

**Becoming the Third Generation:
Negotiating Modern Selves in Nigerian *Bildungsromane* of
the 21st Century**

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DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

December 2009

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, original and exciting developments have been taking place in Nigerian literature. This new body of literature, collectively referred to as the “third generation”, has lately received international acclaim. In this emergent literature, the negotiation of a new, contemporary identity has become a central focus. At the same time, recent Nigerian literary texts are articulating responses to various developments in the Nigerian nation: Nigeria’s current political and socio-economic situation, diverse forms of cultural hybridisation, as well as an increasing trans-national consciousness, to mention only a few. Three 21st-century novels – Chimamanda Nogzi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), Sefi Atta’s *Everything Good Will Come* (2004) and Chris Abani’s *GraceLand* (2005) – reveal how new avenues of identity-negotiation and formation are being explored in various contemporary Nigerian situations.

This study tracks the ways in which the *Bildungsroman*, the novel of self-development, serves as a vehicle through which this new identity is articulated. Concurrently, this study also grapples with the ways in which the articulation and negotiation of this new identity reshapes the conventions of the classical *Bildungsroman* genre, thereby establishing a unique and contemporary Nigerian *Bildungsroman* for the 21st century.

The identity that is being negotiated by the third generation is multi-layered and inclusive, as opposed to the exclusive and unitary identities which are observable in Nigerian novels of the previous two generations. Such inclusivity, as well as the hybrid environments in which this identity is being negotiated, results in a form of “identity layering”. Thus, the individual comes into being at the point of intersection, overlap and collision of various modes of self-making. Such “layering” allows the individual, albeit not without challenge, to perform a self-styled identity, which does not necessarily conform to the dictates of society. At the same time, the identity is negotiated by means of an engagement, in the form of intertextual dialoguing, with Nigeria’s preceding literary generations.

The most prominent arenas in which this new identity is negotiated include silenced domestic spaces, religio-cultural traditions, constructs of gender and nation, as well as in multicultural and hybrid communities. The investigation conducted in this thesis will, consequently, also focus on such areas of Nigerian life, as they are portrayed in the focal texts. Various theories of literary analysis (some of which specifically focus on Nigeria), *Bildungsroman* theory, theories of allegory, (imaginative) nation formation, feminism, gender

and performativity, as well as theories of cultural identity and cultural exchanges, will form the critical and theoretical framework within which this investigation will be executed.

Chapter One explores how *Purple Hibiscus's* protagonist, Kambili Achike, negotiates her gender identity and voice in order to constitute herself as an independent, self-authoring individual. Chapter Two, which focuses on *Everything Good Will Come*, investigates the dialectic relationship between Enitan Taiwo's national and personal identity, which inevitably leads to her quest to reconceive her gender identity, since national identity, as she finds out, is always an engendered construct. In its analysis of *GraceLand*, Chapter Three turns to the difficulties that Elvis Oke faces when he attempts to negotiate an alternative masculine identity within a rigid patriarchal system and between the cracks of a fraudulent African modernity.

OPSOMMING

In die afgelope paar jaar was daar opwindende, oorspronklike ontwikkelinge in Nigeriese literatuur. Hierdie nuwe literatuurkorpus, wat gesamentlik bekend staan as die “derde generasie”, het onlangs internasionale erkenning ontvang. In hierdie opkomende literatuur, kry die soeke na ‘n nuwe, kontemporêre identiteit ‘n sentrale fokus. Terselfdertyd reageer onlangse Nigeriese literêre werke met verskeie ontwikkelinge in die Negeriese nasie: Nigerië se huidige politieke en sosio-ekonomiese situasie, diverse vorme van kultuurverbastering asook ‘n toenemende trans-nasionale bewustheid, om maar ‘n paar te noem. Drie 21ste eeuse romans – Chimamanda Nogzi Adichie se *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), Sefi Atta se *Everything Good Will Come* (2004) en Chris Abani se *GraceLand* (2005) – onthul hoe nuwe kanale van identiteitsonderhandeling en –vorming in verskeie kontemporêre Nigeriese situasies ondersoek word.

Hierdie studie ondersoek die maniere waarop die *Bildungsroman*, die roman van selfontwikkeling, as ‘n medium dien waardeur hierdie nuwe identiteit geartikuleer word. Terselfdertyd sal hierdie studie ook worstel met die maniere waarin die artikulasie en soeke na hierdie nuwe identiteit die konvensies van die klassieke *Bildungsroman* genre hervorm, en daardeur ‘n unieke en kontemporêre Nigeriese *Bildungsroman* vir die 21ste eeu vestig.

Die identiteit wat ontwikkel deur die derde generasie is veelvlakkig en inklusief en staan teenoor die eksklusiewe, eenvormige identiteite wat in Nigeriese romans van die vorige twee generasies opgemerk word. Hierdie inklusiwiteit, sowel as die hibriede omgewings waarin hierdie identiteite ontwikkel word, lei tot die vorming van identiteitslae. Die individu kom dus tot stand by die kruising, oorvleueling en botsing van verskillende metodes van selfvorming. Hierdie vorming van lae laat die individu toe, alhoewel nie sonder uitdagings nie, om ‘n selfgevormde identiteit te hê wat nie noodwendig aan die eise van die gemeenskap voldoen nie. Terselfdertyd word hierdie identiteit onderhandel deur ‘n skakeling met Nigerië se voorafgaande literêre generasies in die vorm van intertekstuele dialoog.

