Beatrice, on the same night that Sunday loses his election bid. Elvis is left with his father, who had become poor and jobless, having resigned from his paid job as a School Inspector. Following the death of his wife, the family is dislocated. Sunday, the father of Elvis, migrates to Lagos with Elvis, but he refuses to find himself a job and spends his time drinking alcohol in a bar not far from his Maroko residence.

Book Two covers the period of Elvis's life in Lagos and other cities in Western Nigeria, up to the point where he takes up the identity of his friend, Redemption, about to

board a plane to Europe. Some chapters begin with excerpts from Beatrice's journal which Elvis carries with him to keep his mother's memory fresh and also remind him of his happier days in Afikpo. Others include recipes of some traditional Nigerian dishes, explanation of some medicinal herbs, Igbo proverbs, religious texts, extracts from Onitsha market literature and the kolanut ritual which is common among the Igbo people as well as traditional theories about the universe, in order to illustrate how modernism has eroded the cultural practices of the Igbo people.

*Graceland* begins in *medias res* with Elvis in Maroko slum, one of the many ghettos in Lagos, roaming the neighbourhood, trying to make a living and escape the life of poverty by impersonating Elvis Presley. Abani paints an extremely vivid picture of the trauma of growing up in a society where all sorts of vices ranging from stealing, human body part trafficking, cocaine wrapping, homosexuality, prostitution, child abuse, poor parenting, and corruption are common. Readers follow Elvis through life in Maroko, the poverty and the squalor, in a way that they are able to see the depravity of the masses in the midst of plenty. Elvis drops out of school to take full responsibility of his up keep and that of his widowed, jobless, alcoholic father. He had wondered that just two years before, they lived in a small town, his father had a good job and was almost at the verge of winning an election (*GL* 6). From all indications, Sunday may have been lured to Lagos by the news of the high lifestyle of his people who return to their ancestral town during Christmas. They throw money around and create the belief that Lagos is the place where money is made. Elvis observes that poverty and violence in Lagos differ from the postcards of skyscrapers, sweeping flyovers, beaches and hotels. He concludes that it

looks as if people have conspired with the city to weave a web of silence around the unsavoury parts of the city (*GL* 7).

Sunday marries Comfort in Lagos, but refuses to engage in any meaningful employment. Elvis tries to make money from white expatriates and odd tourists tanning on the beach without success. Although Sunday is jobless, he detests his adolescent son's dancing profession; he wants him to seek for more lucrative jobs. He tells Elvis: "dancing is no job; we all dance in de bar on Sunday" (*GL* 5). Elvis's entanglement with Redemption, a self-acclaimed "area boy", facilitates his *Bildung* in Lagos. Redemption engages in various illegal deals that bring money, ranging from stealing, wrapping of cocaine in plastic paper bags, dancing with rich women, to human and body parts trafficking. This brings Elvis in contact with the corrupt military personnel, simply called Colonel. Colonel leads the state security, and all other security agencies, including the police are under him (*GL* 121). The colonel and other highly placed military personnel abuse their authority. According to Jimoh, "dere is no wrong with soldier, just what we want" (*GL* 120). The colonel is involved in child trafficking for which Elvis and Redemption expose him. Elvis is caught, and severely punished, but he manages to escape.

The King of Beggars proves to be a positive influence on Elvis. He tries to shield Elvis from Redemption and other dangers in Lagos. Elvis is constantly plagued by the choice of either the world of crime offered by Redemption or the alternative of the King of Beggars. He joins the King's troupe in an attempt to hide from the colonel. Shortly before the end of the novel, Elvis loses his father. Sunday's resistance and protest against demolition of Maroko, like the people of Morgan Street in *WaitingforanAngel*, leads to

his untimely death. Elvis is grief-stricken; he could not give his father a proper burial; he does not even have the money required by the soldier to move his father's body from the debris. He moves to the Bridge City where Redemption finds him and offers him the opportunity to leave Nigeria to a more accommodating environment, where he can pursue his dream of becoming a dancer. Redemption tells him, "your type no fit survive here long... during your father's time, we dey plan for abroad. Dat time it is London, now it is America" (GL 318).

Elvis leaves for America with a false identity and passport. However, he realises that there is no guarantee that he would survive in America (GL 318). Adeleke Adeeko, in his essay on the role of America and travel in *Graceland*, opines that migration to the West has now become a viable alternative to dying in the struggle to achieve a healthy nation state, but that these migrants, while living in the West, are still committed to building a stable Nigeria. America becomes the place for Elvis and many Nigerians who are tired of Nigeria's unending transition programmes; they move abroad to complete their *Bildung* (America 45). *Graceland* follows the pattern of other third generation novels in the lack of complete denouement. The end of Elvis's journey is left to the imagination of the reader. Elvis's *Bildung* is a continuous, never ending process. Daria Tuncasummarises *Graceland* as a "*Bildungsroman* that features sixteen-years-old, Elvis Oke, an Elvis Presley impersonator, who tries to eke out a living in Lagos ...portrays his ambiguous sexuality and moral choices, he repeatedly faces in the hostile environment of Nigerian largest city" ("Review 6").

## *Graceland as a Bildungsroman*

### **Childhood**

Abani describes a chronological progression of Elvis's childhood experiences and how they shaped his personality as an adolescent. Memorable episodes in Elvis's life are given in graphic details. For instance, Elvis's initiation into manhood at the tender age of five, which to Elvis, is meaningless, confirms that modernisation has eroded the tradition of the people. Sunday informs young Elvis that "it is time to cut your apron strings. Dis is about being a man, no woman is allowed" (*GL* 18). Elvis's initiation is devoid of the original traditional features. Instead of hunting the eagle as tradition requires, he is given "a small homemade bow with an arrow, pierced through its side was a chick. It was still alive and it chirped sadly" (19). One of the elders observes: "In our day, it is real eagle" (*GL*20). The rite of passage which is Elvis's first step to manhood, has been adulterated. Elvis himself questions his skills as a hunter when he exclaims, "it is alive." His uncle replies, "you just shot it," "I didn't", Elvis replies. The uncle retort, "you did." (*GL*19). The argument that ensues between Joseph and Elvis shows that Elvis seems to reject this process of male socialisation.

The traditional 'kaikai' and kolanut that usually grace ceremonies in Igboland have been replaced by Whisky, beer and Fanta (*GL* 22). Elvis's childhood experience includes an eyewitness account of incest committed by Uncle Joseph, who many times rapes his daughter, Efua. Joseph may have been traumatised by the loss of his wife and the effect of the civil war on his family. While his elder brother, Sunday, finds solace in alcohol, he decides to use his daughter as a sex object. One of such scenes is narrated thus:



Efua was lying on the bed, legs spread wide, while Uncle Joseph grunted away between them. Efua stared straight at him, her teeth biting her lower lip. Apart from the tears streaming down her face and soft birdlike mews coming from somewhere in her throat, her face was impassive. (Elvis) wanted to rush and scream at Uncle Joseph, push him off and beat him to a pulp, he watched instead (*GL64*).

Although Elvis is too young to take action, the seed of bitter hatred for men like his father and uncle has been sown very deep in his innocent heart. He admits that “hatred and revulsion filled his nostrils and head, leaving a harsh taste in his tongue” (*GL 64*). Elvis also feels sexual awakening in the form of little snake-like sensations which crawl all over his body as he watched on, his breath and eyes betray him as Efua could see the lust in his eyes (*GL 65*).

Elvis also witnesses the murder of his cousin, Godfrey, by Innocent, a child soldier during the Nigeria Civil War. It is from this eyewitness account that the reader has a glimpse of the brutality of soldiers from both sides of the war. Oye informs Elvis that Innocent screams in the middle of the night because the ghost of those he had killed in the war are tormenting him (*GL20*). Innocent murders Godfrey in order to protect the name and honour of the Oke family. Elvis experience with male family members had a negative impact on him. This provokes the mature Elvis to question his father, “What kind of honour does that? Kills its own?”. Elvis reasons that if Godfrey is killed because “he was a threat to all that Oke family had, De only inheritance... A name of honour which Godfrey’s actions were muddying” (*GL187*), then, why should Uncle Joseph assault his own daughter sexually while everybody in the family refuses to act? Sita

Kattanek states that “Elvis’s upbringing is marked by harrowing events and traumatic experiences that describe Nigerian reality from the perspective of the oppressed” (427). The oppressed, according to Abani, include helpless young girls and boys. Elvis decides to seek an alternative channel of socialisation among the female folk. He allows women to dress him up and apply make up on his face because he is eager to share in the joy and excitement that exist among women:

Elvis longed to try on their make-up and have his hair plaited. Auntie Felicia finally gave in to his badgering and wove his hair into lovely cornrows. One of the girls put lipstick on him. Giggling, and getting into the game, another pulled a mini dress over his head. On Elvis, it fell nearly to the floor, like an evening dress. He stepped into a pair of Auntie Felicia’s too-big platforms and pranced about happy, proud, chest struck up. (GL 61)

Elvis’s father’s reaction is harsh and immediate. He beats and chokes him, shouting, “no son of mine is going to end up a homosexual” (GL61). *Graceland* depicts Elvis’s childhood in the company of his mother and grandmother in a positive manner. Elvis as an intelligent child, learns fast from his mother and grandmother. Beatrice loves to sing, dance, and practice new steps with her son. Oye dictates letters for him to write and send to friends. *Graceland* follows the typical *Bildungsroman* which depicts a child with artistic endowment. Elvis loves to imitate Elvis Presley’s dance steps and act like him. However, after the death of Beatrice, Sunday detests dancing as a profession; he urges Elvis to find himself a more lucrative means of sustenance. It is also likely that the environment in Lagos inhibits the expression of his talent, since he earns so little from dancing.

In an interview with Wayne Catan, Abani stated that childhood experiences are formative on our consciousness as writers and that all characters in novels are autobiographical in some sense. The sour relationship between Sunday and Elvis reflects Abani's relationship with his own father. Elvis's traumatic childhood experience shapes his personality in later years. In harmony with Buckley's requirement that the child possesses artistic endowment, Elvis is artistically endowed. However, he feels unable to express talents especially, after the death of his mother. Sunday refuses to accept his son's artistic desire in accordance with Buckley's specification. He wants Elvis to search for more lucrative source of livelihood. Although he is unable to make money with his artistic talents in imitation of his idol, Elvis realises that dancing is the best career for him. He states: "why does nobody understand me? I am not going back to school. I want to be a dancer, period. I am really good at it, have worked hard at it ... I want to be a famous dancer. Like Elvis" (*GL* 168). Thus, *Graceland* fulfils Buckley's requirement of a sensible child who has artistic ambitions which cannot be expressed freely due to parental constraints. Elvis must move to a more accommodating environment where he can express his talents freely.

### **Family and Friendship**

A typical feature of the *Bildungsroman*, according to Buckley, is that the male hero must seek a substitute due to physical or psychological loss of his real father. Also, the hero's relationship with his father is strained due to diverse interests between them. Elvis's father is alive, but their relationship is strained. His mother remains an essential part of his life even after her death. Elvis's father is described in the novel "as a psychotic" (*GL* 102). He is not interested in his son. Relationship between father and son

worsens after the death of Beatrice. Sunday himself confirms that “Things Fell Apart for us after your mother died” (GL187). He completely alienates himself from Elvis’s life except to reprimand and punish him. He neglects his traditional role of providing materially for his household, leaving Elvis to work, feed himself, and pay the house rent when he ought to be in school like other children of his age. In this respect, Elvis has become fatherless.

When Sunday scolds his son for choosing dancing as a career, Elvis states that the “desire to drive his fist through his father’s face was old and overwhelming” (*Graceland* 5). Elvis’s hatred for his father prompts Benji to admonish him: “Your father is a good man who has lost his way. Show respect; what is wrong with you” (GL27). However, he agrees with Elvis that “a son must not go hungry under his father’s roof, even if dis is Lagos” (GL 27). Benji meant that every individual need money to survive and a father’s responsibility is to take care of his children. Sunday neglects his responsibility as a father to Elvis. He prefers to drown his sorrow in alcohol. The narrator captures one of the dialogues between father and son thus:

“Dere was a time you respected me enough not to smoke in my presence” Sunday said.

“Feared”.

“What”.

“Feared, not respected. Was afraid you would beat me. I never really learned to respectyou”. Elvis said.

“You think I can’t beat you now?”.

“Please, don’t start”, Elvis said.

“I cannot drink de drink of a man who does not respect me”.

“Your loss”, Elvis said.

Why are you here?

“I live here” (*GL130*).

On another occasion, Sunday stands up angrily, threatening to strike Elvis. He asks him, “Are you shouting at me? Are you crazy? I will ...”. Elvis shouts him down, “sit down, old man, before you fall down,” rising to his feet. The two men stand staring at each other for a few minutes; then, unexpectedly, Sunday folded his hands, his rage gone, replaced by a look Elvis took to be shame. “Dis world has spoiled, he muttered under his breath as he sat down” (*GL 186*). Elvis spends most of his time away from his father to avoid more confrontations at home.

Sunday’s personality continues to anger Elvis. This provokes him to seek for a substitute. For Elvis, father-son relationship died even before the death of Beatrice. Contrarily, Beatrice Oke takes personal interest in her son’s education and future. She names him after her favourite singer, Elvis Presley, since she knows that she has a short time to live. Oye instructs Beatrice: “tell your son the things he should know” (*GL 38*). Elvis loves his mother and grandmother, Oye, even though Oye has a Scottish accent which he did not always understand. Elvis continues to seek his dead mother’s presence even in Lagos through her personal diary which he carries with him wherever he goes.

Buckley's requirement that the hero is fatherless in real or figurative sense is fulfilled in *Graceland*.

Elvis acquires both formal and informal education from Beatrice. Beatrice explains to Oye; "I am teaching him things dat useless school cannot. I have taught him how to cook, read and write at the level beyond his age" (*GL* 38). Afikpo is where Elvis remembers the sweet memories of his childhood with his mother and grandmother. Beatrice and Oye expose Elvis to music and dance. At an early age, Elvis listens to pop, rock, blues, country music, and watches Indian and American films acted by Elvis Presley, Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire. Oye also pays Mr. Aggrey to give Elvis dance lessons. Beatrice tells him that he will be a great man in future.

Elvis loses his virginity to uncle Joseph, his rich and corrupt uncle. He fails to understand why Uncle Joseph and his father would murder Godfrey to maintain family honour. He tells his father, "I could forgive you if I tried to, you know, but Uncle Joseph. This is his son. First, he raped his daughter, and then he murdered his own son...he raped me too" (*GL*88). Elvis questions the moral justification that allows a father to murder his son in order to protect a family name, but permits him to rape his daughter and nephew. He resolves to seek a substitute from what all the men in his family have offered.

Elvis also hated his step mother, for treating him as an outcast in his father's house. She cares less about him. He states, "God, I hate her" (*GL* 215). Comfort proves to be a very selfish woman. She cares and provides for her children, Akin and Tope, but asks Elvis to get a job like his mates and contribute to the family. On one occasion, she

asks Elvis to provide the rent for the month. When the Maroko community plans a protest action to stop government invasion of the place, Comfort abandons Sunday and moves to another community. Patriarchal authority within Elvis's family did not enhance his *Bildung*. Elvis seeks other characters outside his family to facilitate his self-actualisation. This is in line with the conventions of the *Bildungsroman*. Sunday, Joseph and Comfort have strained relationship with Elvis. Elvis is thus provoked to seek a substitute like the typical *Bildungsroman*. As regards friendship, Elvis has few friends, Redemption and The King of Beggars. The two men act as mentors who guide him. Other characters are static rather than dynamic. Elvis finds close friendship in female relations like Felicia and Efu. They function as substitute mothers to Elvis.

### **Experience of Love**

*Graceland* differs from the traditional variant which requires that the protagonist should experience two fundamental love affairs. Most of the sexual encounters in the novel are debasing. Although there is no indication in the novel to show that Elvis is a homosexual, he encounters two homosexual experiences as an involuntary participant. Elvis and his friends, Obed, Hezekiah and Titus watched a European movie which they decide to experiment. Elvis clearly states: "Dat is homo, a taboo, forbidden" (GL 196). However, he joins in the act, having the conviction of Obed that he saw it in the movies: "there were two men I do not know, but dey were doing it and it must be all right because dey do it on the movies" (GL197). As the boys pair up in the deserted church tower, a man suddenly appears. The other boys are able to escape; by the time Elvis got up, he is caught by the man. The narrator captures the scene that follows thus:

He opened his fly and Elvis saw a huge erect penis pop out, the man placed his hands roughly on his shoulders and forced him down on his knees. His penis was level with Elvis face, a twitching cobra ready to strike. “suck it” the man hissed ...

Without speaking, the man spurn Elvis around. Elvis felt the man hard against his buttocks and then a burst of fire ripped him into two. The man tore into him again and again. The pain was intense, Elvis passed out (*GL198*).

This experience does not enhance Elvis’s formation. Abani uses the rape of Efua and Elvis to comment on the theme of rape and sexual abuse against vulnerable children. Rape is one of the cruellest and most dehumanising experiences of the individual. Efua finds Elvis on the floor of the church chapel. Her words of comfort reflect the bond that binds together the sexually oppressed when she states that “grown-ups do not believe children” (*GL 198*). Abani seems to say that homosexuality is an imported Western practice that is alien to Africa. This is why he chooses a church building for the illicit practice.

Another instance is when the army officer, Jerome, applies cream on Elvis’s body in preparation for his torture by the colonel. Jerome “took Elvis’s penis in one hand and began to apply cream, he gently smoothed the paste over it working it up and down. Elvis felt himself swell. Jerome laughed and massaged Elvis’s penis faster and faster. It was not long before Elvis shuddered and shot semen all over his torturer’s hand” (*GL285*). Relatedly, a young prostitute of about twelve or thirteen years walks up to Elvis and begins to stroke his sex organ. Although he feels his swell, he is infuriated, “Stop! Stop!



He yelled” (GL 311). Elvis could not develop emotional response towards the girl because he felt that she is too young for the act.

Towards the end of the narrative, Elvis experiences love with Blessing, the girl he met under the bridge. Blessing is responsible for nursing him back to health. He has come to love and care about her. He informs his friend, Redemption, “I promise Blessing that I will never leave her” (GL 318). Abani retains the pattern of an exalting love affair here, but, alters the tradition. He presents Elvis as having love affairs with both men and women. However, neither of them influences the process of Elvis’s emotional development. Elvis’s love relationship with Blessing is fragmented and short. In the traditional *Bildungsroman*, relationship with the opposite sex leads the character to an action that fits into social norms that support the character’s formation. Elvis’s affairs with Blessing deviates from the features of love affairs, since Abani does not give it much detail. Elvis’s debasing encounters with Joseph have serious psychological effects on him: “He cried loud and hard, mouth open, snot running down his nose” (GL 189). Elvis may have experienced real love with Blessing, but the affair is short and lacks details. Abani’s protagonist is too young for such serious issues as marriage. In this respect, *Graceland* deviates from the requirement of two fundamental love affairs.

### **Journey**

Elvis’s journey is a peculiar one. It follows the tradition of the female *Bildungsroman*. Felski opines that “though the female seeks an environment that isn’t a threat to her, it is with family or friends that she embarks on her journey” (“The Novel” 135). The typical *Bildungsroman* hero leaves home alone on a journey of self-discovery. According to Buckley, the hero leaves home for an independent life in the city. Abani’s

protagonist follows the pattern as he moves from his village in Afikpo to Lagos. However, it is Sunday that creates the avenue for Elvis to migrate. Elvis is not motivated to search for an independent life in the city due to parental loss. He can only begin a life of independence in America where he hopes to pursue his dancing career. His search for a meaningful employment in Lagos provides him with a direct experience of urban life. He comes in contact with different people and a mixture of poverty and affluence (*GL7*). Like a typical hero of the *Bildungsroman*, Elvis discovers that the city is not exactly what it is portrayed to be. He struggles with city life and tries to make an honest living.

The poor are forced to inhabit slums like Maroko. Elvis observes that Lagos is “half slum, half paradise,” he is ignorant of the poverty and violence in Lagos until he arrives. (*GL7*). Abani attributes Nigerian’s problems to lack of proper guidance for the youths and the failure of post-independence leaders. Heather Hewitt agrees with Abani when she states that *Graceland* does not “write back to the empire in the classification of postcolonial textualities. Rather, it focuses on Nigeria as a cultural transitional and hybridised space” (“Coming” 14). However, there is redemption for the new Nigeria, like the Molue, a hybrid vehicle, found only in Lagos, whose parts come from different parts of the world. The parts are assembled together to form the magic that moves them around Lagos. The vehicle illustrates how the fractured state of Nigeria since its inception, which consists of different cultures and geo- political zones, could fit together in unity:

Molues are buses unique to Lagos, and only that place could have devised such a hybrid vehicle, its “magic” the only thing keeping it from falling apart. The cab of the bus was imported from Britain, one of the Bedford

series. The chassis of the body came from surplus Japanese army trucks trashed after the second world war. The body of the coach was built from scraps of broken cars and discarded roofing sheets – anything that could be beaten into shape or otherwise fashioned. The finished product, with two black stripes running down a canary body, looked like a roughly hammered sardine tin (*GL* 9).

Just as materials from different cultures form parts of the Molue, Elvis and Nigeria have been exposed to different forms of colonialism. Elvis's books, films and music come from different parts of the globe, ranging from the Koran, Charles Dickens, Dostoevsky, James Baldwin, Chinua Achebe and complemented by varieties of Hollywood and Bollywood films (*GL* 26, 43, 46, 112). Lagos is the microcosm of Nigeria, ravaged by colonialism and neo-colonialism. Like the Molue, Nigerians have continued to live together despite threats of disintegration and numerous political and socio-economic challenges.

Elvis does not mature beyond the age of sixteen. His environment does not facilitate his growth. This implies that he does not attain physical maturation even though the narrative starts during his childhood years. However, Elvis may have reached psychological maturity during adolescence. He experiences various crises in his life, especially in Lagos, where he struggles to make an honest living, acting as Elvis Presley impersonator, working as a labourer and fighting against negative influences of city life. Elvis is caught up in the aftermath of transculturality made worse by a non-existent relationship with his alcoholic father. His growth process is that of “a man in the process of becoming” (Bakhtin 19). Elvis seems to have found himself or his identity. He is ready

to embark on his journey towards artistic fulfilment as a dancer. The novel ends with the reader's speculation about the outcome of the hero's journey.

The traditional *Bildungsroman* traces the individual's development from childhood to adulthood, a period within which the protagonist is expected to conform to societal standards and become a responsible member of society. This is not the case with *Graceland*. Elvis's development is stuck at the age of sixteen, about to get to adulthood, but he never comes of age physically. *Graceland*, like many third-generation Nigerian novels, argues that the Nigerian *Bildung* is a continuous process of becoming. The novel ends when Elvis decides to embark on another journey abroad. As previously mentioned, Elvis left his childhood at the age of six. At the age of fourteen, he feels grown up, struggling to feed himself and his jobless father. We can conclude that Elvis's psychological journey is complete, and he seems to have reached maturity after an honest self-appraisal during adolescence. Thus, *Graceland* follows the male *Bildungsroman* pattern in its depiction of the young hero who journeys to the city. However, unlike the typical hero, Elvis's journey lacks completion. Elvis begins another journey to America when he leaves Nigeria to pursue his dream of becoming a dancer. He never emerges from this as a complete hero who has battled his dragon and succeeded.

### **Mentorship**

*Graceland* creates two characters who act as mentors and informal educators to Elvis in their own special ways. Redemption and the king of Beggars facilitates Elvis's *Bildung* in Lagos. Elvis first encounters Redemption in school when he seeks his assistance to lead a stubborn goat to the headmaster's office. Less emphasis is placed on Elvis's formal education. The narrative follows the typical male *Bildungsroman* tradition

in that, emphasis is placed on Elvis's informal education at the expense of formal education. Redemption is hardly ever in school, but twice a month he offers bribe to his headmaster and teachers who happily promote him to the next class. Redemption is instrumental to Elvis's drop out of school by offering him opportunity to make quick money. He is determined to be a millionaire before the age of thirty. He tells Elvis, "To be a millionaire you must think like a millionaire" (*GL* 54). Rita Nnodim observes that "Redemption walks the dangerous road of employing clandestine, half – legal tactics in order to carve out a habitable space of survival" (324). Redemption is involved in any means of survival which means that he must be a "Hustler" and a "survivor" (*GL* 308).

When Elvis has serious issues with his father, he turns to Redemption: "I need advice" (*GL* 53). Redemption introduces Elvis to various odd deals and encourages him to forget his father: "I said we got to think beyond our guns. See, you spend your whole life fighting with your father and no time for making your own life" (*GL* 54). Elvis is regularly plagued by his conscience. Sometimes, he questions Redemption's lifestyle but it is very clear that he needs Redemption to survive the harsh economic situation and poverty in Lagos. Ceaser Augustus Anyanwu, popularly called the King of Beggars, on the other hand, proves to be a positive mentor to Elvis. He represents the true father figure. He knows what Elvis is up to and appears whenever he is needed. The king of Beggars warns Elvis of Redemption's negative influence. He tells Elvis that he needs "an alternative to de world dat Redemption is showing you" (*GL* 131). The king knows that survival in Lagos is difficult but honest living is possible. He exposes Elvis to other possibilities of making honest riches. He takes Elvis to a cinema in order to show him another side of the life in Lagos. Elvis begins to see another world but questions the

king's right to educate him. The King replies, "Den consider this a new type of education.... This is better and different" (*GL 132*).

Elvis's inability to comprehend this new education makes him return to Redemption with questions. Redemption warns him, "De King is not your father, he cannot be, will not be. One day you will become a man and stop dis small-boy behaviour" (*GL 140*). Redemption sees Elvis's indecisiveness as an inhibition to his growth to manhood. He blames himself for "involving a boy in a man's job" (*GL 107*). He asks Elvis to make a personal choice: "you must choose" (*GL 140*). These words had earlier been used by the King when he tells Elvis that: "Only you can choose" (*GL 196*). The confused Elvis retorts; "tell me what to believe" (*GL 140*). Elvis is convinced that the King has influenced him positively. When he meets Redemption again, he tells him, "I know you are trying to help me but the King is trying to save me" (*GL 196*). Elvis joins the King's theatre troupe from where he realises that "it is only a small group of people who are spoiling the country. Most people just want to work hard, earn a living and find some entertainment. Yet it seems that no matter how they try, they remain poor" (*GL280*).

Elvis is gradually coming to the realisation that it is possible to make an honest living in Lagos. The King comments: "De boy is becoming a man" (*GL 280*). Elvis begins to reject Redemption's offer of illegal jobs. When Redemption informs him of another deal, he asks, "I want to know what I am delivering" (*GL138*). On another occasion, he tells Redemption, "I am not swallowing any cocaine" (*GL 138*). Redemption tries to make Elvis see that the King is no better than him when he asks him questions about the King: "What do you know about your saviour? Who is he? Where does he

come from? Why is he trying to save you?" (GL 139). Through the King, Elvis discovers another world that directly contrasts with that offered by Redemption, one that\* reminds him of his mother and grandmother. However, after the death of the King, Elvis returns to Redemption. Redemption, this time, concludes that the world of crime is too difficult for Elvis. He assists him to leave the harsh environment of Lagos. Elvis develops psychologically under the tutelage of the King of Beggars and Redemption. In this respect, *Graceland* follows the requirement of mentors.

### **Summary**

*Graceland* follows the protagonist from childhood through adolescence, while *Waiting for an Angel* does not treat Lomba's development from childhood. Both narratives exemplify varieties in contemporary male *Bildungsromane*, which reflect the socio-political concerns of neo-colonial Nigeria. The seemingly endless challenges faced by the protagonists inhibit their *Bildung* and make it impossible for them to come to an end point in their respective journeys. Elvis must depart from the Nigerian environment to Europe in order to complete his *Bildung*. The reader hope that upon Lomba's release from prison, he will continue with the profession of journalism. Both Lomba and Elvis experience growth in different ways. Comparing *Graceland* and *Waiting for an Angel* in terms of character development, the former portrays the society and adults, especially males, as destructive forces, and celebrates childhood while the latter presents an older hero who matures from ignorance to awareness. Both of them experience self-discovery and change, as determining factors of a successful *Bildungsroman*.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### NARRATIVES OF FEMALE DEVELOPMENT: *YELLOW-YELLOW* AND *EVERYTHING GOOD WILL COME*, AS FEMALE *BILDUNGSROMANE*

The Female *Bildungsroman* tradition challenges and renegotiates the traditional model by charting the development of the female through role reversal and inversion of the traditional *Bildungsroman* plot structure. Annis Pratt observes that female development is about “Growing Down”, since the female trajectory does not just end in self-discovery, but integration into societal requirement on gender. A heroine who refuses to conform to gender norm is punished with death by the end of the novel. However, change in social and cultural situation made it possible for women to leave home and engage in exploration like men. Since the heroine must explore gender tensions in a male dominated culture, the texts cannot be appraised outside their feminist context. Susan Fraiman states of the female novel of self-discovery: “it is not a single path to a clear destination but on endless negotiation of crossroads” (x). *EverythingGoodWillCome* and *Yellow-Yellow* can be considered revolutionary in that they portray female protagonists who have similar opportunity to explore like their male counterparts. The novels are multifarious awakenings of the protagonists as they negotiate their physical, moral and psychological growth through constant struggle to combat cultural, ecological and patriarchal forces that connive to inhibit their development.



Female entrance into Nigerian literary landscape began as counter-works. Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Zaynab Alkali and others, through their novels, challenge and reverse the negative portrayal of women as inferior, faceless, voiceless, destructive sex objects; only useful to the man as home makers and male child producing machines. They retrieve women from the posterior position they are placed by men, and equip them with roles that are not less heroic than those of their male counterparts.

Although feminism as a movement began in Europe and America, it has a profound and remarkable effect on women's lives all over the world. Female critics and scholars have also developed various theories and definitions of womanhood. In Africa, and Nigeria in particular, theories of feminism have included: African Feminism, Femalism, Womanism, Motherism, Snail- Sense Feminism, Stiwanism, Gynism, and Nego – Feminism. Helen Chukwuma, a female critic, asserts that “all the brands of African feminisms are accommodationist... men remain a vital part of women's lives” (“Feminism” xvi). Chris Weedon provides a broad defining criterion of feminism. He defines feminism as “a politics directed at changing power relations between men and women in the society” (87). This implies that feminism, in all its brands, seeks to liberate women from all sorts of exploitation and oppression that are supposedly defined by tradition, culture and religion. Catherine Acholonu blames gender imbalance in Africa as a whole on the advent of colonialism. She points out that “Gender inequality is a weapon of divide and rule introduced by Europeans to disorganise African social life. The pre-colonial African woman was the backbone of all traditional African societies. To conquer Africa, the colonizers had to first dispose of the woman from the sector where she holds sway as the counterpart of the man” (65).

Relatedly, AfisiOseni Taiwo comments on the role of pre-colonial African women:

Women have played leadership roles in the development of various African societies, from pre-colonial days till now. Even though the patriarchal systems in Africa cannot be denied, the African woman possesses power that binds the society together ... The position of women was complementary to that of the men. There was non-existence of gender inequality. Each role, regardless of who performed it, is equally important because it contributed to the fundamental goal of the community (229).

The history of feminist activism in Nigeria has been traced to the Aba women's riot of 1929, the Egba women's march that forced the Alake of Egbaland into exile in 1949 and the activities of the National Council of Women's Societies as well as the International Decade for Women instituted by the United Nations, between 1975 and 1985 ("Face" 105). Nigerian female novelists of the first and second generations rejected all cultural, traditional and religious practices that subjugate women. Themes such as child marriage, wife abandonment, polygamy, rape, marital infidelity, commercial side of the bride price, importance of the male child and insignificant attachment to female children, childlessness, female autonomy through education and economic independence have copiously been explored by Nigerian female writers. Helen Chukwuma points out that "These issues will remain part of African female literature until a solution is found. Women will continue to bear the yoke and female writers will continue to write about them" (Face" 108).

Third generation Nigerian female novelists never cease to explore themes similar to those of their literary mothers and grandmothers. The image of 21st century Nigerian woman is no more docile, but assertive. They are not afraid or ashamed to wear the feminist label. IniobongUko puts it thus: “They are largely concerned with the assertion of self, reaffirmation of female pride, authentication of African womanhood as well as a search for an independent identity” (“The Concept” 67). Third generation female novelists have consciously moved from non-militant, apologetic themes that accommodate the man to a search for selfhood and equality of both sexes. This, according to Susan Arndt, is purely a radical feminist principle (“Perspectives” 54). Most of the novels trace the female developmental trajectory from ignorance to awareness. Rita Felski argues that this style correlates with two movements within feminist scholarship. The first is the novel of self-discovery and emancipation, depicted as a process of moving outward into the public realm of social engagement and activity however problematic and fraught with difficulties this may be. The second form is that of awakening, which is a more radical form of feminism (*Beyond* 127).

Susan Arndt classifies the history of African female writers into three phases- reformist phase, transformative phase, and radical feminist phase. She locates third generation female novels within the radical feminist phase and argues that radical feminist novelists hold that men (a social group) are responsible for all kinds of oppression and domination against women. Males are “by nature” or because of their socialization hopelessly sexist and deeply immoral (“Perspectives” 34). Radical feminism is believed to be man-hating in orientation as it argues for radical ways of ending female subjugation (Okafor 106). This implies that third generation female novelists adopt

radical means of female emancipation and self-realisation. They modify previous images of the woman and present the new, educated, career-oriented woman who may or may not fulfil her role as a wife, mother or daughter, but refuses to be confined to a life of domesticity. OgagaOkuyade asserts that most third-generation novels are representatives of the Nigerian Female *Bildungsroman* model. The existential bearings, pierced together with the gradual and progressive metamorphosis of characters from a state of ignorance to cognition confirm it (“Trying” 6). Atta’s and Agary’s female protagonists are strong feminist characters whose trajectories reflect that of the 21st century Nigerian woman whose response to societal expectations differs from the previous generations.

***Everything Good Will Come(EG): The Feminist Novel***

*Everything* is set in a patriarchal society where the interests of the man come before that of the woman. The narrative begins from the family circle, the microcosm of the society, an area which allows female novelists to explore the life of a woman and her reactions to events around her. Atta portrays a young girl’s physical and psychological development as she seeks to escape the oppressive societal restrictions that tend to engulf her. The suffocating atmosphere of her home is a physical symbol of this restriction. *Everything* is the continuous awakening to limitations by the protagonist, Enitan Taiwo, alongside her best friend, Sheri Bakare. Through the two female characters, Atta portrays western and African feminism. The narrative is set in Lagos between 1971 through the 1990s, where the urban educated women face similar challenges of patriarchal domination as those in the rural areas. *Everything* is structurally divided into four segments, 1971, 1975, 1985 and 1995. Each corresponds to a particular phase in Enitan’s passage to self-discovery and awareness. The novel follows the linear progression of

tracking the protagonist's life, and told in the first-person voice, like the classical *Bildungsroman*. The story begins with young, naïve Enitan and ends with a different, more mature, determined heroine. The first part recounts Enitan's childhood years as an only child in a middle-class monogamous family. Her parents are constantly at war with each other, and her mother's strict rules seem to restrict her childhood. As the domestic crises in her home worsen, she begins to seek friendship outside her familiar space and defies her mother whom she perceives to be her enemy. Through interaction with Sheri, Enitan is awakened to gender roles, which she must traverse in order to liberate herself from patriarchal oppression. Sheri is the first child of Engineer Bakare's polygamous household. She is the same age as Enitan, but is as an independent, outspoken and experienced child. She has been groomed under the tutelage of Alhaja, her grandmother and her step mothers. In contrast, Enitan is nurtured by her father who claims to be for the liberation of all women (EG25).