Die mees prominente omgewings waar hierdie nuwe identiteit onderhandel word, sluit stilgemaakte huishoudelike spasies, religieus-kulturele tradisies, konstruksies van gender en nasie, sowel as multi-kulturele en hibriede gemeenskappe in. Die ondersoek wat in hierdie tesis uitgevoer sal word, sal daarom ook fokus op hierdie areas van Nigeriese lewe, soos deur die fokale tekste voorgestel. Verskeie teorieë van literêre analise (sommige wat spesifiek op Nigerië fokus), *Bildungsromanteorie*, teorieë van allegorie, (denkbeeldige) nasievorming, feminisme, gender en performatiwiteit, sowel as teorieë van kultuuridentiteit

en -uitruiling, vorm die kritiese en teoretiese raamwerk waarbinne hierdie ondersoek uitgevoer sal word.

Hoofstuk een ondersoek hoe *Purple Hibiscus* se protagonist, Kambili Achike, haar genderidentiteit onderhandel en uitdrukking gee om haarself as onafhanklike, self-skeppende individu te vorm. Hoofstuk twee, wat fokus op *Everything Good Will Come*, ondersoek die dialektiese verhouding tussen Enitan Taiwo se nasionale en persoonlike identiteit, wat onvermydelik lei tot die herbedenking van haar genderidentiteit, aangesien nasionale identiteit, soos sy uitvind, altyd 'n gekweekte konstruk is. In sy analise van *GraceLand*, draai Hoofstuk drie om die moeilikhede wat Elvis Oke in die gesig staar wanneer hy probeer om 'n alternatiewe manlike identiteit te onderhandel in 'n rigiede patriargale sisteem tussen krake van 'n bedrieglike Afrika-moderniteit.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW GENERATION

Since the late 1980s, Nigerian literature has undergone a number of exciting developments. The three texts that form the focus of the current study, Chris Abani's *GraceLand* (2004), Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* (2004) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2005) have emerged from a new body of writing that has recently been termed "third generation". Although the authors of the third generation are generally relatively young, the term "third-generation" specifically refers to a textual, rather than to an authorial, development in Nigeria's literature – signifying an emerging literary trend that is taking shape as texts with similar sentiments and goals are being published. The term "third-generational authors", accordingly, refers to those authors who construct works that fall within this new field or body of writing.

The purpose of the current study is to investigate how the *Bildungsroman* functions as a literary vehicle by means of which new, contemporary Nigerian identities are produced in three third-generation novels.¹ Such an investigation is done, firstly, by investigating the various ways and strategies employed by the third-generation authors to portray and negotiate the becoming of their protagonists. Secondly, I will illustrate how such processes of becoming, as well as the identities that are produced, establish the trend and elucidate the sentiments of the third generation in general. The various processes of becoming will, thirdly, demonstrate how this generation has redefined the African *Bildungsroman*, in such a way that these novels have come to exemplify the new and contemporary Nigerian identity.

The focal texts were chosen for specific reasons. All three texts are *Bildungsromane*, and are thus, by definition, novels that focus on the development of the individual's identity, which is the primary focus of this study. Though it is impossible for three texts to represent an entire body of literature, the focal texts do represent some of the seminal characteristics of the third generation, such as: voicing marginal (gender) identities; breaking taboos; reinterpreting and revisiting longstanding themes and events to allow for the articulation of contemporary commentary; engaging with hybridisation and multiculturalism; challenging social and literary conventions; and reflecting national and political engagement. The chosen texts sketch a broad (though necessarily incomplete) picture of Nigeria's socio-economic

¹ Though the three focal texts of the current study are all *Bildungsromane*, which focus on individual journeys of becoming, not all third-generation texts are. The literary body evolved from the poetic realm, and encompasses a field that ranges from poetry to short stories and novels.

situation, and thus the “becoming” of characters under very different circumstances. Analysing characters under such conditions allows for comparisons of differences and similarities.

Since the focal texts under discussion reflect responses to the current situation in Nigeria, as well as to the work of literary predecessors, in relatively novel ways, it is important to understand the (literary, socio-economic and political) events that have paved the way for the genesis and literary innovation of the third generation. By understanding the context in which such writers place and construct their work, together with the scholarly inquiries that are being carried out in this field, it is possible to deduce the primary characteristics of the relevant literary tradition. In order to gain a better understanding of how the *Bildungsroman* functions within such a literary tradition, the differences and similarities between the classic European *Bildungsroman* (as defined in Franco Moretti’s analysis in *The Way of the World*) and African and women authored versions thereof, will be explored. These investigations will provide a provisional analytical framework through which the third-generation *Bildungsroman* may be viewed, and will lay bare the complex (and sometimes allegorical) relationship between the individual characters and the state. Such exposure of the relationship between the individual and the nation is of great importance, because the focal texts continuously invite being read as national allegories, while just as often, problematising such a reading. The work of Fredrick Jameson and Frantz Fanon, as well as some comments by the critics of the third generation, offer some degree of clarity when grappling with such an intricate allegorical individual-state relationship. By drawing on Achille Mbembe’s notions of self-stylisation in African representations of the self, a theoretical framework through which to view the new kind of multi-layered (personal and political) identity, as propagated by the third generation, will be constructed.