Enitan's father is more tolerant and liberal. He tries to reverse the societal norm by uprooting her from the domestic site where her mother wants her to be. He tells Enitan: "I see your mother is making you understudy her again ... Girls don't do this anymore" (EG 25). Sunny Taiwo wants his daughter to be an amazon. However, Sheri understands women are not meant for roles that will endanger their matrimonial responsibilities. She creates the awareness in Enitan that gender inequality exists in society: The conversation between the girls in choosing a career shows that young Enitan has developed a revolutionary spirit from her father's tutoring:

"I want to be something like .... Like president".

“Eh? Women are not presidents”.

“Why not?”

“Our men won’t stand for it. Who will cook for your husband?”

“He will cook for himself.”

“What if he refuses?”

“I’ll drive him away.”

“You can’t”, she said.

“Yes, I can, who wants to marry him anyway?”

“What if they kill you in a coup?”

“I’ll kill them back.”

“What kind of dream is that?”

“Mine,” she said (35).

Sheri exposes Enitan to the taboo topic of sexuality and gives her satisfactory answers to questions related to sex. Enitan sees Sheri as her childhood role model, and begins to imitate her by undoing her plaits and using a red marker to paint her lips and nails as Sheri does (*EG* 20). Sheri seems to follow the traditional *Bildungsroman* than Enitan. Sheri begins her journey as a rebellious character, experiences humiliating sexual encounters and eventually reconciles with her society by accepting societal rule on gender issues.

Enitan's college years take her to another social circle different from her home environment. She spends her adolescent years in a boarding school housing over five hundred other girls; sharing a dormitory with twenty girls from different backgrounds and geo-political zones of her country. She describes her school as a balm in comparison to her prison-like home (*EG* 47). Enitan comes in contact with girls from different cultures, traditional and religious backgrounds. It is also during this period that she develops physical attraction and fantasy for heterosexual relationship. Her crush for the handsome boy, Damola Ajayi, disappears when he joins others to gang rape Sheri. Enitan describes Sheri's rape as "a silent moment, a peaceful moment" (*EG*67). The silence associated with the rape of Sheri is interrupted by the news of her pregnancy and subsequent self-abortion.

Enitan is psychologically raped as she is to live with the trauma of Sheri's rape for a long time. Rape is one of the most dehumanising experiences that degrade the woman. It is a universally oppressive practice of masculine brutality and domination that defies solution. Enitan's position that bad girls get raped changes when she learns from Robin in London that "nothing a woman does justifies rape" (*EG* 78). Enitan's formal and informal education progresses as she is sent to England to continue her studies away from her relationship with Sheri. At the background is news from Nigeria about Sheri and political assassinations, coups, political tussles. She states:

We had two military governments since the summer of 1975. The first ended with assassination of our head of state; the second, in a transition to civilian rule. Still the news from home has not improved...I heard about Sheri again. She won the Miss Nigeria

pageant after taking her university title and would be representing the country in England(79).

The now mature Enitan engages in sexual rendezvous with different men, without the intention of marriage. Her first boyfriend, a first-year pharmacy student at London University, takes away her virginity and abandons her when he thought that she is too frigid. "Frigidity is a form of mental illness," he says (*EG* 77). Another young man whom she prefers to call "Stringfellow," a Nigerian student in England, cheats on her with other girls and lies to her out of respect (*EG* 80). Enitan's parents' separation and divorce also mark another phase in her journey of becoming. Arinola Taiwo is completely dependent on her husband. She has no money of her own, having been restricted to the domestic sphere throughout the period of her marriage to Sunny. She dies from neglect and lack of money to purchase her drugs. Atta uses the example of Arin to explore the theme of female marginalisation and laws that ignore the rights of women. Sunny, a human rights lawyer and an advocate of women's liberation, ignores and abandons his wife. He refuses to sign over the property in her name. Enitan states: "my father explained that my mother would take his duplex in another suburb of Lagos, and she would live in one unit and collect rent from the next" (*EG* 79). However, he stubbornly retains ownership of the property and continues to exercise control over his divorced wife. He punishes her for badmouthing him and threatening to get him debarred. Similarly, Sheri's uncle takes over her father's properties after his death, abandoning the widows and their children. Atta here stresses the importance of female economic and financial independence as a weapon against male domination.



Upon Enitan's return to Nigeria, she becomes Sheri's instructor and engages in another relationship with Mike Obi, a fellow corper. Although he proves to be like other men she dated, he assists her to overcome the trauma of Sheri's rape. Enitan reunites with her childhood friend, Sheri, who is now a mistress to wealthy Brigadier Hassan. Enitan later marries Niyi Franco. Niyi, like her father, encourages her to be independent: "You have to be tougher, you can't let people push you around" (EG 185). Although Niyi is aware that Enitan is not feminised before marrying her, he wants her to be a kitchen martyr. She refuses to submit to his demands that she remains docile as a wife and a mother, to the extent that Niyi's family becomes aware of Enitan's lack of culinary skills. She continues to question patriarchal attitudes and societal expectations of women by directing her husband to the kitchen. She asks him: "Why can't you go to the kitchen? What will happen if you go? Will a snake bite your leg?" (EG 191). Niyi uses silence as a weapon when his masculine authority is challenged. He would ignore his wife for days because he does not want to be labelled "a woman wrapper" (EG 183).

Following the arrest of her father, Enitan discovers her father's hypocrisy; that a man as educated and cultured as her father could be involved in marital infidelity and female oppression. She attends a reading of political activists hosted by Grace Ameh, in the hope of securing her father's release. Ameh writes for the *Oracle* Newspaper and works as a political activist. She mentors Enitan into the world of human rights activism. Despite her pregnancy, she is arrested and imprisoned alongside Mrs Ameh. Enitan's prison experience is short but remarkable. She is exposed to the plight of women at large as she listens to gory tales of male exploitation from the female prisoners. Like Lomba in *Waiting*, Enitan abhors the deplorable state of Nigerian prisons, where prisoners are

detained without trial. As she begins to create identity for herself outside marriage and motherhood, her relationship with her husband begins to wane. When Niyi begs her to abandon activism for the sake of her family, she asks him: “how can I decide what to do about my father from the kitchen?” (EG245). Apart from moving out of the kitchen, Enitan needs to break marital ties, she asks, “how can I decide anything with a mini Idi Amin sitting right there in my house?” (EG245). Atta identifies the kitchen and men as forces that frustrate and discourage female autonomy. Enitan’s frequent visits to Grace Ameh for advice empower her to abandon her restrictive husband, fight for her father’s release and that of other political detainees.

Polygamy is an old traditional practice that downgrades the woman and reduces her to the status of a second-class citizen in her home. Nigerian female novelists negate the picture of women who calmly share their husbands as prescribed by African male novelists. However, Atta seems to condone the practice in her portrayal of Sheri’s polygamous family as a peaceful abode, in comparison to Enitan’s monogamous home where domestic crises abound. Although Atta relates a few incidents that reflect the misery, deprivation and economic hardship for women in polygamous household, she does not outrightly condemn the practice. Enitan states that:

My parents’ mothers were both in polygamous marriages. My mother’s mother was a trader. She saved money for her children’s education under her mattress. One day my grandfather took the money she’d been saving and used it to pay the dowry of a second wife. My grandmother died heartbroken for her money ... My father’s mother was a junior wife. The

two senior wives would deny my father food, hoping that if he were skinny enough, he would amount to nothing. (*EG* 154)

Closely related to the problem of polygamy is the issue of childlessness and the importance attached to male children. Although Enitan continuously questions patriarchy, she desires the joy of motherhood. When she is unable to get pregnant after marriage, her father suggests that she travels abroad for fertility treatment. Enitan also reflects on the fate of Sheri and the importance of fulfilling the role of motherhood. Sheri is stuck with Hassan because she has destroyed her womb. She states: “Better to be ugly, to be crippled, to be a thief even, than to be barren ... A woman had to have a child” (*EG* 106). The narrative again explores preference for male children. Arin loses her husband because of his preference for male children. Enitan’s father has a son and a wife in another part of Lagos, of which his friends and staff are fully aware. Enitan revolts against her father and cuts ties with him. She begins to see things from her mother’s perspective. On reflection, she comes to realise that her mother is not religious after all: “Had she turned to wine or beer, people would have called her a drunkard. Had she sought other men; they would call her a slut. But to turn to God? Who would quarrel with her? ‘Leave her alone,’ they would say ‘She is religious’” (*EG*183).

Atta condemns women like Mama Enitan and Mama Franco, who are beautiful, educated and career-oriented. They abandon their lucrative careers for marriage. For Mama Niyi, “Her husband loves her so much; he will not eat stew prepared by anyone but her” (187). For forty-five years, she cooked stew and fried meat until her hands were as dry and shriveled as the meat she fried (*EG* 187). Mama Enitan lacks the strength to question her husband’s authority. She sacrifices everything for her marriage. Arin

advises her daughter: “Never make sacrifices for a man. By the time you say ‘look what I’ve done for you,’ it’s too late. They never remember” (*EG* 177). Enitan’s father gives her the best education abroad while exploiting her success for personal gain. She works in his law firm, as a result, she is completely dependent on him. She challenges her father’s authority and wants him to face reality when she asks: “Can you change the culture for me, she continues; show me one case ... just one, of a woman having two husbands, fifty years old women marrying a twelve years-old boy” (*EG* 144). Atta observes here that culture is dynamic and should adapt to changes, since it is the primary oppressor of the African woman.

Enitan experiences the reality of asymmetric gender relations in her society. She learns from those women who stick to societal prescribed norms, and are destroyed in the process. Accordingly, she states: “I had always believed my mother chose to depend on father. The evidence was there in her dusty certificate. Now I felt no different from her, driving a car he bought. My father would give a car, but would not pay me enough to buy myself one...the power has always been in my father’s hand” (*EG* 152). She becomes what some would regard as rebellious. She moves outside the confines of marriage and bonds with liberated women like Grace Ameh who instructs her: “use your voice to bring about the change, you’ll have to speak up” (*EG*260).

Enitan and Sheri are highly educated women who are intellectually equipped to question oppressive patriarchal structures. Enitan, like Kainene in Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun*, runs her father’s business with competence in his absence. Her duties involve attendance in court, interacting with male colleagues and paying wages to workers. Sheri is completely dependent on the brigadier. When Hassan tries to beat her,

she retaliates immediately: “Nobody hit me. You hit me and I will hit you back. God no go vex,” 174). Enitan and Sheri form a bond of sisterhood in order to resist patriarchy, display their feminist power and emancipate themselves. Enitan discovers her feminist voice and takes up the bold step of liberating herself through female activism. By the end of the narrative, both women have metamorphosed through various awakenings to the stage of completely independent, outspoken, assertive women, whose lives are not governed by domineering spouses. Enitan begins to educate other women on human rights. She wonders why a woman is subordinate to a man whose buttocks she has seen and touched (EG191). Enitan concludes that patriarchal socialisation destroys the woman. She takes her daughter along with her, in order to liberate her from what her mother lacks: the will power to do. She states:

I was lucky to have survived what I believed I wouldn't, the smell of my mother's death. I couldn't remain as I was before, otherwise my memory of her would have been in vain, and my survival would certainly be pointless. Anyone who experienced such trauma would understand. The aftermath could be a reincarnation or death. One life was gone and I could either mourn it or begin the next ... This is the option I choose (337).

Solomon Edebor reads *Everything* as “a catalogue of atrocities often perpetrated by men against the female folks” (“Image” 43). Sunny Taiwo cheats on his wife and neglects her. He refuses to obey court orders. Arin describes him as “a man who can't keep a family, now he wants to save his country” (EG 220). Niyi Franco wants Enitan to be liberated, but also believes in absolute submission of women to men (EG 250). The Brigadier proves to be like others in the text. He abandons his wives for young girls “as

young as his daughters” (EG 103). Atta’s portrayal of men is not different from her predecessors, only that these groups of men are, well read, advocates of justice, pretenders and double-faced.

Attah also explores the theme of women empowerment. The narrative catalogues women who are committed to redirection of the black woman’s course, such as Kudirat Abiola, Ama Ata Aidoo, Alice Walker, Buchi Emecheta, Jamaica Kincaid, Bessie Head, Nadine Gordimer and Toni Morrison (EG 261). Nadaswaran Shalini confirms that these women have “redressed the misconception of women allotted roles as wives, mothers, to build an individual identity for themselves” (EG 22). Atta advocates female bond through activism and collective education. She admonishes: “women, leave the prison of the kitchen and fight for your right” (EG225). This is what Chieme in Akachi Adimora Ezeigbo’s *The Last of the Strong Ones* does. Though childless, she excels in her chosen profession of chanting.

Enitan is dissatisfied with a society where “human rights were never an issue till the rights of men were threatened; where there is no constitution for kindness at home” (EG 200). “Why a woman will need her husband’s consent to get a new passport. why a female judge can’t legally post bail; a man would be entitled to discipline his wife with a slap or two, so long as he doesn’t cause grievous bodily harm” (EG 144). She wonders “How could I defer to a man whose naked buttocks I’d seen? touched? Obey him without choking my humility” (EG184). Atta’s feminist voice states clearly: “I wanted to tell everyone, I! Am! Not! Satisfied with these options...I would not let go until I was heard” (EG197); Enitan’s marriage to Niyi is doomed to fail from the start because she is not a housebroken woman, her awareness of female subjugation and a desire to rise against

oppressive cultural practices is expressed thus: “On the day of my traditional engagement, I knelt before him according to the rites. He presented the dowry to my family, of a hand-woven cloth and gold jewelry, I did not want a dowry and I did not want to kneel” (EG 184). When Niyi begins to make demands that suppress Enitan’s growth and independence, she opts out to pursue her vision as an advocate of justice and a human rights activist. In the end, Enitan dances on the street, a dance of freedom. She declares, “Nothing could take my joy from me” (EG326).

The women, like others in their environment, have been raised to believe that their greatest days would be those of the birth of their children, marriage and graduation. Since Sheri cannot have the joy of motherhood in her barren state, she opts to be a mistress to the possessive General. Enitan encourages Sheri to fight for her right and move away from the limited space into the wider world. Sheri moves out of the Brigadier’s life, not before giving him the beating of his life. The narrator states: “The civil war hadn’t prepared him for her. She beat him for every person who had crossed her path in life ... with a pot of okra” (EG 174). Education changes nothing in the men who expect absolute submission from their wives; they oppress and batter in private and publicly advocate liberation for them. It is after she abandons the General that Sheri realises her worth and asserts her individuality. Enitan encourages her to start a catering business. With assistance from her step mothers, Sheri thrives. Sheri buys a car, rents an apartment and spends her leisure on charitable causes involving children. *Everything* follows the pattern of other third generation narratives in its lack of a complete resolution.

### ***Everything Good Will Come: The Female Bildungsroman***

*Everything* traces the various awakenings of the heroine which coincide with those of her nation. The narrative is a *Bildungsroman* in its thematic preoccupation as it follows the protagonist through the arduous task of growing up in a postcolonial, patriarchal environment. Enitan's self-development does not end in early adulthood, but continues well into middle age. *Everything* shares common themes such as childhood, education, relationship with family and friends, love, marriage, the role of mentors and the journey of self-discovery with other novels of the form.

#### **Childhood**

Atta follows the theme of childhood as a characteristic of the *Bildungsroman* by presenting Enitan's character formation from childhood. Enitan's childhood years are dull, chaotic and unexciting. She is raised in a monogamous household that is shattered by domestic feud; she narrates: "My parents had occupied everywhere else with their falling out; their trespasses unforgivable. Walls could not save me from their shouting. A pillow, if I stuffed my head under it, could not save me. My hands could not, if I clamped them over my ears and stuffed my head under a pillow" (*EG 2*). Enitan is emotionally distressed because her parents are not part of her life. Mama Enitan, who is supposed to be her daughter's first agent of socialisation abandons her for religion. Enitan's psychological problems manifest from faulty parental relationship.

From the beginning of the narrative, the reader encounters Enitan as a sensitive, lonely, submissive, timid, eleven-year-old. Although, she is required to obey all



instructions without questioning, she has developed a mind of her own, which is temporarily silenced by her mother's strict rules. She relates her childhood agony thus:

From the beginning I believed whatever I was told. Downright lies even, about how best to behave, although I had my own inclinations. At an age when other Nigerian girls were masters in ten-ten, the game in which we stamped our feet in rhythm and tried to outwit partners with sudden knee jerks, my favorite moments were spent sitting on a jetty pretending to fish (11).

Enitan's home, very typical of children from the Aristocratic class, like that of Kambili in Chimamada Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, is alienated socially, culturally and psychologically from events around them. According to Karen Horney, the major cause of becoming neurotic is how children grow up and are treated by their parents. (*Neurosis* 18). Enitan is traumatised by her parents' constant quarrels, which restrict her psychological development. She is nurtured by her father's idea of women liberation. Sunday Bandele Taiwo, a Cambridge graduate and a successful lawyer, claims to be for the liberation of women, except his wife (*EG* 25). Enitan's mother, Arinola Victoria Taiwo, also referred to as Mama Enitan, a once beautiful, slim, career-oriented woman, abandons her lucrative career for marriage. She becomes a religious fanatic, abandoning her daughter for a white garment church she joins to cure her son from his sickle cell ailment. He dies, three years old (*EG* 14).

Enitan spends most of her time at home with the servant, Bisi, and the gardener, Baba. She quietly accepts her limitations before she meets and befriends Sherifat Bakare.

As an inexperienced child waiting to be cultivated, Sheri helps her to utilise her time properly. Friendship between the girls proved to be a temporary escape from the prison-like atmosphere in Enitan's home. Sheri and Enitan are of the same age, but from different backgrounds and experience growth differently. Sheri is outspoken, acts independently and understands the role of women in African society. Mama Enitan refers to such children as "Omoita" (*EG*17), and tries to discourage the friendship. When Sheri first visits Enitan in her mother's absence, she comments, "This house is like a graveyard" (*Everything* 58). Ayo Kehinde and Joy Mpibom point out that: "Sheri sets the pace for Enitan's social and moral education; it also contributes to the advancement and swift unraveling of the action embedded in the plot" ("Discovery"3). Friendship between the girls begins in childhood and continues well into adult years, till the end of the narrative.

Sheri is not confined to Islamic standards. She is not a dedicated Muslim. This is evident from her outward appearance. She wears afro hairstyle, put on red lipstick and dresses as she likes. Enitan tries to imitate her by undoing her plaits and painting her lips and nails with a red marker (*EG* 22). Following Enitan's acknowledgement of her limitations as a child, Sheri creates in her the awareness of the role of women and gives her the kind of sex education her mother shields from her. She encourages Enitan to look at her vulva, which she describes as "a big, fat slug" (*EG* 37). At puberty, Enitan lacks proper maternal care which Sheri happily provides.

Enitan is very intelligent, knowledgeable and inquisitive. By the age of seven, she has a vast knowledge of the politics of her country, and that independence did not liberate Nigeria. Like Kambili, whose home looks like a prison and graveyard, Enitan learns by

eavesdropping on her parents as they exchange harsh words or listen as her father and his friends, Uncle Alex and Uncle Fatai (who have nicknamed themselves the three musketeers in the heart of darkness (*EG* 13), engage in heated arguments about occurrences around them. She states:

Through the years, from their arguments about federalists, secessionists and bloody British, I'd amassed as much knowledge about the events in my country as any seven-year-old would. I know that our first Prime Minister was killed by a Major General, that the Major General was soon killed and that we had another Major General heading our country. For a while, the palaver had stopped, and now it seemed the Biafrans were trying to split our country to two (13).

Enitan also listens to radio bulletins on the war and how Nigerian troops are faring against the Biafrans. From Akani, the driver, she hears fascinating tales about the war front, how Biafran soldiers stepped on land mines that blew away their legs like crushed tomatoes; and how Biafran children ate lizard flesh to stay alive (*EG* 14). As a child, Enitan is not ignorant of the tribal, ethnic, military and political tensions in her country. *Everything* follows the typical *Bildungsroman* in its depiction of a child that is intelligent. Atta's protagonist is a female whose artistic talent is not expressed in childhood but she uses her intelligence to learn about happenings in her immediate environment. Enitan's childhood years are spent in the city of Lagos which is not rural. However, the environment looks natural. Enitan lives by the Lagoon facing Ikoyi Park where she watches fishermen and their canoes. She also pretends to fish as she watches the current that sometimes drags a person away (*EG* 11). Atta follows her heroine from

childhood in accordance with Buckley's requirement that the protagonist's journey begins from childhood.

### **Education**

Another aspect of Enitan's growth as required of the *Bildungsroman* is gaining education. *Everything* does not follow the pattern of the typical female *Bildungsroman* in that formal education is given more attention in the novel. The protagonist undergoes institutionalised education which, sometimes, takes her to boarding school. Enitan leaves home to continue her education in a boarding school where she experiences, first-hand, the diversities that exist in her country. Like the typical *Bildungsroman*, she takes her first step towards real life as the boarding house marks another phase of her awakening. Her father instills in her with the spirit of rebellion. He instructs Enitan to "join the debating society, not the Girls Guide: Girls' Guides are nothing but kitchen martyrs in the making ... Anyone who bullies you, beat them up" (EG 44). Enitan observes that the environment of the school is less conducive, but a balm away from the loneliness and constant squabbles at home. She acquires more knowledge about her country in and outside her environment. She observes that the crisis in her home is not peculiar. According to her,

I met Muslim girls ... who rose early to salute Mecca. I met Catholic girls... there were Anglican, Methodist girls. One girl, Sangita, was a Hindu. I met girls born with sickle cell anemia like my brother... I learned about women in my country, from Zaria, Katsina, Kaduna who decorated their skin with henna dye and lived in *purdah*. Women who are

circumcised ... I learned that my mother's behaviour wasn't typical. I also learned that every other girl had an odd family story to tell ... I joined my classmates studying through the night and spreading bitter coffee granules on my tongue ... outside our school, oil leaked from the drilling fields of the Niger Delta into people's Swiss bank accounts. There was bribery and corruption. (48-50).

As Enitan associates with girls in the boarding school, her awareness of women from different parts of her country and their cultural diversity broadens. She longs to imitate and join the girls in a beauty competition. She loathes her skinny body frame that gives her the nickname "panla," which means a very thin fellow. Enitan notices remarkable physical differences between her and other girls. Some of such differences are enumerated thus:

I was captain of our junior debating society, though I longed to be one of those girls chosen for our annual beauty pageants instead. But my arms were like twisted vines and my forehead like sandpaper. Those cranky nodules behind my nipples didn't amount to breasts and my calf muscles had refused to develop. The girls in my class called me *panla*, after a dry, stinky fish imported from Norway ... I wanted to be fatter, fatter, with a pretty face, and I wanted boys to like me (50).

It is also during her boarding school years that Enitan begins to fantasise about Damola Ajayi, a boy she met at the debate competition held in her school. Although the relationship is not established, Enitan continues to dream about Demola. She explains

that “I thought of Damola once or twice, I crossed out the common letters in my name and his to find out what we would be; friends, lovers, enemies, married. We are lovers” (EG 58). Sheri tries to organise a meeting between Enitan and Damola at Ikoyi Park. Enitan’s crush for Damola vanishes as she witnesses Damola’s involvement in the rape of Sheri. (EG67). This shameful incident temporarily fractures the friendship between the girls.

According to Buckley, the hero leaves his rural home for an independent life in the city where he acquires both formal and informal education. Enitan is not motivated to leave her Lagos home due to parental loss or inadequate formal education. Although she has a troublesome relationship with her mother, it is the fashion in the 1970’s for parents to send their children to school abroad. Atta reverses the *Bildungsroman* features by moving her protagonist from the national to international. In *Everything*, Atta locates the heroine in her university years which plays a significant role in her formation. However, the theme of formal education is not explored in detail, except that Enitan is in London to acquire formal education. *Everything* illustrates the social and inter-human relationship in Enitan’s university life which enhances her *Bildung*. Armed with a degree in law, Enitan returns to Nigeria, a more mature educated woman. She does not move to London in search of independence like her male counterparts. Atta, here, seems to place emphasis on Enitan’s informal education; this is typical of the *Bildungsroman*. However, Atta presents Enitan as a psychologically orphaned child who grows up in an urban environment. She becomes disrespectful and challenges constituted authority due to lack of proper parental control. In this respect, Atta both follows and diverges from the traditional pattern of the *Bildungsroman*. According to Abel et al, “those directly involved

in formal education...do not significantly expand their options, but learn instead to consolidate their female nurturing roles rather than to take a more active part in shaping the society” (7). Enitan is highly educated, but one wonders why she decides to remain in the home with her husband until the birth of her daughter before rebelling against the structure of society.

### **Relationship**

The theme of relationship allows the protagonist to explore her life, her interactions and relationship with other individuals who influence her in establishing her philosophy in life. In *Everything*, Enitan is alienated from her family, especially her mother, who tries to domesticate and confine her to gender roles. Her home, which ought to be the first agent of her socialisation, becomes a battle field. She asserts: “my parents’ quarrels were becoming more senseless; more frequent and louder. One wrong word from my father could bring on my mother’s rage. He was a wicked man. He had always been a wicked man” (EG 26).

Enitan’s mother is strict, harsh, unsmiling and religious, especially since the death of her only son. She concludes from her mother’s attitude that “Holy people had to be unhappy and strict, or a mixture of both” (EG 24). This conforms with Horney’s words that parents might be preoccupied with their own neurotic desires that prevent them from loving their children. Enitan lives in constant dread of her mother because mother/daughter relationship does not exist between them. She says: “My mother never had a conversation with me; she talked and I know that I was listening. I always was. The mere sound of her footsteps made me breathe faster” (EG 23). Mama Enitan attempts to

socialise her daughter into female roles that will confine her to domesticity. Enitan hates it when her mother calls on her to assist in the kitchen, accompany her to her church or listen to her elaborate sermon. Mama Enitan is like Beatrice in Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus*, Mama Ofunne in UnomaAzuah's *Sky-High Flames* and Binaebi in Kaine *YY's Yellow-Yellow*, who are physically present, but emotionally and psychologically absent from their daughter's lives. Writing on some features of third generation female novels, Nadaswaran Shalini reveals that: "absent mother is a key element in third generation female writings" ("Rethinking" 26).

Enitan hates her mother for persistent quarrels with her father. He so successfully indoctrinates her that she blindly believes in equality between the sexes. Sunny Taiwo is his daughter's idol. Enitan believes her father is infallible. NadaswaranShalini comments that "The young female character's response to father figure/patriarch in the family usually begins with undue admiration. It is the experience of some sort of violence, the recognition of unfair treatment and the search for self-agency that causes the female character to evolve" ("Rethinking" 23). After her parents' divorce, she continues to stay with her father. It is during his incarceration that she becomes aware of his flaws and that the standard he set for her to follow is false. She is shocked when she stumbles on her parents' divorce papers and discovers her mother's reasons for divorce:

A neglectful and uncaring attitude. Withheld housekeeping allowance on several occasions, did not return home and gives no reasonable answer as to his whereabouts, influenced her child to disregard her, disrespected her church family; made wicked and false allegations about her sanity; colluded with family members to alienate her, caused her much embarrassment and unhappiness. (289).



Enitan also discovers that her father engages in extra-marital affairs which is hidden from her and her mother. She severs ties with him and returns to her mother. Enitan has not only rejected patriarchy in favour of matriarchy but, denounced all oppressive structures that deny her a life of independence. Since Sunny Taiwo fails to be a good husband, he equally fails as a father. His imprisonment removes male presence and brings both women together again. It is at this point that her mother, just like Nnuego in Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, dies a lonely death.

On the other hand, Sunday Bandele Taiwo plays a dominant role in the life of his daughter. She loves, admires, and idolises him. He is a loving and caring father who works hard and showers his daughter with gifts. He ensures that Enitan lacks nothing. When Arin tries to inculcate culinary skills in Enitan, he discourages her; “you should tell her young girls don't do this anymore ... Tell her from your father and he's for the liberation of women” (EG25). Sunny tries to reverse the traditional structure where daughters learn under strict tutelage of their mothers. He wants to unfeminize his daughter and make her a hybrid just like the character of Ona in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*. Ona is an only child who is tutored by her father to be the son he never had. Sunny acts as a shield between his wife and daughter. When Arin tries to stop the friendship between Enitan and Sheri, he attacks her: “What is this? She can't make friends anymore? ... you are her mother not her juror” (EG42).

Enitan's parents are rarely at home and she is aware of the tussle between them. Sometimes, she is confused on whose instructions to follow. The extract below exemplifies the psychological effect of parental conflict on Enitan's innocent mind:

“Get up, when I’m talking to you, Enitan,” my mother said, “up, up”.

“Sit down”, my father said.

“Up,” my mother said.

“Sit,” my father said.

My mother patted her chest. “She will listen to me” (42).

Enitan looks forward to spending happy moments with Sheri, with whom she learns and acquires knowledge that fills parental void. Relationship with Sheri marks the beginning of another awakening for Enitan. Sheri is described as “chatty, rude and rebellious” (EG13). She serves as Enitan’s friend with whom she shares most of her experiences. The reason for their friendship can be attributed to the stifling atmosphere of Enitan’s home. Sheri is physically motherless while Enitan’s mother is psychologically absent. They share conversation on different subjects including the taboo of sex and sexuality. Enitan takes full advantage of her parents’ constant absence from home. She defies her mother in order to visit Sheri. She declares: “Sheri led me between parental consent and disapproval. I would learn how to bridge it with deception, wearing a face as pious as a church sister before my mother and altering steadily behind her” (43). Although the friendship is temporarily terminated, most events that would eventually change Enitan’s perception in life result from her friendship with Sheri. Upon Enitan’s return from London, she reconnects with mature Sheri. Both women bond together to fight patriarchal oppressive practices that suppress their self-realisation.

### **Love and Marriage**

Atta's *Everything* mirrors the emotional experiences of the protagonist. According to Buckley, the protagonist experiences two fundamental love affairs of which one is debasing and ends in disappointment. The second provides self-realisation and full integration into society. In *Everything*, Atta adopts the theme of love affairs. She presents Enitan as having love affairs with different men. Abel, Langland and Hirsch say that the female has less opportunity of sexual exploration as her male counterpart. Women are not free to leave home for sexual exploration in the city. They merely exchange from one domestic sphere to another (the parents' home to the matrimonial) (*The Voyage* 8). However, Esther Labovitz observes that this is not the case with a 21st century woman like Enitan who finds no sexual constraints. Her sexual awareness begins with her mother's elaborate moral sermon just before she leaves for secondary school: "sex is a filthy act, she said, and I must always wash myself afterwards. Tears filled my eyes. I had wanted to ask, what if I want to pee during sex, what if the bleeding started during morning assembly" (*EG*28). Enitan's sex education is shallow, faulty and inconclusive, creating more confusion and curiosity. This is why she says: "I will not marry... I will not have children" (*EG* 23). Sheri provides satisfactory answers to Enitan's questions about sex and convinces her to look at her reproductive organ. "I dragged my pant down, placed the mirror between my legs" (*EG* 36). When Enitan informs Sheri that Akani visits Bisi in their servant quarters, Sheri is quick to understand that "He is doing her" "sex," "Banana into tomato. Don't you know about it?" (*EG* 36). Sheri creates the awareness of societal expectation for women and sexuality in Enitan.

As Enitan transits from her familiar environment into a completely new one, she leaves the challenges of home behind. The boarding school opens up the opportunity for

teenage dating. Thoughts of heterosexual relationships begin to invade Enitan's mind. Sheri informs her that she has a boyfriend with whom she has not gone beyond kissing which she claims feels "like chewing a gum" (*EG* 59). When Sheri learns that Damola and some of his friends plan to attend a picnic at Ikoyi Park, she drags Enitan along with her because she wishes to see Damola. On arrival at the beach, the boys ignore Enitan. As Sheri begins to flirt with them, she drinks and even smokes Marijuana. The picnic climaxed in Sheri's rape.

Sheri and Enitan experience internal crises which both girls shield with silence. While Sheri is physically raped, Enitan's hatred for sex deepens. She begins to think that her mother is right after all; sex is filthy and disgusting. The rape of Sheri becomes a recurring decimal in Enitan's life, inhibiting her sexuality and denies Sheri the joy of motherhood. Enitan experiences romantic love as she moves from the local space to the international. It offers Enitan the opportunity for more awakening. Although the rape of Sheri marks the end of innocence for both girls, Sheri puts the ugly incident behind her but Enitan cannot outgrow the memory which continues to hunt her even in London.

Enitan learns from her first boyfriend that her virginity belongs to her and that she is at liberty to give to him. The second, a Nigerian, cheats on her and lies to her out of respect. Upon her return from England, Enitan meets Mike Obi, an artist, who rescues her from the trauma of Sheri's rape. Although Mike does not marry Enitan, he destroys her sexual frigidity and gives her a symbolic bath that transforms her from sexual prison to sexual bliss. Mike creates the awareness that a woman can indeed enjoy sex without feeling filthy and unclean. Enitan experiences release from her frigidity as Mike washes her after sex:

He wrapped his hands around me so tight I thought my fear might drip out. He took the bucket from me, filled it with water and brought it to the shower. He lowered me and began to wash me. I shut my eyes expecting some pain, some probing, something. The last person who washed me was Bisi, our house girl, I was nine. “Spread you lecks”, she would say, and I would spread them hating her sawing motions. But Mike washed me with the gentlest motions, like a mother washing her baby. I felt sure my fear was like any other fear; like the fear of a dog bite, or of fire, or of falling from heights, or death. I was certain I would never be ashamed again(137).

Mike proves to be a cheat like other men. The affair ends in pain and frustration. However, he destroys her phobia for sex, changes her perception about sex and prepares her for marital sexual bliss.

A major characteristic of the female *Bildungsroman* is the theme of marriage and inequality between sexes. One of the requirements for women where Enitan comes from is to submit to social pressure and get married. Enitan marries a divorcee, Niyi Franco, in order to fulfill the multiple roles of a wife, mother, and daughter-in law. Abel, et al call this “an awakening to limitations”. Her problem in marriage gets compounded because she lacks knowledge of home management. She realises that Niyi’s demands will inhibit her own process of becoming and conflict with her desire to become a self-liberated woman. She recalls that even in England, girls cook for their boyfriends. Sheri also cooks for Brigadier Hassan, but, Enitan could not fulfill her role as a home keeper. She consults Sheri, her childhood friend and mentor, for assistance. Although Sheri is

aware that Enitan is raised by her father who tries to masculinise her, she tells her that she cannot skip her traditional role as a woman: “scream and shout, if you like, bang your head against the wall, you will end up in the kitchen. Period” (EG 108).

Felski and Labovitz argue that to achieve gender parity, the heroine must emancipate herself from the inhibiting bonds of matrimony. This differs from early female *Bildungsromane* which usually ends in marriage or death. The classical *Bildungsroman* is constructed in a way that societal conventions, if strictly complied with, present the possibility of total freedom. Enitan conforms to the custom and tradition of marriage and motherhood but challenges the custom that seeks to confine her to the traditional role of the wife like her mother and Mama Franco. She abandons Niyi since she cannot accept the fact that fulfillment for the female lies only in marriage. Felski and Labovitz see marriage as a hindrance to the heroine’s growth process of actualisation. Sheri and Enitan fall out with society when they seek a life of independence. *Everything* follows the typical female *Bildungsroman* pattern in that it deals with the protagonist’s attitude towards marriage. Enitan marries Niyi to escape parental feud. On her marriage day she says: “I did not shed a tear over leaving home. I, who cried easily” (EG 184). Once married, she sees divorce as another escape route from the bonds of matrimony.