Despite the critical acclaim accorded them by the international community, the focal texts explored in the current thesis have, to date, only partially been researched academically.² With new texts in the field continuously being published, this literary trend is still taking shape, which has served to complicate in-depth theorisations. Apart from numerous reviews and interviews, the first major compilation of academic essays on third-generation work – to which work Adesanmi and Dunton refer as being “produced by emergent writers who had acquired a creative identity markedly different from that of second generation writers” (7) – appeared in a special issue of *English in Africa* in May 2005, edited by Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton. In their introductory essay, Adesanmi and Dunton

² After extensive research, only two articles that focus on *GraceLand* were found; other than interviews and reviews, no critical material focusing on *Everything Good Will Come* was found.

observed that, at the time, “little or no scholarship [had yet been done] on the rapidly expanding body of work” (7), hence the need to devote an entire issue to it. With their dedication of the issue to the discussion of the writings of the third generation, the editors hoped to “signal the entry of the new writing into the arena of African critical discourse” (8). They defended their choice of theme by stating that it provided

a timely legitimation of our initial efforts to bring scholarship to bear on this significant body of writing and a recognition of the fact that more scholars have now turned their attention to this significant corpus of new writing. (8)

In support of such a contention, a second compilation of essays on the writings of the third generation appeared in *Research in African Literatures* three years later. This special issue of *Research in African Literatures*, which was specifically “devoted to the work of third-generation Nigerian novelists” (viii), was again guest-edited by Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton. They declared that “the new Nigerian novel does exhibit distinctive features, in terms of scope of characterisation, thematic and formal characteristics...” (ix). During the course of this thesis, I intend to draw on the critiques published in the above issues, and on the insights that such a “preliminary record” established. Other information available on the third generation, as well as on the three third-generational *Bildungsromane* studied in this thesis, are drawn upon in an attempt to elucidate certain key features of third-generation work.

In the opening paragraphs of his essay, ‘Trends in the Nigerian Novel’, Charles Nnolim grapples with the usefulness of periodising literary movements, expressing his reservations about drawing overly rigid boundaries around literary trends. He feels that, under such limitations, the critic is forced to untangle the relationship existing between a literary trend and its “literary history as a kind of by-product of social change or literary history as a sort of intellectual history which chronicles the great movements of ideas” (53). Such an imposition serves only to over-simplify the intricate relationship between literature and the milieu from which it emerges. Taking such complications into account, Nnolim argues that

we should regard a literary period as a time-section dominated by a set of conventions which have crystallized around certain historical or political events and possibly modified the concept of the whole period. (54)

In his article, ‘Writing Against Neo-colonialism’, in *Criticism and Ideology: Second African Writers’ Conference* (1994), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o provides some of the “historical [and] political events” that may provide a “time-section” into which literature in Africa can be periodised. He identifies the primary stages in African literature as “[t]he age of anti-colonial struggle; the age of independence; and the age of neo-colonialism” (92). Such a model is helpful, in the sense that Nigeria’s literature can partially be divided, in this way, into three

broad periods. Yet the model, despite providing a point of departure for the study of related writing, is overburdened by temporal specificity. Being bound by historical events, it effectively loses sight of the “scope of characterization [and] thematic and formal characteristics” and central themes that are not determined by colonisation.

Garuba shares Nnolim’s sentiments in the former’s discussion of the periodisation of Nigeria’s three generations of poets, when he asserts that “[a]s boundaries demarcating neat categorizations [...] literary periods and schools are as porous as they come” (51). A body of literature cannot be isolated from those of a preceding or following generation’s work. Garuba continues, stating that “[a]s markers of general trends, however, [such periods and schools] retain some usefulness, more like provisional maps, open-ended rather than closed, always inviting revision” (51). Though Garuba is mainly concerned with Nigeria’s three generations of poets, his essay, together with that of Nnolim, nevertheless provides some insight into the way in which literary movements, in general, can be mapped. Garuba’s views on the poets are relevant to a discussion of Nigeria’s three novelistic generations, as the novelists have built on the foundations laid by the poets.

The literary foundation laid by the poets, as well as the subsequent works of the third generation have emerged from, and as a response to, the convergence of various factors, including Nigerian socio-political and literary histories. As such histories form the platform on which the third generation has constructed its work, it is crucial that they should be examined.

Although there was frequent friction and wars between Nigeria’s indigenous societies, kingdoms and empires, dramatic changes ripped through the country with the arrival of the British. The first British occupation of Nigeria took place in 1851, in an attempt to stop the slave trade, for which Lagos, together with Benin City, served as Nigeria’s “principle port from which slaves [were] shipped” (*History*). However, as Michael Crowder rightly suggests, “Britain’s overriding interest in Nigeria was economic” (190). Kristin Mann explains this economic interest when she writes that “many mid-Victorian policymakers regarded [the abolition of slavery] as part of a further process of reform – the vigorous expansion of commerce abroad – that was vital to the stability and well-being of the British nation” (85). Mann continues to explain that the abolition of slavery spurred on new missionary activities in Africa: “In 1842 an interdenominational competition offered a prize for the best essay on the duty of Christians to carry the Gospel to the heathen. The winning essay stressed the material as well as spiritual rewards that the enterprise would bring” (89-90). When the Lagosian royal family was unable to end slavery in their city, such an inability, accordingly,

presented the British with a perfect excuse to colonise Lagos in 1861, under the banner of abolition and Christian duty, but with material exploitation in mind.³

Chinua Achebe's novel, *Things Fall Apart*, tells the story of how parts of an Igbo community, after coming under Christian sway, are forced to change under the influence of an intolerable colonial administration, with disastrous effects. Vigorous mission and colonial schooling and education also played a significant role in changing the society. *Purple Hibiscus's* protagonist also falls victim to intolerable Roman Catholicism, the result of exclusionary missionary practices. By the early 1900s, Lagos had become "a centre for educated West African elites" who had studied in Europe, especially Britain (Twine). The impact of the West European style of education enabled the indigenous Nigerian people to encode their rich oral tradition into the written word. However, the benefits of such an advance, as *Things Fall Apart* shows, were undermined by the disruption that it caused.