Thus, like other novels in the female *Bildungsroman*, the theme of sexuality and marriage is explored at length in *Everything Good Will Come*. Sexual exploration for the female protagonist would result in ostracism, yet, it does not occur in *Everything*. Enitan engages in varied sexual experiences before marriage. She defies sexual rules but she is not punished for it. Marriage also provides Enitan with a new type of awakening. She conforms to societal expectations of marriage and motherhood. When she realises that the

institution suppresses a woman's growth and self-discovery, she opts out. Ayo Keyinde and Joy Mpibom write that Enitan's action projects marriage as "suffocating and constricting" ("Discovery" 13). Her growth does end in marriage like the traditional hero or heroine, rather, her marriage is a catalyst that enables her to break societal barrier and assert herself. Unlike the typical heroine of the novel of self-discovery, Enitan uses her sexuality to rebel against existing societal norms and traditions. She pairs up with other liberated women and intentionally chooses to reverse the role of women as presented in narratives written by men.

### **Mentorship**

The female Bildungsroman develops an autonomous self-identity through what Okuyade calls "guidance and protection from a network of strong women" ("Weaving" 159). In this respect, Atta follows the typical pattern of other novels of the genre. Enitan's growth involves constant questioning of patriarchy in order to find her feminist voice. She rejects women like her mother and Mama Niyi (Toro Franco) who try to maintain the status quo so as to continue the chain of female subjugation. She affirms that: "My mother's generation were the professionals. We, their daughters, were expected to continue" (*EG* 190). Atta criticises women who depend on men for their sustenance. They keep their certificates in the cupboard while they spend their lives in the kitchen. For Atta, these women lack the ability to act as mentors or role models. Mama Enitan realises too late that "a woman must never sacrifice for a man" (*EG*171). Toro Franco replaces her nursing career with the kitchen where she spends her years cooking until her hands are as dry and shriveled as the meat she fries (*EG* 187). Atta's use of the kitchen as a metaphor for female oppression differs from that of Adichie and Azuah. For Beatrice in

*Purple Hibiscus* and Ofunne in *Sky-High Flames*, the kitchen is a metaphor for resistance. They fight their battles against female oppression from their kitchen.

Atta foregrounds the significance of strong female friendship and solidarity that defy religious, ethnic and personal differences in the novel. Sheri, like Amaka in *Purple Hibiscus*, is Enitan's juvenile mentor. Jonas Akung contends that "Enitan's meeting with Sheri marks her transition to an entirely new stage in life" ("Feminist" 116). The bond between the girls enhances Enitan's social and moral education. Sheri's character creates awareness on the role of women in society and how Enitan may cope. She helps Enitan find a balance in her society by giving her proper sex education and assists her to understand heterosexual relationship. Sheri represents a mother figure in Enitan's life. This is why she calls her "Aburo" (EG 60). She prepares Enitan for her first outing with Niyi. She makes sure that Enitan dresses appropriately for the occasion. According to Enitan: "Always. She asked if I'd eaten. She fixed my hair as I walked out of the door, made me iron my cloths, I told her she had an old woman's soul. She said that is why she was wiser. She pulled out a black gown with a large gold print. It was narrow and the neckline was a little wide, Senegalese style "Tell me you don't like it", she said. I wore it" (EG 171).

Sheri has learned under the supervision of Alhaja, her paternal grandmother. Alhaja is a strong feminist character like Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus*. She is self-reliant, independent and confident. Alhaja is a woman widowed in her thirties. She owns a massive fabric store and heads the market women's union. She earns enough to single-handedly educate her children overseas without assistance from any man. Men and women alike treat her with respect. The narrator states that:



Alhaja was disappointed when her son ended up with a white woman, but she raised Sheri herself so that no other wife would maltreat her... She would go to the houses of her daughters if their husbands beat them. The husbands would end up begging her. When she learned about what happened to Sheri at the picnic, she visited each of the boys' houses with a mob in tow. The mob started with the watchmen, or whoever was unfortunate enough to open the gates. They broke down doors and windows. As they went for furniture, Alhaja went straight for the boys' crotches. She wasn't letting go until their mothers, fathers, their grandparents even lay flat on the floor to beg her granddaughter. After, she visited her medicine man to finish what was left of their lineage (*EG* 163).

Enitan discovers that Sheri is her grandmother's true daughter when she relates her encounter with a boy who laughs at her at school as eight years old: "I beat him up... Then I emptied his school bag on his head and pushed him into the gutter. I will never forget his name. Wasiu Shittu" (*EG* 163). Sheri knows how to respond to the slightest provocation with "A fist fight... or Chop a person down in three glances heads, torso, and legs" (*EG* 163). As both girls grow older, they work hard to retain each other and establish their respective identities after both have experienced failed relationships in different ways. This empowers them to overcome the challenges of adulthood and struggle for self-autonomy in patriarchal establishments.

Grace Ameh leads Enitan to another form of awakening. Ameh represents the autonomous woman that has attained parity. Although she is married, her husband supports her course. Ameh works as a journalist and an activist. She writes for the *Oracle*

newspaper which she uses to fight oppression and offer information to the public on the evils of military dictatorship. Enitan visits Ameh “hoping for some impartial advice on what to do about my father” (EG 263). Ameh tells her to “use your voice to bring about the change” (EG 263). She invites Enitan to a meeting of a group of people involved in the campaign for democracy, human rights and civil liberty. This meeting breaks Enitan’s silence and empowers her to create her own voice as Ameh declares: “No one will expect you to be silent” (EG 263).

The arrest and imprisonment of both women further intensify the union between them. Enitan’s journey to the Nigerian prisons increases her resolve to break her silence. She comes in contact with women who resist different forms of patriarchal oppression. Their tales inspire Enitan to speak against all forms of oppression, including intensifying her campaign for her father’s release. Ameh creates the consciousness that gender identity is socially constructed, can be challenged and destroyed. Her prison experience is short but remarkable. She comes to the comprehension that her mother and Toro Franco are responsible for their actions. Just like NnuEgo in Emecheta’s *The Joy of Motherhood*, they stick to societal restriction and are destroyed in the process. The people in Ameh’s group are academics and activists. According to Enitan: “I was awe of the people I was listening to ... they denounce injustice as a group, at the expense of their freedom and lives” (EG 267). Enitan, like Lomba in *Waiting for an Angel*, emerges as a vocal, gender assertive activist, and a single mother. She cannot accomplish her aspiration while still performing her wifely duties, which will eventually limit her from actualising her dreams. Atta adds the theme of female activism as a vital tool against male autocratic domination, both in the home and in the public sphere. Atta’s *Everything* is groundbreaking because it

allows a politically conscious female protagonist to develop herself through assistance from other women. In fulfilling the requirements of mentorship, *Everything* follows the typical feature of the *Bildungsroman*.

### **The Female Journey of Self-Discovery**

As typical of the *Bildungsroman* protagonist, Enitan moves to an environment that is not a threat to her successful *Bildung*. As mentioned earlier, Enitan is a loner, her parents are physically and emotionally missing from her life. She reveals her daily routine as a child thus: “The early afternoons were for eat and sleep breaks; eat a heavy lunch, I sleep like a drunk. The late afternoon, after homework, I spent on our jetty... Most days are not exciting. And I was beginning to get bored of the wait when two weeks to the end of vacation, everything changed” (*EG* 16). Loneliness moves Enitan to explore her immediate environment. Walking around her father’s fenced compound with her catapult, she meets Sheri Bakare who facilitates her transition. Their friendship is to continue through adolescence to adulthood. However, both girls experience their journeys in different ways. Enitan’s friendship with Sheri leads to the consciousness of having a companion with whom she shares her childhood experiences and learns about the world around her. Sheri unravels the mystery surrounding sex which Enitan’s mother shields her from: “She stood up and retrieved a cracked mirror from a drawer, ‘Look and see’ she said, “handing me the mirror” (*EG* 36).

Learning under her father whom she loves so much totally alienates her from her mother. Later in the text, Sheri tells Enitan: “Education cannot change what’s inside a person’s veins” (*EG* 108). Enitan admits the flaws of her father’s tutorship: “growing

with my father, I rarely stepped into the kitchen” (EG178). She allows her friend to lead her to a complete awareness of her situation as a woman. Enitan follows the male *Bildung* that travels unchaperoned as part of his formal and informal education. Enitan moves from home to the boarding school in Royal College. This new space away from home removes parental restrictions and opens up opportunities for her to cultivate new habits as she interacts with people from a culture that differs from hers. She declares: “I preferred boarding school to home” (EG 47).

Formal education is a fundamental requirement of the *Bildungsroman*. Enitan acquires formal education in Lagos and moves to England to pursue a course in Law. Her journey abroad opens the way for both formal and informal education. Enitan is tested by social and moral values. Her journey follows that of the typical male hero who acquires formal education and experiences sexual initiation. Enitan’s sexual initiation is at variance with African values which require the woman to keep her virginity intact until she is married. She leaves home and explores with different men. Atta uses Enitan’s journey abroad to explore the theme of racial prejudice and her strategies of coping with them: “My school friends were surprised that I didn’t live in a hut in Africa, that I’d never seen a lion except in London zoo. Some confessed their parents didn’t like black people. Only one had decided that she didn’t either and I ignored her, the way I ignored another who said, “hey men and did all sorts of silly dances whenever she saw me” (EG77).

Enitan’s political awareness begins at an early age. As a child nurtured by his father’s values, her political view begins with her father as he encourages her to listen to heated political arguments between him and his friends. Enitan’s declaration that “I was

born on the year of my country's independence, and saw how it ravaged against itself" (*EG* 303), equates her growth with that of Nigeria since independence in 1960. Enitan's father becomes her first political mentor; he leads her to understand the diverse political factions, ethnic groups, military coups and counter coups, poverty and the civil war which ravaged Nigeria for three years. At Royal College, her awareness continues as she comes in contact with the reality of the Nigerian situation and diversity. Her growth involves questioning of dysfunctional governments and to speak out against them. String fellow, her second boyfriend overseas, introduces her to political activism when he invites her to join a vigil for democracy at the Nigerian High Commission in London. Back home, she continues to show signs of activism which some interpret as feminist rebellion: "In my country, women are praised the more they surrender their right to protest ... If a woman sneezed in my country, someone would call her a feminist" (*EG* 240).

Grace Ameh mentors Enitan to become an activist. Akung argues that Ameh and Enitan remind the reader of "female activists like Margaret Ekpo, Fumilayo Ransome Kuti, Queen Amina, among others, who were at the forefront of political activities that culminated in Nigerian independence" ("Feminist" 119). Enitan's visit to Ameh inspires in her the desire to speak out for the oppressed. She joins the group of women fighting for the rights of the oppressed. She fights for the release of her father and urges him to transfer the estate in her mother's name. She ends up as a campaigner for the rights of women and her country's freedom from corrupt rulers. She tells them: "Get out of my country" (*EG* 305).

Enitan's journey of self-discovery includes revolt against the patriarchy. Her father's efforts in this regard are altogether of no effect. Her sojourn abroad creates

awareness and autonomy. Although she conforms to societal requirements of marriage and motherhood, Shalini states that:

By challenging the male figures in their lives, Enitan and Offune did not allow themselves to be calcified through traditional dictates of patriarchal supremacy but rather create spaces of independence for themselves. Although both of them are wives and mothers, they do not create an identity for themselves based on their wifeness or motherhood. Rather, the desire to participate in the public realm beyond their cultural and social circle encourages them towards individual mobility and agency (“Rethinking” 26).

Atta’s protagonist grows from ignorance towards awareness. Her developmental stages run through childhood, formal and informal education, her love affairs as well as her journey of individual fulfillment and activism. The issue of gender asymmetry and the nation’s political crises run through the narrative. Enitan’s journeys and awakenings confirm her *Bildungsroman* label. Atta deviates from the female *Bildungsroman* pattern in her depiction of a female who undergoes personal journey outside her immediate home environment; goes through varied sexual experiences or exploration and abandons her marriage for an independent living. Taiwo points out that “modernization process in contemporary Africa has distorted the African family traditions, and conjoined to produce a new system of moral order and family issues which have changed the meaning of character of gender roles and responsibilities” (“Power” 235). He concurs that the wind of change is blowing in the direction of gender equality and equal participation of gender in all issues involving members of society. Third generation female novels capture these

trends. The theme of female sexual independence runs through Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*.

***Yellow-Yellow*(YY): Degradation of the Niger-Delta**

*Yellow-Yellow* introduces the female perspective in the narrative of the oil-rich Niger Delta region through the lens of an eponymous heroine, Zilayefa, fondly called Laye or *Yellow-Yellow*. It is a realistic depiction of environmental and social degradation, oil spillage, pollution, under development, poverty and insensitivity on the part of Western oil companies, wealthy Ijaw capitalists, as well as Nigerian leaders, who continue to plunder and militate against the much-desired growth and development of the Niger Delta Region. The narrative spans between 1995, shortly after the execution of Ken Saro-wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists, and climaxes in 1998, with the demise of the military dictator, General Sani Abacha. Critical works on *Yellow-Yellow* from Ignatius Chukwumah, Ogaga Okuyade, Etiowu Joy, Sunny Awhefeada, Simon S. D., Ngozi Chumah – Udeh, to Charles Cliff Feghabo explore the text from eco-critical perspectives and its devastating consequences on vulnerable girls and women. Women are presented in the novel as helpless victims of reckless exploitation by patriarchal forces alongside the natural resources of the Niger Delta. Meredith Armstrong Coffey argues that “literary criticism has embraced *Yellow-Yellow* as a much-needed corrective depiction of the Niger Delta crises in a male-dominated space” (43).

According to *YY*, debasement of women is synonymous with deterioration of their environment as a result of the activities of oil companies. Previously economically independent Ijaw women are rendered poor, helpless, and dependent. The protagonist

gives a graphic description of destruction of farmlands and the waterways, which are the main sources of occupation for the people, by oil spillage: “During my second to last year in school, one of the crude oil pipes that ran through my village broke and spilled oil over several hectares of land, my mother’s farm included” (YY 3). Loss of farmlands also means loss of sustenance and livelihood for the people. There is also the problem of health hazards from air pollution. The narrator continues: “Then there was the smell. I can’t describe it but it was strong, so strong it made my head hurt and turned my stomach. I bent over and retched so hard I became dizzy. I felt like everything had turned to black and spinning around me” (YY 4).

According to S. D. Simon, environmental degradation, poverty, female powerlessness, chauvinism, toxic environment, pollution, destruction of the ecosystem, acid rain and lack of social amenities such as pipe borne water, schools, roads, hospitals, young girls who should be in school learning are forced into prostitution in order to earn a living (153). Exportation of crude oil is the major source of the nation’s revenue. It provides wealth and luxury for the elite, ruling class, and development to other parts of the country, while the region from which oil is got is left barren and grossly underdeveloped. The people are faced with what Zilayefa calls “colourless existence” (YY 21). SuleEgya observes that “The Ijaw people were mostly rural peasants, engaged in farming and fishing. With the soil damaged, waters polluted, the air invaded by gas flares and the debasement of the flora and fauna, the people are extremely vulnerable” (117). This vulnerability is expressed through vices such as militancy, violence, criminal activities and conflicts, in order to attract attention from government and the international community. Rebel groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger



Delta(MEND), and other militant groups were formed to fight for indigenous control and to defend their natural resources.

In *Yellow-Yellow*, men and women are victims of environmental exploitation, but women suffer more. The traditional Ijaw woman is enterprising, hard-working, self-reliant and economically independent. What a young wife needs from her husband is a well dugout canoe with which she fishes and earns profitable living (YY 39). Destruction of their financial sphere by the activities of oil companies creates additional burden for women as they row their canoes farther to the forest to seek fertile areas for farming and fishing. The men have become jobless, frustrated and more aggressive. Under the influence of alcohol, they batter their wives and demand healthy meals when hungry, disregarding the fact that the women had to row extra miles to get firewood or cultivate and harvest the land now fertilized by their sweat and blood (YY 40). Others like Binaebi, who relocates to Port Harcourt in search of greener pastures, are further exploited in the city. Binaebi ends up disillusioned and returns to the village with a strong determination to survive on the profession that had sustained her mother and her mother's mother. She toils hard with the hope that educating her daughter will mean economic emancipation from poverty for both of them. However, the despoliation of her land renders her handicapped and exposes her daughter to all forms of perils, both sexual and economic.

More disturbing is the predicament of the young generation, who are forced out of school to seek alternative means of livelihood. The narrator declares:

In my graduating class, I was one of the five girls in a class of twenty-four students who took the final examination. The school year had started out

with twelve girls and thirty boys in my class. But some of the boys dropped out to take on responsibilities for their families. Others dropped out to join the growing army who claimed they are fighting for justice for the Niger Delta. (34)

The boys, whose dreams of acquiring education have been shattered by lack of development and infrastructure in their schools, gradually metamorphose into militants; kidnapping oil executives and barring oil workers from doing their job (YY 9). The girls travel to expatriate base to sell their bodies and engage in lewd sexual practices just to make money and survive. Desperation moves others to travel deep into the bushes of Isoko land to get love potions. They sometimes fall into the hands of crazy whitey who beat them up or push objects like bottles into their private parts as a form of “fun” (YY 37). Laye also considers the option of prostitution, since it is not uncommon for girls in her town to do that in order to send money home to their families (YY 35). When her mother’s farm is run over by oil spillage, she reasons: “I could find my way to a place like Bonny, the base of expatriates working for oil companies and sell my body to a whitey” (YY 37). She boldly informs her mother, “if prostitution will feed me, then I will prostitute, no problem” (YY 43). Prostitution, militancy and forced migration are the only alternatives for the people of the oil producing region.

While the people continue to struggle for survival and deprived of social amenities in the midst of their abundant natural resources, they are further humiliated by the news of affluence resulting from oil boom in other parts of the country, which drives youths from host communities to further violence. We read: “The water that flowed with streaks of blue, purple, and red, as drops of oil escape from pipelines that moved the

wealth from beneath my land and into the pockets of the select few who ruled Nigeria was the same water I drank” (YY 39). Government and multinational companies provide elusive compensations, scholarships and skill acquisition centres for indigenes. These amenities are inaccessible because “nobody told us where we could go to apply for them ... they are useless because no one in my village knows how to get them” (YY 11). Wealthy Ijaw capitalists like Chief Kenneth AlaoweiAmaleyefa further complicate the situation by taking undue advantage of their own for selfish gain. They send their children abroad and encourage strife among young Ijaw men, exploit Ijaw girls like Laye, impregnate and lead them for abortion. AllwellOnukaogu and EzechiOyerionwu point out that: “The activities of imperialists, corrupt officials and local chiefs give rise to militancy, prostitution and all kinds of moral short-comings in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria” (128).

The narrative also raises issues of identity crises which have plagued the region since the early days of European invasion of the Niger Delta. Binaebi becomes a mother at the age of eighteen. She represents young job seeking school leavers, often forced to migrate to the city in search of better living conditions and jobs. They fall prey to the activities of married white men, who engage in brief affairs with young black girls and abandon them for another location to continue with others. This explains why many children in the region are mulattos. Sisi, who is also called Madam George, represents the older generation of yellows who are lucky to know their parents. Laye and Emem’s group of mixed races are thought to be products of promiscuous, and confused mothers. They are regarded as *born-troways*, product of women of easy virtue who do not have morals to pass on to their children (YY 74).

Agary expresses concern for these helpless victims of sexual exploitation. In an interview with *GeosiReads*, she states: “My concern is from eighteen to twenty years from now, how will this generation of children relate with and be received by the society? They wear their shame in their skin colour and hair texture”. The narrative traces the generation of the yellows from the 19th century and captures the psychological trauma of mulattos fathered by all colours of white men as they grow in a society that is hostile to their skin colour. Laye comments:

I found out that there were generations of yellows in the Niger Delta area and that each one had a different story. There were the yellows from the 1800’s; the days of the Royal Niger Company, later known as the United African Company (UAC)... There were also yellows from Portuguese traders... These British and Portuguese interactions were the origins of the oldtime yellows such as Sisi .... The next generations were Syrians, Lebanese, Greek businessmen and sailors. These yellows know their fathers; .... The rest of us were *born-troways*, rejected by our fathers or, worse, non- existent to them. Our crops of yellows were full of varieties, coloured by the Filipinos, the Chinese, the British, and the Americans who worked in the oil sector.(74)

These hybrid generations of Nigerians are abandoned by fathers who may or may not know of their existence and are stigmatised. Laye observes that the general notion is that “a mixed-race woman in a position of power must have gotten there because of her looks. She was not there because she was intelligent” (YY 74). Binaebi belongs to the group of single mothers with *Ashewopikins* whose fathers are unknown. She tries to raise

her only child on honest living despite the difficulties surrounding her. Agary, like Habila and Atta, moves from fiction to fact with ease. The author incorporates the murder of Ken Saro – Wiwa and eight Ogoni activists, tribal wars in different geopolitical zones between the Ijaws and Itsekiris, the Kuteps and the Jukun-Chambas, Ifes and Modakekes, and the Bassas and Ebiras, fuel scarcity, corruption in the military and the death of Sani Abacha. These incidents are not just fictional accounts, but true contemporary history of Nigeria.

According to J.M.Ayuba, “the demise of Saro – Wiwa changed the agitation goals of the people to a demand for increase control of their resources, rather than assistance with the infrastructure of the people” (133). The vision of dying gallantly for which Ken Saro- wiwa and Isaac AdakaBoropioneered is the dream of every young Ijaw man (YY 34). Saro -wiwa engaged in non- militant activism, but today, militant group activities remain visible in the region. Different militant organisations continue to fight for the emancipation of the Niger Delta. The Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs has taken to public propaganda on radio and television. However, unending agitation from groups indicate that the region is still grossly under-developed and Niger Delta riches remain in the hands of few Ijaw capitalists.

Agary, like her contemporaries, also addresses issues of national concern such as censorship of the press, political assassinations, corruption in the military and judicial system, devaluation of the naira and government unending transition programs (110-112). The mention of factual realities of contemporary Nigeria makes the novel look like a sociological narrative which the narrator captures thus:

Petrol prices went up, bus fares went up, the price of bread went up, school fees went up ... one could get a license without a driving test, because there is so much greasing, because of how things are in the country. You grease palm everywhere...In offices, you have to grease palms, from the front desk person to the secretary to lose her lips about oga's availability (110).

The movement from the Niger Delta issues to exploitation of Nigerians by both Western and indigenous capitalists shows that Agary writes about the predicament of her nation.

#### ***Yellow – Yellow: The Feminist Novel***

*Yellow-Yellow* opens with female protests against the destructive activities of multinational companies in the Niger Delta region. As the Ijaw peasants, mostly women, paint their faces black and march en masse to the palace of the Amananaowei, the village head, expressing opposition against oil spillage, the reader is reminded of the Aba women's riot, and the Egba women's protest that led to the exile of the Alake of Egbaland and other forms of female protests around the globe. According to Onukaogu and Onyerionwu, "The people of Niger Delta are a cornered public that has exhausted its crying, sulking and complaining about its fate...mobilize themselves to undertake violent protests and other revolutionary activities" (69). The situation is worsening by refusal of oil companies to compensate the natives on the flimsy excuse of suspected foul play, that youths deliberately destroy pipelines (YY 4). Laye gives an eye witness account of the oil

spillage that completely shattered her future and her mother's dream for her education thus:

I watched as the thick liquid spread out, covering more land and drowning small animals in its path. It just kept spreading and I wonder if it will stop, when it will stop, how far it would spread. I felt that everything had turned to black and was spinning around me, there was so much oil, and we could do nothing with it – vicious oil that will not dry out, black oil that is knee-deep. I stayed there, in a daze (4).

The narrative shifts from the community to the lives of individual characters. Anchoring the section on feminist ideas, *YY*'s tale revolves around the lives of four different women – Binaebi, popularly known as Bibi, Sisi, Lolo and the young Laye at the centre as she navigates between the village and the city, where her *Bildung* actually takes place. Bibi is an orphan character, a product of gender-based exploitation. She begins her struggle for survival in the village as a single unwed mother. Laye is the product of a brief blissful affair with Plato Papadopoulos, a Greek sailor who disappears shortly after. She also faces colour stigma associated with “born-troways”. She narrates the circumstance of her birth thus:

My father was a sailor whose ship had docked briefly in Nigeria about one year before I was born. After months at sea, he was just happy to see a woman and would have told her anything to have her company. The woman he chose was my mother, a young and naïve eighteen years' old who had just moved to Port Harcourt from the small village with visions

of instant prosperity. She had completed her secondary school education and had passed her school leaving examination with the equalization, she hoped to get a good job in Port Harcourt. After all, Nigeria was in the middle of the oil boom, and there were many business men around. She saw herself working as a secretary for one of them. Instead, she met my father at a disco and fell for him (7).

Bibi's dream is aborted when she finds out that she is pregnant and her lover has abandoned her with the seed planted in her womb. She returns to her village to face the shame and humiliation of raising her biracial child alone. She determines to give Laye the best in life. Bibi never relied on male assistance or plans to get married. She raises her daughter through personal effort and hard work. She transcends all unpleasant circumstances and experiences to emerge as one of Agary's strong feminist characters. Bibi toils day and night to make sure that Laye becomes a better person; Laye says: "My mother said that I would be better than her as long as I am educated" (YY 8). Bibi lives a life of self-denial and removed herself from all social groups to avoid spending on outings and wrappers (YY 8). She thrives with assistance from rural women like mama Ebiye and becomes a true feminist.

Sisi is a successful business woman. Although she is not highly educated, she understands the importance of acquiring education. Sisi is very resourceful and uses her exposure and her brother's influence to gain contracts. She supplies toilet paper and lets her pick up vans and also runs a successful boutique and employs young men and women whom she empowers. She has travelled all over the world to purchase merchandise at the height of the success of her boutique (YY 56). Sisi is solely responsible for the up keep of



her daughter who lives abroad with her grandchildren. She tells Laye, “I am not waiting on anybody for my breakfast, lunch and dinner, times are different now...you must be up and doing” (YY 69). Sisi has managed to overcome the stigma of racial prejudice. She exemplifies hard work, economic independence and therefore, encourages Laye to become “*aworkadaygirl* (YY68). She represents the modern woman with a strong financial base that does not rely on male intervention or assistance to survive.

Lolo is the granddaughter of the famous Leslie Cole family of Port Harcourt. Sisi calls her “my little friend,” because she is industrious and hardworking. Lolo is a strong feminist character who knows the value of her name and uses it to open doors of financial success. She is twenty-five years old, beautiful, zealous and energetic. She begins to make money in her final year in the university; she travels to Lomé and India where she buys fabrics for Sisi and also sell to rich women, bankers and girlfriends of rich men in Port Harcourt. She runs her mother’s business alongside her own. Lolo possesses the exclusive benefit of becoming a mentor and role model for Laye. She, like Sisi and Bibi, has battled against her society and destroyed patriarchal and cultural establishments. Layecomments that “I see a future image of me in the likeness of Lolo, and that pleased me” (YY52).

In *Yellow-Yellow*, YY deliberately removes male power and authority. The role of male characters in the novel is to enhance the female *Bildung*. According to Arndt, this is a remarkable characteristic of a radical feminist writing. She points out that radical African feminist literature seems to be domiciled in the authors who started writing in the “80s” (“Perspectives” 35). The environment created in the novel is not patriarchal like that of Enitan in *Everything Good Will Come*, Ofunne in *Sky High-Flames* or Kambili in

*Purple Hibiscus*. In *Yellow-Yellow*, women like Bibi could possess rights of inheritance like their male counterparts. Agary blames the plight of Niger Delta Women on environmental degradation and the exploitative activities of multinational companies, not patriarchy. Masculine power and authority is completely absent in the novel. The absence of male power encourages the women to thrive. Ignatius Chukwuma points out that the absence of male characters is a common fact in *Yellow-Yellow*. (“The Displaced”1). The protagonist traces her lineage from her maternal roots, showing that it is purely a feminist novel: “My mother, her mother and her mother’s mother” (YY 59). Moses, a minor character, is presented as a happy father of five beautiful daughters. The girls take turns to care for their father. He does not express dissatisfaction with having only female children like Sunny Taiwo or seek male offspring from another woman. Moses’ daughters, like the Ozobia twins in *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Enitan in *Everything Good Will Come*, are strong female characters who have achieved parity in their own rights.

### ***Yellow-Yellow: The Feminist Bildungsroman***

*Yellow-Yellow* captures the predicament of a mixed race, growing up without a father, under a strict but loving mother. When the novel begins, Laye is disillusioned with her life in the village. She moves to Port Harcourt through the assistance of Mama Ebiye and Pastor Ikechukwu, in order to look for better living conditions. Her exodus from her rustic, unnamed Ijaw base is influenced by environmental factors. The ever-present image of Plato Papadopoulos, Laye’s father, runs through the narrative. Plato is absent, but remains omnipresent from the beginning to the end of the novel. Laye is awakened to the fact that her skin colour is not peculiar through contact with Sisi, a hybrid as herself, who helps her cope with identity crises. The reader also observes self-

hatred, which is the result of Laye knowing that she is the product of an illicit affair between her mother and an unknown father.

The novel is set in an unnamed Ijaw settlement in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and moves to the cities of Port Harcourt and Lagos, against the background of strong military presence and oil boom during Abacha years. Although Abacha is not mentioned in the text, the atmosphere is characterised by tribal wars, fuel scarcity, killings, corruption in the military and neglect of the masses. The death of Abacha coincides with awareness for the protagonist as she grows to self-knowledge and decides to give herself a new beginning. When the novel begins, Laye is seventeen years- old. She lives with her single, unwed mother in a village ravaged by gross underdevelopment, exploitation and lack of infrastructure. She tries to live her mother's dreams of acquiring formal education. However, her dream is truncated by deprivations and humiliating conditions in the Niger Delta region.

Laye grows up without the presence of a paternal figure, which results in great psychological trauma, that is made worse by Bibi's silence over Plato's abandonment. She tries to educate her daughter and encourages her to acquire books from Mr. Diseye. But, Laye is not satisfied with the poor living conditions in her village. News of city life intrigues her. She relocates to Port Harcourt where her real education begins. Laye's contact with people of similar skin colour, especially Madam George (Sisi), the elderly, experienced, rich and influential mulatto woman completely erases her negative feeling. Sisi and Lolo prove to be Laye's role models and mentors in Port Harcourt.

Strong desire for an unknown father brings Laye in contact with the rich old Ijaw capitali, retired Admiral Kenneth Alaowei Amalayefa, popularly called the Admiral and Sergio in Port Harcourt. She repeats her mother's mistakes and becomes pregnant. Laye induces her own abortion and learns to be focused through personal experience. She experiences complete change when she recalls her mother's instructions and begins to chart her own course in life. According to Labovitz, the female *Bildungsroman* to mean a narrative which follows a female protagonist from adolescence to maturity focusing mainly on friendship and family, education, and career, love and marriage. Unlike her male counterpart, the heroine grows under completely different circumstances. Her *Bildung* functions from her life experience rather than from lessons to be learned (246).

*Yellow-Yellow* follows the linear progression of the typical *Bildungsroman* novel. The narrative begins in adolescence and follows the protagonist as she transits from her poor village setting to the rich and affluent home of Sisi in Port Harcourt. Labovitz, points out that the development of the female takes place under very different circumstances than that of the male. Laye acquires knowledge from reading. She has a controlling strict but loving mother, yet, could she not fill the emotional void in her life. She is torn by identity crisis, lack of parental model and poverty. This is why she leaves her mother for the city. Thus, *Yellow-Yellow* is a narrative of various awakenings for the protagonist which will be explored in detail.

### **Relationship**

Labovitz highlights the importance of patriarchal presence in the female *Bildungsroman*. According to her, "the theme of equality of both sexes is one sharply

raised in the female *Bildungsroman*, alone” (251). *Yellow-Yellow* lacks patriarchal presence and authority. Although *Yellow-Yellow* does not begin in childhood but in adolescence, relationship is given full attention in the novel. From the beginning of the narrative, the figure of the father is non-existent. The protagonist finds it very difficult to reconcile the fact that she is fatherless. Bibi, her mother, does not even have a photograph of her lover because “he left Port Harcourt without saying good-bye” (YY7). He is not even aware of the planted seed in the womb of Bibi. The curiosity about her father becomes psychologically traumatic, with a disastrous effect on Laye’s *Bildung*. The strong presence of her mother does not deter her from seeking for her father. She is compelled to seek her father from her relationship with men. Following her awakening to this limitation, when she sees a man of similar skin colour for the first time, the repressed desire for a father resurfaces. She says: “seeing this man brought the thought of my father, where is he? Did he ever come back to Nigeria? Did he ever think of my mother? Would I ever know him if I saw him? I have no clue what my father looks like” (YY 19). When she meets the sixty-one-year-old admiral in Port Harcourt, she again sees a father figure in him and begins to draw closer in order to know what it feel to have a father. Laye says that “In my eyes he looked so dignified, if I had the luxury of creating a dream father, he would definitely come out looking like Admiral” (YY 120).

Relationship in *Yellow-Yellow* is purely matriarchal. Women are the focus of the novelist’s attention. Yellow’s relationship with her mother is cordial. Bibi proves to be over protective, loving, caring but strict. Although Laye is her only child, she seeks to protect her from falling into similar situations, as she had done. She totally immerses herself into providing for her daughter. Laye describes her thus: “My mother never

fought ... when she is upset, she got quiet” (YY4). Bibi never visits anyone except the elderly mother of four boys, Mama Ebiye. Laye has only her mother to listen to. When she questions Bibi about her father, she responds: “Have I not taken good care of you? Why are you asking of your father? (YY19).

Bibi ostracises herself from all social activities in her village, including the women’s meeting group. She provides for her daughter by rowing her canoe to the farm she had inherited and substitute with fishing. Laye’s upbringing in the village is strictly domestic. She acquires culinary skills from her mother. Unlike Enitan in *Everything*, Laye is skilled in kitchen management. She prepares traditional delicacies which she meticulously serves her Spanish friend, Sergio, and teaches him how to eat it. According to her:

I put the plantains and the fish on the banana leaves and poured in some palm oil. I broke the plantains into little pieces and showed Sergio how to pick a piece of the plantain, cut a morsel of fish into the plantain, and dip it into the palm oil, all with one hand. I put the first piece in his mouth, and after one or two chomps, his eyes popped open, his face turned red, and he stopped chewing ... he kept eating until the last morsel of fish was gone (25).

Laye’s mother warns her against neighbours and friends. She occasionally allows visits to Mama Ebiye. On the occasion of Mama Ebiye’s last child’s graduation ceremony, Laye joins other girls and boys in the traditional dance. Bibi observes that Laye is among the dancers, she registers disapproval and continues to fix her gaze on her.

Laye comments: “I knew I was in trouble; that was the end of my celebration! A heart-tugging lecture will follow as soon as my mother got me inside the house” (YY 16). The lecture came in form of a calm rebuke. “*Yellow-Yellow*, so you don’t have anything better to do than to *gbeinmo* your back side like a jobless girl?” The mild rebuke results from mama Ebiye’s cautious remark to Bibi on her strictness: “Yellow no be small pikin again o, you go allow de girl grow o, after all na inside house you siddon born the pikin” (YY 16).

Bibi proves to be a loving and supportive parent. This is atypical of the *Bildungsroman* which requires that the child is motivated to leave home as a result of strained relationship with parents. When Sergio abandons Laye in the village, she experiences strong feelings of rejection and abandonment, which she expresses by pulling her knees up to her chin and lying in a fetal position: “Bibi quietly put a wrapper over her daughter, lay beside her and she held her tight without saying a word” (YY28). This is why her courage fails her when it is time to leave her mother, her village and her past behind. She feels that an important part of her life is missing. She comments: “I was afraid to leave the comfort of all that I had known for seventeen years to start a life in a new place without my mother, who had been my protector, my shield, and who would have been, if she could breathe for me, my life support” (YY41). Laye eventually leaves her village for an independent life in the city. She is not driven by an urgent need to leave her only parent, since the relationship between them is not problematic. She is forced to migrate because of poor living conditions and environmental degradation. Laye’s courage fails her because she is used to being with her mother. She states: “Nevertheless, the desire to start a new life far outweighed any fears I had” (YY41).