After World War II, Britain started to share its political power in the region with the Nigerian indigenous population, in an attempt to meet the latter's growing demands for independence. Such redistribution and franchising of political power was apparently aimed at solving the growing regional and religious tensions between the various native groups; such tensions were, however, exacerbated by both the system of indirect rule and by the warrant chiefs incorporated to pacify it.⁴ The main reason for these tensions was the way in which colonial administration displaced whole tribes, cultures and kingdoms through their demarcating of regional and national borders.⁵ The continuous reclassification of regions led to the drawing of borders through people's ancestral lands, resulting in different members of the same tribes and cultures being governed in a variety of ways either by the British, or by British-appointed Nigerians.⁶ Such disparate rule had caused rifts and tensions to develop

³ Falola also asserts that "[t]he colonial economy was basically exploitative. A focus on exports was a mechanism for wealth transfer from Nigeria to Europe" (76).

⁴ See A. E. Afigbo (1972).

⁵ "The sixty years of Britain's colonial rule in Nigeria are characterized by frequent reclassifying of different regions for administrative purposes. They are symptomatic of the problem of uniting the country as a single state" (*History A*). In addition: "In the successive phases of the European partitioning of Africa, the lines demarcating spheres of interest were often haphazard and precipitately arranged. The European agents and diplomats were primarily interested in grabbing as much African territory as possible" (Anene 3).

⁶ "By 1951 the country has been divided into Northern, Eastern and Western regions, each with its own house of assembly. In addition there is a separate house of chiefs for the Northern province, to reflect the strong tradition there of tribal authority. And there is an overall legislative council for the whole of Nigeria" (*History A*).

within the local populace, which, a century later, still require overcoming, as is illustrated in Atta's novel, *Everything Good Will Come*.

Nigeria's first generation of writers published their works during the colonial period that lasted till shortly after independence (more or less from the 1940s to the late 1960s). Adesanmi and Dunton write that the first and second generation "were mostly born during the first five decades of the twentieth century when the colonial event was in full force. Their textualities were therefore massively overdetermined by that experience" (Adesanmi and Dunton 14). Evident in the "textualities" of the first-generation authors is a form of anti-colonial nationalism. Such nationalism was aimed at asserting the value and worth of the indigenous Nigerian cultures, in an anti-colonial thrust. Nnolim states that the first generation "stresses and promotes the innate dignity of the black man and makes creative use of [...] myths, legends, rituals, festivals, ceremonies, and folklore" (55). The belief in 'Nigerian-ness', embodying a pride in the indigenous culture and traditions of the Nigerian people, can also be seen in the poetry of the first generation. Describing how the post-1960 Modernist-Nationalist poets experienced colonialism, Garuba asserts that they had a "firm belief in the 'truth' of the 'nation', a truth rooted in the people, their culture and traditions" (59). In this way, the writers of the first generation sought to re-establish an identity rooted in their cultural and traditional heritage, which had previously been so tainted by the colonial experience. Some of the notable writers of the first generation are Amos Tutuola, Cyprian Ekwensi, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo and Flora Nwapa.

In the post-colonial era following independence, Nigeria fell subject to ruthless neo-colonial rulers.⁷ The first civilian government, which ruled Nigeria from 1960 until it was overthrown by an Igbo military officer from Eastern Nigeria in 1966, was dominated by the Hausa-Fulani of Northern Nigeria.⁸ This was the first of a succession of six successful military and government coups and numerous political assassinations. The political turmoil into which Nigeria plunged after independence was mainly the result of the state being artificially manufactured by the imposition of colonial boundaries that housed a fragile construct of nation. The tension between different factions in the East and North culminated in the Biafran War, which raged from 1967 to 1970. The "ill-managed oil boom that [followed on the fratricidal war] created social and political dislocations that the nation has yet to

⁷ The state of neo-colonialism refers to one in which a country is plunged right after independence, when a new, local administration resumes the same (or worse) exploitative practices and approaches to the nation that it governs as those which characterised the colonial government. See Chapter III in Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.

⁸ *History A*.

overcome” (Folorunso). Although “[t]he second generation were also born into the colonial event [...] their formative years were mostly shaped by independence and its aftermath of disillusionment and stasis” (Adesanmi and Dunton 14). Garuba, understandably, argues that “[a]fter the war, the old narrative of ‘nation’ and community inherited from anti-colonial nationalism could not survive in the same form as previously. [...] Founding narratives simply collapsed; new narratives had to be constructed and new explanations proffered” (59). Nnolim agrees, asserting that “[t]hese writers have definitely moved far away from cultural nationalism and cult of the reconstruction of [their] history” (58). Rather, “they revel in the depiction of the pathetic circumstances of the poor masses in a society (Nigerian) in which the oppressed and the oppressor, the exploiter and the exploited, share unequal and uneasy coexistence” (Nnolim 58). In such a context, the terms “exploiter” and “oppressor” specifically refer to the neocolonial government. In an attempt to come to terms with their generation’s sense of frustration, (dis)illusionment, alienation, estrangement and violence, the second generation offered ‘new’ explanations for, and narratives of, “nation” and personhood. Coming to terms with their unravelled nation and the existential state of their lives was partly made possible by means of their employment of magical realist techniques, with Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* serving as the exemplary text. Some novels of the second generation were a form of protest writing, embodying “an attack on social injustice” (Nnolim 58).⁹ Among the second-generation authors, who were most affected by the existential crisis and general feelings of disillusionment of the time, were Ben Okri, Odia Ofeimun, Buchi Emecheta, Femi Osofican and Niyi Osundare, who wrote primarily from the early 1970s to the late 1980s. Such work formed the basis on which the third generation constructed their work in the mid-1980s.

In the late 1980s critics responded to the rejuvenation of Nigerian literature, especially in the realm of poetry.¹⁰ Adesanmi and Dunton (2005) ascribe the dominance of

⁹ Sumaila Isah Umaisha, the literary editor of *New Nigerian Newspapers*, writes that a “typical example of the protest works of this era is [Festus] Iyayi’s *Violence* (1979), which portrays violence not only as a physical phenomenon, but as a circumstance in which a man is denied the opportunity of being the real man he is supposed to be” (*Everything Literature*).