Regarding relationship with friends, Bibi does not allow her daughter to make friends or mix with children in her neighborhood, for fear that she will spoil her future. Nevertheless, Laye manages to make friends with her school mate, Ebiere, who leave school for marriage and lose her husband shortly after. Laye also rows her canoe with some girls of her age to Wokiri Island, away from the village, where she gets initiated to womanhood at the age of thirteen (YY 17). In Port Harcourt, she befriends Emen, of Portuguese descent. Emen is a girl of easy virtue; she is more experienced in love matters and had dated several men for money, pleasure and one or two, whom she would have considered for marriage if they propose. Following Emen's lead, she starts a relationship with the Admiral, in the hope that "it will give me a taste of close paternal affection that I never had" (YY 133). Emem quickly tells her: "when he is rubbing your body, do you think he will be thinking about how old you are?" (YY133).

When Laye gets pregnant from the affair, she discovers that Emem is a negative influence and severs ties with her. Nevertheless, she derives joy and satisfaction from her friendship with Lolo and Sisi, her substitute mother in Port Harcourt. She affirms: "We bonded immediately" (YY69). The circumstances surrounding Laye's journey to the city differ from that of Enitan. In Enitan's palatial abode, both parents are torn apart by marital dispute. Laye's home is not antagonistic, since Bibi fulfils her parental role, giving Laye all the attention she desires. In *Yellow-Yellow*, parental conflict is absent.

### **Education**

Education of the main character is given great space in *Yellow – Yellow*. The theme of female empowerment through formal education runs through the narrative. Bibi,



Sisi, Lolo and the Admiral stress the importance of education in the novel. Agary seems to be saying that lack of education is probably the cause of lingering crises in the Niger Delta. Bibi learns from experience that education is the key to selfemancipation. She works hard to pay for Laye's education until her only means of sustenance is overrun by oil spillage. According to Laye: "My mother used to tell me that I would be better than her, that as long as I am educated, I would be able to take care of myself .... She said it with all conviction and made so many sacrifices to make sure I went to school" (YY9). Bibi is obsessed with her daughter's education. Repeatedly, she advises Laye: "Your books should be your best friends" (YY 78). This dream is shattered by oil spillage, but Bibi continues to water it with hope. Laye spends her leisure time reading books from Mr. Diseye's library. She explains: "I read because the books take me to other worlds and make me forget my own reality, I felt like a trapped animal" (YY 39). Laye's decision to educate herself through personal study is a requirement of the *Bildungsroman*. Buckley talks of "school – without walls" (20). This implies that the protagonist learns from personal experience. Laye is not particularly talented but learns informally from her relationship with others.

According to Abel et al., the female protagonist receives formal schooling ...Even those directly involved in formal education do not significantly expand their options, but learn instead to consolidate their female nurturing roles rather than take more active part in the society (7). It is also argued that the female lacks freedom of career choice. This is not true of the female variant. Atta's protagonist acquires a university degree, while Lolo is a graduate. Laye completes her secondary school education in the village before leaving for Port Harcourt. Bibi accedes to her daughter's request because she hopes that

Laye will acquire a degree in the city and fulfill her wish that she becomes a university graduate, since environmental degradation and social pressure continue to dwarf any thought of education in the village.

Upon Laye's meeting with Sisi and Lolo in Port Harcourt, her interest in education is rekindled. This time, the decision to be a graduate is not just for her mother's sake, but she says, "being around her (Lolo) made me want to continue my education and not because I want to please my mother. I just want to carry myself with confidence as Lolo" (YY 83). Sisi acts as a mother figure to Laye in the city. This is clearly evident in her words and actions. She provides her with comfort and accommodation. She leads Laye to accept her racial identity. When Laye confides in her that her father is unknown, Sisi, helps her out of her psychological trauma and identity crises: "you don't know your father and you can't do anything about that. Focus on the things you have control over, and get your education. If you do that no one can take your future away from you because your father is not around. Do you understand?" (YY101). Sisi highlights education as a strategy for overcoming racial discrimination, prejudice and identity crises. She continues: "it is important to have that paper in your hand, my dear" (YY 69).

The Admiral observes that Laye is an intelligent adolescent with a bright future. In a discussion with Laye on the situation of the Niger Delta region, he points out, "that is why you must go to school and get your degree so that no one has an excuse not to give you an opportunity in life" (YY137). He promises to take care of everything she needs to be successful in life. Regarding the theme of education as a characteristic of the *Bildungsroman*, Agary follows the pattern in that, Laye undergoes both formal and

informal education. He hopes that she will focus on acquiring a university degree in imitation of Lolo, her role model.

## Love

Love plays a significant role in the heroine's spiritual and emotional formation. In Buckley's list of fixed features, ordeal by love is prominent. The protagonist experiences two love affairs, of which one ends negatively. The first experience is painful and disappointing while the second leads to satisfaction. Agary adopts the theme of love affairs, but, contrary to the tradition, love affairs in *Yellow – Yellow* are debasing. Laye does engage in love affairs with two men, Sergio and Admiral which lead to self – realisation. Laye's sexual awakening begins with an innocent kiss from a classmate in primary school, who hardly understands the meaning of sexuality. She relates the experience while comparing the kiss to that of Sergio, her white lover. "A group of us have been playing during break, and the boys started a game where they could pick a girl and kiss her. The boy that kissed me was a nice boy, but it was a horrible kiss and we never talked about it afterward" (YY 27).

Sergio, an expatriate from Spain has a family back home which he values so very much. The first encounter between the two happens in a rural setting. Laye could not allow him to go beyond kissing. Though, she stops his hand from exploring under the skirt of her dress, she cherishes that kiss and sees Sergio as the leeway out of her entrapment in the village. Sergio's disappearance without warning cause Laye to seek alternate strategies of escape from the village. When Sergio resurfaces in Port Harcourt,

Laye accedes to his sexual advances because she is driven by the curiosity to know how it feels with a white man, she says:

I did not need Sergio in the same way anymore, yet I was a bit curious about what it would be like being with a white. There could have been something they offered besides money, that thing my mother has fallen for. It was that thing I had been looking for. I had wanted to understand what it was besides money that made beautiful twenty – year- old girls look at their short, fat, ugly fifty -eight -year-old white husband with so much affection. Maybe then, I could understand better or with less anger why there were more and more of my kind “African -profits”, “born -troways,” ashawo-pikin”, “father-unknowns”, running around the slums of Port Harcourt. Maybe then I would not hide from the facts that my birth that my yellow skin and curly hair put on display (171).

It is with the Admiral that Laye experiences her first love relationship. He is the first person she desires to spend her life with. Laye begins a romantic affair with the old man who lavishes her with expensive gifts and money. Her deflowering marks her initiation into womanhood. Her attraction to him is not for financial gain. She declares: “I was hoping that the relationship would give me a taste of close paternal affection that I never had” (YY 138). Admiral takes undue advantage of her naivety and craving for a father figure to exploit her sexually. Laye becomes entangled in a similar web that cut her mother. The Admiral pretends to be a helper to Laye and the entire Ijaw people. He impregnates and sends her to Island Clinic for abortion. Laye recalls that her indiscretion is a terrible mistake that will cause loss of the luxury she has come to know in Port

Harcourt. Her search for the absent father in Sergio and Admiral results in pregnancy that she cannot attribute to anyone of them. She aborts the fetus the traditional way and decides to focus on her education as a form of rebirth.

Early female *Bildungsroman* ends in marriage or death. Although the end of *YY* is ambiguous, marriage is never mentioned as part of the plot. Laye, like Enitan, is granted sexual freedom that is not restricted by societal standards. Like Enitan, she explores her sexuality without any inhibition. Laye's period of pregnancy through abortion is a time of self-appraisal and self-discovery. It is obvious that Laye involves herself in two love affairs, of which marriage is never the focus; both relationships end in failure. *Yellow-Yellow* reflects the varieties in the postcolonial Nigerian *Bildungsroman*.

### **Mentorship**

According to Okuyade, "the main character gains self-awareness through her relationship with a network of women, who guide and support her in becoming self-reliant. This network provides the character with moral guidance in the face of adversity" ("Trying" 10). Bibi, Sisi and Lolo provide Laye with positive guidance and support throughout the narrative. Emem, Laye's co-receptionist, functions as a negative mentor. In the rural setting, Bibi provides her daughter with protection, guidance and support. Although she learns from her mistakes, she tries to protect Laye from the prying eyes of male predators like Sergio. When he abandons her, it is Bibi that provides comfort and encouragement. Bibi ensures that Laye lacks nothing. She works hard as far as she is concerned to educate her daughter formally and informally. Laye learns culinary skills from her mother. She is able to prepare local delicacies like *Kekefia* and *Osun*. Bibi finds time

to eat and listen to recorded music like *ekiokoto* with her daughter. She is the perfect role model for Laye. She successfully fathers and mothers her daughter and remains single in order to concentrate on Laye's upkeep.

In the city, Laye finds positive role models in Sisi and Lolo who are of the elite class. They enlighten her on how to survive in the city. Laye identifies first with Sisi, whose skin colour is similar to hers. Sisi is rich and generous. She provides luxury, comfort, accommodation and tutors her to work hard. Although Sisi represents the earlier generation of "yellows" who know their father, she has her fair share of racial discrimination and abandonment. Sisi takes her destiny into her hands and excels despite her skin colour. She is a true matriarch who understands racial discrimination and identity crises. Nevertheless, she fights her way to the class of elites.

Lolo has the strongest influence on Laye. She is a twenty- five-year-old university graduate who refuses a permanent job with ELF. She prefers running her own business ventures which take her all over the world. She is rich, economically independent and very industrious. Sisi hands Laye over to Lolo for proper mentoring. Laye says that "I saw a future of me in the likeness of Lolo and that pleased me" (YY 52). While Sisi offers Laye comfort and maternal affection, Lolo gives her a sisterly companion. Laye agrees that she learns under the pressure and scrutiny of two women who she so desperately wanted to impress (YY 67). Lolo finds Laye a job in Royal Hotel and expects that she will save for a degree and send money home to her mother. Laye's strong bond and attachment to Lolo bring back her confidence and desire to return to school. Lolo takes her to different places, introducing Laye as her younger sister. Her success has to do with her educational background.

### **Journey of Self Discovery**

Laye's sense of awakening involves dissatisfaction with her present circumstances and status and a recognition that she must traverse her geopolitical space in order to avoid what she calls "a colourless existence" (YY 21). Her rural environment is a place of "certain death" and destruction. She is a prototype of the traditional *Bildungsroman* who grows up in the rural area and travels to the city as part of her education. According to Felski, travel is an essential element in the *Bildungsroman*. Laye's journey is motivated by dissatisfaction and not parental dispute. She experiences social and intellectual constraints in the village as she points out that "The sameness of life in the village would kill me if I did not escape" (YY 10). Secretly, she begins to map out her strategies of escape. She considers several options, including the ones her mother would never approve of. Though Laye appreciates her mother's sacrifices, she strongly believes that she must care for her in return so that the water spirit will not tie her womb and make sure that she never experiences the joys of motherhood (YY 10). Laye watches silently as her mother's struggles gradually become a mirage. She observes the situation and concludes that if she must live her mother's dreams, she must devise a means of survival like other girls in the village. She decides to find someone who would save her from certain death in her claustrophobic village (YY17). Her first trip to Port Harcourt with Mama Ebiyeprovides insight into what city life looks like. The funeral of Chief Semoke provides Laye the opportunity she desires. She says, "I simply wanted a way out of the village, and if love comes, it will be a bonus" (YY 23). She sees Sergio's presence during the burial ceremony as her ticket out of the village. However, the leeway she

expects from her short encounter with Sergio is not realised. He disappears without saying goodbye, and Laye begins to think of other plans of escape.

Bibi has been very protective of her only child and desires that she be educated. She sees education as a prized commodity that will liberate Laye from the entrapment of poverty and the under-privileged status of people in her village. She works hard for this purpose and is on the verge of achieving her goal when yet another catastrophe occurs. According to Laye, "During my second to last year in the secondary school, one of the crude oil pipes that ran through my village broke and spilled oil over several hectares of land, my mother's farm included" (YY 3). Laye is determined to come up with something to do to stay alive, including the option of joining in the age-old practice of prostitution, which seems to be the engagement of most girls, from which they send money home to their families (YY35). She gathers up the courage to inform her mother that she wants to leave the village for Port Harcourt. The acknowledgement of her limitations in the village marks the beginning of Laye's awakening. She wishes to consider every other option except that of remaining in the village. This awakening leads to another feature of the *Bildungsroman*, which involves movement from rural to urban area. For Laye, the city is a place of freedom and better living conditions.

Mama Ebiye and Pastor Ikechukwu facilitate Laye's transition to Port Harcourt where she experiences various forms of awakening. She learns that her colour crises is not unique. She discovers different generations of "yellows" with similar skin colour as her own such as Sisi and Emem. She observes that "Emem is a little darker than I was, but she had light green eyes that gave her a supernatural look and earned her the nickname "pussycat" (YY 73). In Port Harcourt, Laye becomes aware of the condition of



her existence. She says “I never thought of the circumstances of my existence until I got to Port Harcourt” (YY 73). People just want to know where her father comes from. The notion about racial discrimination is that they are promiscuous, undisciplined and attract power or attention because of their looks. Some see them as products of women of easy virtue.

Emem helps her adjust in a society where biracial is discriminated against. She adopts Emem’s attitude: “it did not matter what people thought of me because of my complexion. I had to accept that I could not change the attitude of every person who see my colour and judged me before they knew anything about me. It was not easy getting to that resolution” (YY 75). Sisi, like Emem, knows her father but also experiences various forms of racial prejudice. She tells Laye: “You, young ones today don’t have to pass through what some of us passed through” (YY101). As she listens to Sisi’s tales, she wonders why and how in the midst of everything, she is successful despite the colour of her skin. She slowly eciates the fact that knowing or not knowing her father would not release her from the society’s judgment. She says: “the realization was comforting ... even though I know that my obsession over my father’s whereabouts would not end, at least not that day” (YY 101). Sisi experiences similar circumstances as Laye and makes her look, not at the present, but “just look to your future” and this involves acquiring formal education. Sisi and Emem equip Laye to overcome the challenge of colour discrimination. But she continues to long for her father. According to her:

Questions about Plato’s personality and his whereabouts nagged me, and the only person I could trust to tell me about at least his personality had refused to open up to me. The idea of Plato and how he was, was my

personal battle. One day I desperately needed to know about my father and the next day he and who he was did not matter because I had gotten as far as I had in my life, and hoped to get even further, without him. Inside me was my personal turmoil over Plato and outside was the turmoil of a nation; so where in between was the contentment of life provided for me by Sisi and Lolo (YY 109).

It is this lack of knowledge and experience that leads to psychological trauma and loss of focus. She seeks the presence of the absent father in the Admiral. Admiral is married to an Equatorial Guinean named Pillar, who bears him two children. Pilar lives with her children in Spain. Following Emem's instructions, she tries to fill the void of a father with her relationship with Admiral. Laye never lacks female affection but had not experienced what it's like to be loved by a man. With the Admiral, she agrees that: "I was yearning for emotional bond with him" (YY 149). On her first date with Admiral, she tries to justify her involvement with him thus: "I felt a deep sense of longing for him, not because of the comfort Emem hinted at, which was money, but because I was hoping that the relationship would give me a taste of close paternal affection that I never had" (YY 138). Bibi hardly spoke with Laye about her father. Her silence on the issue further inspires Laye to search for her missing father. She says: "My mother hardly spoke about him. I learnt not to ask questions, because each time I did, she very tactfully changed them, changed the subject (YY 19). This lack shortened Laye's ambition for a better life in the city. She loses focus and allows herself to get pregnant for the Admiral. She had hoped that the man who initiated her into womanhood would accept the pregnancy and even marry her. The Admiral simply hands her some cash and referred her to Dr. George.

Laye could not confide in her mentors and inform them that her dream is shattered. She is sure that Sisi and Lolo would send her to the village. Full of pain and regret, she commits self-abortion. Laye has reached the pinnacle of her development. She can now discern between right and wrong. She decides to take her destiny in her hands and promises herself that she must return to her mother's dreams and put her knowledge to proper use. The reader follows Laye through her growth from the stage of naivety to awareness. Laye resolves to retrace her steps by making the following resolutions:

I promised God and myself that I would focus only on completing my education and make my mother, Sisi and Lolo proud of me. As much as I enjoyed the drama of working at the hotel, I knew in my heart that it was not what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I wanted the confidence that Lolo had, and if Sisi was right, the choices also that came with an education ... I need to refocus, and this time I would have to do it myself (YY177).

Laye also goes through a spiritual re-birth. This rebirth actually results from personal experience. The novel climaxes as Laye takes the position of a baby about to be born. Like Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus*, she expresses herself thus: "I Laye curled up in the fetal position on the cold tile floor until my sweat and the blood that gushed from between my legs drenched my cloths" (YY78). To gain total physical freedom, according to Labovitz, the protagonist must go through the process of shedding. Shedding means, ridding oneself of familial bonds, self-hatred and burdens. For Laye, shedding means severing all ties with Admiral, Sergio and Emem. She comments: "Emem possesses a lack of seriousness; I could only appreciate from a distance" (YY 177). Her personal

journey and rebirth become that of her country, Nigeria. Laye emerges from her journey as a mature individual. She seems to have found peace in her life. She has reached maturity psychologically after what Buckley calls “painful soul-searching” (17). *Yellow-Yellow* ends with a determination to succeed in life. It is open-ended. Thus, Agary follows the *Bildung* tradition in its depiction of a heroine who moves to the city to seek formal and informal education, experiences sexual initiation and a life of independence.

*Yellow-Yellow* does not follow the pattern of the typical female trajectory since she has option to leave her home unchaperoned. Like Enitan in *Everything*, her development takes place in an environment where she is granted more freedom to explore like her male counterpart. Port Harcourt, for Laye, equals independence. However, her *Bildung* is similar to her mother’s. Bibi is an orphan who manages to complete her secondary school education. She leaves her Ijaw village to seek a better life, only to return in shame to nurse her daughter as a single parent.