¹⁰ In her contribution to the special issue of *English in Africa* (2005), which was dedicated to the writings of the third generation, Heather Hewett writes that “[i]n his 1988 introduction to *Voices from the Fringe*, the first of several anthologies published by the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), editor Harry Garuba observes that there was ‘a significant literary renaissance taking place all over the country, especially in the genre of poetry’ (xv)” (74). Adesanmi and Dunton explain that the “decade that saw the emergence and the domestic consolidation of the generation, 1985-1995, was almost exclusively dominated by poets” (2005).

poetry during the genesis of the third generation to two main factors. The first factor consisted of ANA's "seeming legitimation of poetry as the major genre of its emergent members", with the second factor comprising "the earliest generational voices who ventured into literary criticism [...] and who thus pioneered an intra-generational critical tradition – [being] mostly poets" (9). During the late 1990s, however, a "significant generic shift from poetry to the novel" took place (8). Riding the waves of the poetic rejuvenation came the publication of novels by the third generation from the 1990s onwards.

Similarly to their literary predecessors, the third generation wrote against a tortuous backdrop of unsettling political activities (especially marked during Abacha's dictatorship), and amid the ruins of a devastated country and economy. Clement Nwankwo sums up Abacha's despotic rule thus: Abacha "seized power in November 1993 and proceeded to arrest and incarcerate the apparent election winner, Chief Moshood Abiola [...] Over the next five years, Abacha had embarked on the most devastating campaign of human rights abuse and economic pillage in Nigerian history. He had ordered the execution of several human rights and prodemocracy activists, jailed others, and driven the rest into hiding or exile" (157). Jan Palmowski, furthermore, states that Abacha increased the price of petrol by 600 per cent, "outlawed all democratic political institutions" and shocked the international community when he executed Ken Saro-Wiwa, a human rights activist, without even a pretence of a fair trial. Meanwhile, environmental activists tried desperately to keep various oil companies from completely ruining the Niger Delta. The activists' efforts escalated in 1998, taking the form of numerous protests and attacks on the companies concerned.¹¹ Being the fifth largest exporter of oil in the world, Nigeria was, by that stage, one of the richest countries in Africa. However, due to ongoing political corruption and mismanagement, Nigeria's masses remained desperately poor.

Adesanmi and Dunton refer to the writings of the third generation as texts born into the scopic regime of the postcolonial and the postmodern, an order of knowledge in which questions of subjecthood and agency are not only massively overdetermined by the politics of identity in a multicultural and transnational frame but in which the tropes of Otherness and sublaternity are being remapped by questioning erstwhile totalities such as history, nation, gender, and their representative symbolologies. (15)

The subjectivities constructed by the third generation, thus, come into being within the postcolonial modes of African modernity. Individuals are presented as holding ideologies of

¹¹ *History B.*

self-conscious subjectivity and self-governance. In the postmodern “order of knowledge” master or “grand” narratives (such as the anti-colonial nationalism espoused by the first generation) disappear as informative overarching discursive systems, to be replaced by numerous conflated cultural, political, and economical discourses or “petit” narratives.¹² Although not becoming new master narratives, previously marginal discourses, together with the conflated petit narratives, became more informative. One of the results of the conflation of discourses is the emergence of “multicultural and transnational” frames of reference, which enables individuals to move freely between these frames as they negotiate their identities. In short, no governing thought structure prevails in the postmodern¹³ postcolony. Individuals are presented with the freedom to govern themselves, as well as having the right to self-conscious subjectivities. However, such opportunities are foreclosed by certain imposed social, cultural and economic organising structures which are still prevalent in various Nigerian societies (such as the state). Set within a “multicultural and transnational frame”, a continuous struggle for identity thus unfolds between subjection as subjugation, on the one hand, and individual freedom and agency, on the other.

The third-generation’s unique “order of knowledge”, embodied in the freedom of master narratives and textual approaches, accordingly allows its members to explore themes that had previously been marginalised in Nigerian literature. In his novel, *Virgin of Flames* (2007), the American-based author Chris Abani grapples with the previously taboo issue of gender, as well as with hybrid and transnational identities.¹⁴

Abani’s *Becoming Abigail* (2008) reflects similar themes. The novella explores the coming into being of Abigail, a Nigerian girl trafficked into child prostitution in London. The part Nigeria, part London setting gives the work a transcultural and transnational slant. Abani’s novel *GraceLand* advocates for a form of patriarchy that does not prey on vulnerable

¹² See Jean-François Loytard 1979.

¹³ The disappearance of the master narrative, as well as the emergence of “multicultural and transnational” frames of reference may indicate that the postcolony is completely set within the postmodern age. However, as is evidenced by both *GraceLand* and by Chapter Three of this thesis, the project of modernity is still a major influence in the postcolony, and African modes of modernity are still more informative than are postmodern orders of knowledge. I shall, accordingly, refer to the new identity negotiated by the third generation as a contemporary and modern identity. This “modern” identity does not, however, indicate that previous Nigerian identities were pre-modern or primitive, but rather, that the current identity under construction is partially informed by the modes and narratives of African modernity.

¹⁴ *Virgin of Flames* investigates the “[t]ensions between the desires of the body, its self-destructive urges, and the spirit as mediated by ritual, sex, and art” (Saidullah).

victims, such as women and children, when it investigates the consequences of rape, murder and incest. It also presents culturally hybrid masculinities as an alternative to violent hegemonic masculinity.

Jude Dibia, a novelist who divides his time between England and Nigeria, published his first novel, *Walking with Shadows*, in 2005. The novel is about a homosexual man, Adrian, who is torn between keeping his family together, and embracing the possibilities that his homosexuality holds.¹⁵ In his second novel, *Unbridled* (2007), Dibia additionally investigates taboo issues of incest and rape, and the resultant difficulties that women face when trying to express their own identities.¹⁶ *Everything Good Will Come* makes a similar case when exploring the extreme difficulties that a rape victim faces when attempting to become a self-governing and counted individual within society.

With many third-generational authors either living abroad, or dividing their time between Nigeria and (mainly) the United States and England, it is no wonder that members of the third generation are constructing hybrid identities in novels that are increasingly transnational in their settings.¹⁷ Explaining some of the conditions that incline writers towards writing such transnational novels, Chukwuma Okoye states that

[t]he present age of global capitalism and commodity culture witnesses an unprecedented dispersal of peoples, commodities, and cultures across the globe, and creates a new ethic of diaspora discourse that continuously pushes the parameters of the term's original Greek and Zionist formulation [...] Diaspora inverts

¹⁵ Marc Epprecht writes that "*Walking with Shadows* is Nigeria's first gay-themed and gay-friendly novel. Dibia wrote it at a moment when Nigeria was starting to supersede Zimbabwe and Namibia as the source of the harshest homophobic political rhetoric on the continent" (155). Epprecht's comment can be seen against the backdrop of the socio-political climate that leads to the marginalisation of certain alternative identities. However, the third generation's quest to assert personhood and the right to negotiate personal identities leads to the defying of stereotypical sociocultural conventions.

¹⁶ Previously marginalised themes, such as homosexuality and trans-sexuality, are clearly coming to the fore, while taboos of the past – including child prostitution and trafficking, as well as sodomy (as explored in Uzodinma Iweala's *Beast of No Nation*) – are being brought to light. Writing about such taboos breaks them wide open, allowing their victims to voice their shatteredness. Drawing on marginalised themes, furthermore, brings the voices of the other into mainstream literature.

¹⁷ In an interview with Zaude Kaufman, Chris Abani comically remarks that "Nigerians are everywhere". When asked about his own residency in Los Angeles, Abani says that he "feel[s] more a part of a community of Nigerian writers and intellectuals who live not just in the U.S. but across the world. It's sort of a diasporatic, creatively exiled community" (ibid.).

the equation by making *here* the world and *there* the homeland. (80; emphasis original.)

Such an “unprecedented dispersal” of peoples, cultures and commodities results in postcolonial and postmodern societies that are locked in cultural exchanges, resulting in hybridised communities and cultures.

Several third-generational novels, including Biyi Bandele’s *The Street* (1999) and Oyeyemi’s *The Icarus Girl* (2005), portray characters as “cultural tourist[s]” (Okoye 84), caught between two worlds in a “migrant condition” (Okoye 84). However, whereas Bandele’s *The Street* depicts characters that negotiate their hybrid identities with relative ease after moving to London, Jess, the protagonist of *The Icarus Girl* struggles to come to terms with these hybrid worlds. Madelaine Hron writes that “Oyeyemi makes it clear that the hybrid space that Jess inhabits is not a liberatory space or even a workable one; on the contrary, Jess is fragile, if not mentally unstable” (35). These transcultural and hybrid worlds thus present characters with ambiguous spaces of becoming – spaces that facilitate creative becoming, but which are simultaneously challenging. *Purple Hibiscus*, similarly to *The Street*, illustrates how hybridised culture can facilitate constructive individual development, whereas *GraceLand* investigates the violent reaction of hegemonic patriarchy when faced with alternative hybrid masculine identities.

The transnational novel exemplifies further concerns with which members of the third generation occupy themselves. Primarily, the novels express and consider various aspects of the Nigerian transnational consciousness and hybridisation in their setting outside the borders of their country. Though some second-generation novels, such as Buchi Emecheta’s *In the Ditch* (1972) and *Second Class Citizen* (1974), were also located abroad, their focus leaned more towards issues of racial and cultural prejudice and contestation. In contrast, the third-generation transnational novel tends to celebrate cultural hybridity and migrant communities, and to probe the individual’s personal negotiation conducted in trying to establish a transnational, hybrid identity. Though not set abroad, *Everything Good Will Come* reveals the way in which individuals not only inhabit, embody and negotiate various cultural identities with ease, but also shows how such identities are exploited and manipulated for personal benefit. For example, *GraceLand* celebrates the multiple and diverse commodities, products and cultural flows, originating across the globe, that permeate the cultural make-up of Lagos.

The advent of the third generation also saw renewed interest in revisiting the Biafran War. In discussing the war novels of the third generation, John Hawley writes that

“[c]ontemporary fiction [...] suggests that time, and art, may by default have become the only effective means to digest the poison of the past, and to slowly heal from within the damage that has been done” (16). Forty years after the War, the third generation is now engaging with the historic event in their literature. The emotional distancing granted by time is now allowing a new perspective on such themes as loss, trauma, violence and displacement. For example, Dulue Mbachu’s *War Games* (2005) views the events of the War through the eyes of a child narrator. The novel “shares the committed anger of earlier accounts” (23) of the War by mapping the intense suffering of innocent victims. Hawley believes that the novel “uses the Biafran War principally as a microcosm for the ongoing complexities of Nigeria itself” (20). Such complexities encompass issues of an ever-failing nation construct, of continuous political, ethnic and religious unrest, and of perpetually present crime and violence. Uzondinma Iweala’s *Beast of No Nation* (2005) and Adichie’s second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), in contrast, show “a gradual movement away from the specifics of the Biafran war, towards the universalizing of what that civil conflict can be made to represent” (Hawley 23). For Hawley, the works represent “broader philosophical probings of the travails of the subject in the context of war and trauma” (Adesanmi and Dunton 2008:x).