### **Summary**

*Yellow-Yellow* and *Everything Good Will Come* are concerned with challenges of postcolonial Nigerian women. They celebrate the female variant of the *Bildung* in different ways. Both novels follow the female quest in that the protagonists are both females who emerge from their respective journeys as ideal protagonists. The narratives capture the physical, moral, spiritual and psychological growth of the protagonists. They move from individual quest of the protagonists to the narratives of Nigeria as a nation in transition. This is why both novels portray their heroines on a continuous process of becoming. Atta follows her protagonist from childhood to

adulthood, while *YY*'s protagonist is an adolescent. These women are describing the world around them and the challenges of their growing up years.

The narratives begin with the predicament of the individual; the concluding parts predict a fresh start for the protagonists and their nation. For example, *Yellow-Yellow* ends thus: "if I lived. It was an opportunity for a personal rebirth along with Nigeria" (*YY*177). *Everything Good Will Come* ends with: "nothing could take my joy away from me. The sun sent her blessings. My sweat baptized me" (*Everything* 340). These writers celebrate the female variant on the *Bildungsroman*. Both novels differ in many ways. Laye's journey is a psychological one, while Enitan goes through physical and psychological awakening. *YY* seems particularly interested in mixed race and Niger Delta issues than Atta who challenges patriarchal domination. Thus, characters in *Everything* fight for female autonomy. However, both narratives follow the pattern of the *Bildungsroman* in many ways, while defying or reversing the convention. The novels investigate the formation and development of the heroines as key elements of the *Bildungsroman*. Bakhtin describes the protagonist of the form as a "man (or woman) in the process of becoming" (19). Third generation *Bildungsromane* have ambiguous endings. However, the protagonists discover themselves, and are able to accomplish their formation in spite of the possibility of a second journey. The readers, too, experience their own development as they follow the narrative.

### **Authors' Stylistic Devices**

The focus of this study is to explore characters and voices in some selected third generation Nigerian novels. All the narratives fall within *Bildungsroman* tradition.

Characters in the novels battle with socio-political challenges during the period of their growing up years, which precisely fall within the Babangida/Abacha eras. All the novels are set in post-colonial Nigeria. The research equally concentrates on the growth process of various protagonists as they transit from childhood or childlike naivety to experience or adulthood, thereby creating a unique neo-colonial Nigerian *Bildungsroman* category that is not gender specific. The flexibility of the form gave rise to variations and modifications that ensured its viability in different environments just as Tzvetan Todorov asserts: “In art, every work modifies the sum of possible works, each new space (in turn) alters the species” (6). The narratives clearly present the laborious passages of the protagonists and persistent dialogue of individuals and their national identity through the writers’ reconstruction and reproduction of the *Bildungsroman*, in order to describe the Nigerian experience.

The *Bildungsroman* as a literary form is highly contested, phallogentric, dominated by the West, with Goethe’s novel as the widely cited prototypical blueprint. The study is not unaware of debates, controversies and contradictions surrounding the form. However, the traditional *Bildungsroman* remains the model from which other variations evolve. Given the fact that the history of the *Bildungsroman* is clearly Western, the study offers a non-western perspective which is open to transformation, revision and adjustment. Critics and scholars have accepted the *Bildungsroman* to mean a steady progression of a fictional character from inexperience to experience. Third generation Nigerian *Bildungsroman* fall under the post-colonial, minority variant. Scholars like Ebele Eko, Apollo Amoko, Ogaga Okuyade, and Chikwenye Okonjo-Ogunyemi, outline some features of the Nigerian variant to include a switch from the individual self to the

community. Theme of identity crises runs through the narratives. The protagonists are not integrated into society as it is in early model. They all go from naivety to awareness. Given the complex nature of Nigerian society with grossly corrupt leaders that continue to enrich themselves and consolidate power at the expense of the citizenry, failure of the ruling system creates room for individuals to construct personal identities. However, Nigerian *Bildungsroman* lack male/female distinctive category as it is in the European model, but, are unique illustrations of the genre.

Sefi Atta, for instance, presents the story of two intimate friends. She uses the growth process of her protagonist to interrogate the nation. She explores socio-political problems alongside the theme of male domination. The Nigerian woman faces various crises in a bid to construct her self-identity and redefine the role imposed on her by tradition, custom and colonialism. *YY* equally celebrates the female voice as an alternative to hegemonic male *Bildungsroman*. Her novel, *Yellow-Yellow*, presents the story of a single protagonist. *YY* unexpectedly follows the male developmental trajectory. Her female protagonist is autonomous, compared to Abani's vulnerable male protagonist. Nevertheless, all the works treated in this study are rooted on the politics of survival; the protagonists must overcome restrictive and unjust situations in the course of their growth. In this circumstance, post-colonial concerns such as transculturalisation, identity crises and gender asymmetry form part of the genre's revising.

Okuyade observes that change or transformation is the cardinal concern of the Nigerian *Bildungsroman* ("Weaving" 162). The novels effectively present the strenuous journey to maturation of the protagonists and prioritises continuous negotiation between individuals and society. The protagonists traverse borders and experience both physical

and, or psychological growth and journeys, inspired by family, environment or socio-political factors. Some of them journey from rural to urban areas. Atta's protagonist migrates from the national to international sphere. Journey, as a dominant stylistic device of the *Bildungsroman*, provides the protagonists with opportunity to discover themselves in a more favourable environment, find mentors/role models and learn under their guardianship. Francois Joist considers the *Bildungsroman* "as a process by which a human being becomes replica of his mentor and is identified with him as an exemplary model" (135). YY's, Abani's, Atta's and Habila's protagonists discover positive and negative mentors, who are not family members.

The female *Bildungsroman* counters male-centered *Bildungsroman* by re-conceptualising marriage plots and inclusion of female activism, national discourse and strong resistance of gender formation that characterises the male variant. They celebrate female autonomy, while male characters in the novels become gynandrists or playsubordinate roles. The female *Bildungsroman* thrives on female friendship, bond, and role models. The women form bonds that defy parental\societal consent, as a strategy for overcoming all forms of obstacles and oppression against women, both in the domestic and public spheres. Female friendship is also a source of empowerment to women that enable them exceed societal boundaries constructed for women by men. Atta and YY describe mixed race from different perspectives, Sheri and Laye are seen as objects of male sexual gratification. However, their experience differs. Sheri suffers from male suppression while YY blames Laye's plight on economic issues. By the end of the novels, the protagonists have undergone separate forms of maturity and achieved new viewpoints in life without compromising their sexuality. YY blames the inferior status of women on



the environment and economic limitations while Atta holds patriarchal dominance responsible for the woes of the female folks.

*Waiting for an Angel* examines the effects of military dictatorships on writers, journalists and the masses in general. Habila uses the form to interrogate military rule in Nigeria and its impact on the citizenry. Although *Graceland* addresses issues of ethnic, cultural identity, Abani modifies the form in order to expose the consequences of trans-culturalism on the Igbo people and their struggle for survival, just after the civil war, which had gradually transformed man to beast. Elvis, the protagonist, is both a victim and a character in the novel. He does not experience the civil war, but its aftermath weighs heavily on his development as a child. Third generation Nigerian *Bildungsromane* move beyond the narrative of growth to address Nigeria's socio-political flaws and struggle for identity in a country that is in perpetual transition. Abani and YY incorporate regional features into their novels. YY draws the reader's attention to the destruction of both human and non-human components of the Niger Delta. Abani, on the other hand, says: "There is only one history, Igbo" (Abani 299).

*Bildungsroman* places primacy on character development. The protagonist's journey begins as an individual quest and eventually progresses to become a collective story of the people, thus, making the protagonist's personal experience inseparable from that of the nation. A notable deviation from the typical form is that the protagonist initially struggle to assimilate societal values, but eventually abandons them and constructs personal, self-identity for themselves. By this innovation, the protagonists have become representatives of their time and society; drawing attention to the challenge of the Nigerian child within a specific historical, socio-political context. Third generation

Nigerian writers use the form to question issues of national identity. They construct an unsettled society with confused individuals who choose to rebel and revolt against society. It is obvious that issues explained in the texts are not easily solvable. Thus, the narratives lack complete resolution, which is also a reflection of the state of their nation. All the texts end with the protagonists on the verge of journeying further to another environment or circumstances. The novels all exhibit variations in setting, journeys, education and gender roles. The journey from naivety or childhood to adulthood in post-colonial setting runs through the narratives. Lomba, Elvis, Laye and Enitan, all engage in one form of journey or the other. This might be in the form of a rebirth or a second *Bildung*. By this manipulation, the novelists reshape and re-write the *Bildungsroman* in order to highlight specific experiences of the Nigerian child within a specific socio-cultural space.

Another interesting inclusion in the novels is the emphasis on activism as a device for collective revolt against marginalisation and oppression. *Yellow-Yellow* begins with female march against destructive tendencies of multinational companies with the assistance of some wealthy Ijaw indigenes. In a similar vein, residents of Morgan Street, renamed “Poverty Street”, march en masse to the headquarters in protest against neglect of the people, in *WaitingforanAngel*. Sunday Oke is at the forefront of the war against destruction of Maroko, which culminates in his untimely death in *Graceland*. Activism in *Everything Good Will Come* becomes a new dimension of female revolt. This is in the form of sisterhood bonds and female education and enlightenment, in order to fight for the cause of women. According to Akung, “Activism is a dimension of feminism that has not been adequately explored” (“Feminist” 116). Atta advocates activism through women

education and programmes of enlightenment and awareness on the dangers of cultural practices that enslave women and all sorts of patriarchal domination.

From the analysis of selected texts, it is observed that the *Bildungsroman* in the Nigerian context combines the search for individual identity with that of genuine national identity. This supports Jameson's argument that "the private individual journey is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third world culture and society" (320). The Nigerian postcolonial variant, features the Nigerian experience, but utilises western standards in evaluating character, setting and plot. But the language is purely localised. Other features of the variant include first-person narrators in order to create authenticity and reality effect. The study connects with Buckley's defining features of what constitutes the *Bildungsroman*, while also recognising its limitations. Critical works from female scholars such as Abel, Hirsch and Langland, Labovitz and Fraiman argues for continuous viability of the female *Bildungsroman* which is also useful in the analysis of heroine's developmental trajectory. All the protagonists eventually moves toward self-liberation.

Drawing upon Horneyan's psychoanalytic social theory, the analysis of the texts indicates relationships and manner of nurturing in the familial base, with impact such as society and culture as basic causes of anxiety and conflict in the protagonists. The novels are explored on the basis of childhood, family, education, love and gender.

*Waiting for an Angel* follows the requirement that the protagonist undergoes formal and informal education. Lomba's education begins in the city. He decides on a career choice before dropping out of school due to military actions. Nevertheless, he

learns under the guardianship of Fiki, his mentor and role model. The narrative ends with unresolved questions about the hero. Lomba makes choices after painful self-discovery and is satisfied with them. Conversely, *Graceland* emphasises formal education. Elvis is a school dropout who learns informally under two mentors.

In *Yellow-Yellow* and *Everything*, education is emphasised as a source of female empowerment and liberation. Female empowerment, through formal education, is a major theme in the novels. Atta's protagonist does not end her development with marriage as is required of the female novel of development. *YY* follows feminist ideas by excluding marriage and patriarchy from her narrative. Her female characters are single, rich, hard-working, and economically independent. According to Maria Cutrefelli, "The new characteristically urban figure of the male-unprotected, husbandless single women has significantly taken shape...the consciously deliberate rejection of marriage on the part of increasing number of urban women appears to be a courageous, indeed daring deed" (3).

The novels span between the 1980s and 1990s. This locates the writers within the literary period of third generation. Impact of globalisation is felt in the novels as writers' address issues that are generally uncommon themes in African literature. As regards gender relationship, *YY* and Atta's novels can be described as feminist works. The novels were written during the time of increased agitation for equality of both sexes. *Graceland* and *Waiting for an Angel* are typical male *Bildungsromane*. *Graceland* begins with Elvis' childhood years, while in *Waiting for an Angel*, Lomba's adolescence is the primary focus of Habila. In this respect, *Waiting*, follows the feature of the female traditional *Bildung*. Both Elvis and Lomba are talented in compliance with Buckley's requirements. Elvis is

an aspiring dancer in imitation of his idol, Elvis Presley, while Lomba, an aspiring novelist turns journalist. Both characters experience inner struggles. Lomba's crises result from extreme poverty and military oppression that deprive him of his dreams and leave him in perpetual poverty. The women in his life abandon him for wealthy men. Love relationship plays a dominant role in all the novels. Sexual encounters in *Graceland* are purely ambiguous; from homosexual to incest and rape.

According to Buckley, negative and positive sexual initiation for the male is a step towards maturity. However, characters like Laye, Enitan and Lomba experiences sexual initiation without marital intentions. It is difficult to conclude that those experience call for moral re-evaluation. The characters never fulfill the requirement of two sexual encounters where one is debasing and the other exalting. Atta's protagonist takes advantage of her familiar environment to engage in varied heterosexual affairs for which she is not ostracised from her society. Atta and YY follow the male trajectory on the requirement of sexual exploration. Realism, is a major technique that runs through the novels. The novelists provide authentic presentation of growing up in post-independence Nigeria.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The four novels depict protagonists who are in search of meaning for their lives. Identity development is typical of all the novels. The texts encompass the all-round development of major characters, all the protagonists embark on a journey from their home base to the urban or international sphere. The quest is complex, gradual, long, involving constant clash between individual desires and those of society. Differences in setting, age of the protagonists, education and gender roles are observed. The novels educate the readers as they follow closely and carefully the failures and successes of the protagonists and they learn from them. Thus, the narratives are universal experiences of growth that is both physical and psychological. Modification of the tradition focuses on society rather than the individual conforming to society. The nation, since independence, has been ravaged by military and civilian corrupt leadership which put the nation in a continuous process of transition. The Nigerian *Bildungsroman* is not completely at variance with the traditional form but utilises the genre's suppleness which accepts novels that do not end in reconciliation, as varied experiences of the form. Laye and Enitan abandon the society that seeks to dehumanise them. Enitan dances in the street, a dance of freedom, having liberated herself from patriarchal dominance. Laye seeks a new beginning with Nigeria as it transits to another phase of governance. Elvis relocates to a less hostile environment overseas where he could achieve his ambition to become a dancer.

*Yellow-Yellow* begin when the protagonist is an adolescent like in *Waiting for an Angel*. Childhood experience is totally absent in both novels. Degradation of the environment and absence of a father figure inhibits Laye's development. *Everything Good Will Come*, features duality. A second heroine shows that the novel is a double *Bildungsroman*. Enitan Taiwo is certainly the first heroine of the text. But the fact that Sheri follows her from the beginning to the end of the narrative and also undergoes personal development in a different way qualifies her as a second heroine. When Enitan goes through a difficult situation, it is Sheri that empowers her overcome it. Similarly, Enitan is able to help Sheri through difficult times. Both women unite to fight against patriarchy. Enitan marries Niyi with whom she has a child. Identity is constructed outside the confines of marriage and motherhood. Both women challenge the norms of society which also require challenging societal boundaries on gender roles. Their journeys and experiences are parallel and similar. Features of duality are also evident in Adiche's *Purple Hibiscus*. Kambili and Jaja go through stages of growth and change in circumstances.

Relationship with family and friends is typical of the *Bildungsroman*. Atta, *YY* and Abani give family and friends great details. Habila deviates from the pattern in that childhood and family relationships are non-existent. The protagonist of *Graceland* experiences psychological loss of the father, which provokes him to seek a substitute, like a typical hero. In *Everything*, relationship with parents is reversed, while, *YY* presents a mother's determination to direct her daughter towards educational freedom. All the narratives follow the importance attached to mentors or role models. Lomba finds mentorship in James Fiki. In *Everything*, the protagonist finds a mentor and role model in

Sheri and Grace Ameh. Sisi and Lolo fulfill the requirement of mentorship in *Yellow-Yellow*. Sisi becomes a role model for biracial. Atta's and Abani's protagonists are nurtured by their fathers. Elvis Oke loses his mother at a very tender age while Enitan grows up with her father's ideas.

Atta addresses issues of gender inequality, but does not highlight discrimination and differences in career choices. Enitan is a lawyer, just like her father. Sunny Taiwo removes his daughter from the domestic sphere in order to avoid maternal schooling. Laye, on the other hand, is not restricted to gender roles. Although she acquires culinary skills, she is not domesticated. In Laye's feminist world, women are in full control of their lives. This explains why Laye walks around in the village with the stranger, Sergio, without opposition, she even takes him to a hidden outlet outside the village. In *Graceland*, Elvis does not move outside his Afikpo home for self-exploration before the age of sixteen. However, he attains psychological maturation after a difficult experience from Afikpo to Lagos. *Graceland* defers the tradition of physical maturation process of the protagonist. All the novelists adopt history or knowledge of the past in relating the protagonists' experiences.

According to TanureOjaide, "Identity is an ongoing process like the African culture, it is not fixed on marble but dynamic. It absorbs new features" (7). These features include the use of pidgin. YY, Atta and Habila employ pidgin in order to add local colour to their works. The use of local forms points to regional variety, since the writers are from different cultural backgrounds. Abani's use of language is completely unafican, unEuropean. His choice of diction and levels of expression stand out as a creative translation. This is why the language use in *Graceland* has come under fire from critics



who feel that the narrative is not reflective of the society portrayed for a story that is told about Nigeria and Nigerians (Ojaide 20). The novels are written against the background of change. The novelists provide authentic representations of the predicament of the young generation as they grow up in a country of continuous military and democratic turmoil. Individuals take charge of their lives in order to achieve meaningful living condition.

The narratives contribute to existing works by creating a balance in the criticism of *Bildungsroman* in third generation Nigerian literature and open new avenues for further academic exploration on the *Bildungsroman* in the Nigerian context. Growth is a universal phenomenon that continues to evolve in different cultures and contexts. The novels, through the *Bildungsroman* style, raise serious post-colonial concerns in the twenty-first century. The form is used to interpret the works of third generation Nigerian authors and foreground how the novelists have completely reconstructed and redesigned the *Bildungsroman* in Nigerian literature that alters the genre's process of growth and dilemma of identity formation.

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