Though the focal texts only mention the war in passing, the war novels exemplify some of the foundational strategies employed by the third generation, and thus illuminate the technical workings of the focal texts. As illustrated in Mbachu’s text, allegory is used to explore the current Nigerian issues of national importance through the eyes and experiences of the individual characters concerned. Adichie’s and Iweala’s texts show how the third generation draws from the themes and subject matter of older generations in such a way that they are able to reinterpret and (re)present it from their more contemporary vantage points.

Though the texts mentioned above do not capture the full thematic scope of the third generation, they embody and reveal some of the central thematic thrusts and emerging characteristics of the third generation. The texts also illuminate the central themes and concerns with which the focal texts grapple, namely the modern Nigerian individual, as well as the individual’s gender and national identity. Nigeria’s modern identity is clearly marked by conflated and contesting cultural expressions, religious ideologies and political practices. Such culturally hybrid worlds create a rich and vibrant, though conflicting, social fabric, within which the third-generation characters have to negotiate their identities. Increasingly, therefore, characters with culturally hybrid identities are found living in multicultural worlds, which are in a state of persistent flux. The multicultural spaces in which the characters negotiate their identities are also highly politicised. Usually by means of allegory, the protagonists’ engagement with the politics of home, gender, tradition and society link up with

those of national politics. By means of this linkage, the protagonists' personal identities, by extension, also become a question of national identity, national consciousness and 'nation-ness'.

The identities that emerge from such politicised and hybrid spaces appear to be multi-layered, in that they are composed of various cultural elements and traditions, as well as multi-layered national and political ideologies. In his article in *English in Africa* (2005), Garuba discusses a few quintessential poems of each generation as synoptic of the generation in question. Two of the third-generation poems that Garuba discusses are of specific significance, as they illustrate the multi-layered nature of the identity explored in the poems, but also resonate in the novels of the generation concerned.

When Emman Shehu says "I am what I am" in his poem 'Notes for a Burial', Garuba explains that he is "affirming all the multiple identities and histories that have come together in the making of this one person" (65). Such a conglomeration of personalities in one person is one of the hallmarks of the third generation and a consistent theme in the novels concerned. The characters in the novels of the third generation tend to construct and draw their identities from multiple histories and ancestries, preventing them being regarded as representatives of any unitary cultural or ethnic group – they are presented as hybrid individuals, emerging from the postcolony, who are what they are.

Garuba's analysis of a fragment from a short piece, 'Letter 6', taken from Uche Nduka's *Belltime Letters* (2000), points to the need for

squabbling selves [...] to be assured of their different legitimacies, selves that do not need to be harmonized and hegemonized into a single identity authorized by nation or race... (68)

Multifaceted identity is, once more, favoured above a singular group identity. Such individually negotiated identities of the protagonists are, in the focal texts, always played off against a collective "harmonized and hegemonized" identity, which society tries to enforce on the individuals concerned. The friction caused between collective group identity on the one hand, and individually negotiated identities on the other, illustrate the friction existing between the individual and society. A modern Nigerian identity, according to the third generation, therefore, consists of various, equally legitimate, identities of which the individual claims ownership. Such identities may, simultaneously, have their roots in the past, be adopted from other cultures or nations, and be part of a collective identity, as well as be both private and national.

Negotiation of the new multilayered identity is achieved by challenging, by means of intertextual dialoguing, the approach taken in previous forms of literature, especially in their portrayals of their respective realities in Nigeria. Third-generation writings, thus, strive to define a new, contemporary Nigerian identity and reality: a reality that discards the (post)colonial *angst*, sense of loss and strong nationalist emotions revealed in some of the works of the first generation. Achebe attempts to reconstruct a sense of national identity when he harkens back to pre-colonial Igboland in his novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958). *Purple Hibiscus* steps into conversation with Achebe when its protagonist states, in the opening line, that “[t]hings started to fall apart” (Adichie 3), in a clear allusion to Chinua Achebe’s text. Yet, where the loss of Achebe’s Igbo tradition (the result of missionary work) leads to *angst*, Adichie’s novel explores how Roman Catholic tradition is crumbling to make way for a constructive Africanised form of Catholicism.

The modern identity of the third generation is, furthermore, overwhelmingly realistic, in the sense that it is free of ‘exotic identities’ and distant realities found in the phantasmagoric and propagated by some of the works of the second generation, notably those of Okri. *GraceLand*, likewise to Adichie’s text, engages in conversation with *Things Fall Apart*, as well as with *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) by Ayi Kwei Armah. Departing from Armah’s comparatively pessimistic take on the postcolonial situation, Abani illustrates creative *Bildung* in a very similar society. Such departures from the work of their literary predecessors illustrate the commitment that the third generation shares with its predecessors to the Nigeria about which they write, albeit in different ways and to different ends. The third generation situates the lives of their respective protagonists (mostly) in the here and now, embroiling them, constructively in the immediacy of Nigerian life.

Hewett writes that the “emerging account of this generation is one of triumph over adversity, a story of courageous individuals refusing to be silenced and the greater community supporting them” (74).¹⁸ These protagonists thus stubbornly refuse to remain silent in the face of corruption, inequality and discrimination. Though I support Hewett in her claim that the third-generation protagonist is one who does not shy away from conflict, the “greater community” does not necessarily support the protagonist as such, since his or her main conflict is usually with society (in the case of the *Bildungsroman*). Such a protagonist also does not always triumph over adversity; all three protagonists in the texts under scrutiny

¹⁸ Silence, in the primary texts discussed in the current thesis, is multifaceted. By means of the imposition of fear, silence is forced upon the female protagonist in *Purple Hibiscus*. She needs to break the silence in order to emerge from her solitary world of thought, whereas silence in *GraceLand* expresses the protagonist’s disapproval of his father’s conduct.

are ultimately left in ambiguous and inconclusive situations, with only relatively obscure signs of victory over their respective adversaries. However, though the protagonists do not come of age in the classical sense of the *Bildungsroman* proper, a definitive identity emerges, irrespective of any societal and political adversity. The protagonist's victory lies, thus, in the fact that they develop self-knowledge about, as well as insight into, their respective journeys of becoming. They also stay true to their convictions, whatever the cost.

The *Bildungsroman* is an established genre that specifically focuses on the coming of age of a youth by means of exploring this mentioned dialectic relationship between the youth and the society in which he or she lives. The *Bildungsroman*, therefore, serves as an effective vehicle by means of which to investigate the becoming of the new modern Nigerian identity, as embodied by the protagonists in the focal texts.

The *Bildungsroman*, as the term suggests, has its origins in German literature, dating back to the Pietistic literature of the 17th and 18th centuries. The first *Bildungsroman* proper, in terms of the current understanding of the term, is generally agreed to be Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Lehr- und Wanderjahre* (*The Apprenticeship of Wilhelm Meister*), which was published in 1796. The term "*Bildungsroman*", loosely translated, means "novel of formation" or "novel of education" (Abrams 119), and "focus[es] primarily on the protagonist (from youth to maturity), who by the end of the novel, has developed a distinct personality and has become sufficiently mature to cope with life" (Scholtz 440). Victoria (126) defines the genre as follows:

[The *Bildungsroman* is] most generally, the story of a single individual's growth and development within the context of a defined social order. The growth process, at its root a quest story, has been described as both 'an apprenticeship to life' and a 'search for meaningful existence within society' [...] [T]he process of maturity is long, arduous, and gradual, consisting of repeated clashes between the protagonist's needs and desires and the views and judgments enforced by an unbending social order [...] 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 that society.

The classic *Bildungsroman* focuses on the male European subject's apprenticeship to adult life – it maps and plots his journey into selfhood and illumination within the parameters of his own specific society. However, as Franco Moretti makes clear in his seminal text, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (1987), the path of personal growth is not without its ambiguities. Initially, the protagonist finds that he is at odds with his community, believing that self-actualisation is only possible if he is unconstrained by the

conventions of society. The protagonist, therefore, attempts to live a life outside such boundaries. Nonetheless, he soon finds that it is exactly such structures that provide him with the freedom that he so earnestly desires, and, consequently, comes to find 'true' freedom and illumination once he becomes a part of the very social system that he initially sought to defy.

The emphasis on male *Bildung* in the genre can be attributed to, and is the result of, the political, social, economic and religious climate of the two centuries that followed European post-Enlightenment. In his book, *Tracing Personal Expansion*, Walter P. Collins asserts: "Certainly, female characters did abound in *Bildungsromane*, but they were there to ensure that the male characters developed appropriately" (21). By far the majority of protagonists featured in the *Bildungsroman* were male, and, when female characters were brought into account, they were presented as subsidiary, rather than as central protagonists, important only insofar as they facilitated and aided in the male *Bildung*.

The lineage and conventions of the classical *Bildungsroman* changed in the 19th century, when women authors started to appropriate the genre as a vehicle by means of which to voice female (un)becoming. Though female *Bildung* occurred in these *Bildungsromane*, such development usually took place in a negative way. The 'negative' *Bildung* was usually marked by "sacrifice and alienation in the process of becoming and developing" (Collins 25). One of the main differences between male and female *Bildung*, as explained by Susan Rosowski in her essay 'The Novel of Awakening', is that the female "protagonist's growth results typically not with 'an art of living,' as for her male counterpart, 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).

In the introduction to her book, *Unbecoming Women*, Susan Fraiman declares that "[t]he heroines [...] have, by contrast, a clearer sense that formation is foisted upon them, that they are largely what other people, what the world, will make of them" (6). Socialisation "foisted" upon an individual is a stronger determinant in female *Bildung* than in male *Bildung*. The full effect of foisting formation on an individual becomes vividly clear in the character of Eugene Achike in *Purple Hibiscus*. Eugene then foists his daughter's, Kambili's, formation into a perfect cast of what he wants to make of her.

In addition to European women's adaptations of the genre, Africans also adapted the genre to create African versions of the genre. A few examples of *Bildungsromane* to emerge from Africa are Camare Laye's *L'Enfant Noir* (1953), Mongo Beti's *Mission terminée* (1957),

and Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'Aventure ambiguë* (1961).¹⁹ Such *Bildungsromane* form part of Africa's first literary stage, as defined by Ngũgĩ, and are thus intricately linked with the colonial experience. Cultural and gender prejudice towards female writers did, however, influence the literary production of women.²⁰ Female *Bildungsromane* in Africa, therefore, generally only emerged during the second and third stages of the production of African literature, in terms of Ngũgĩ's model. Buchi Emecheta's *Second-Class Citizen* (1974) and *The Bride Price* (1976), Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), as well as Calixthe Beyala's *Maman a un amant* (1993) are a few texts that describe the becoming of female protagonists.

In his article, 'The *Bildungsroman* in Africa: The Case of *Mission terminé*', which focuses on the earlier version of the African *Bildungsroman* (typically set in the colonial era), David J. Mickelsen argues that the *Bildungsroman* "typically examines the conflict of cultures in which a young *évolué* struggles to achieve a balance between the 'civilizing' education of the colonial power and the traditional culture of his forefathers" (481). Such is certainly the case in *Mission terminé*. The protagonists in the older form of the African *Bildungsromane* are conventionally described as attending either a mission or a colonial school, where their 'eyes are opened' to the possibilities with which Western-styled education and modernity present them. The Western form of education is highly individualising, being focused on the Western 'I', which is autonomous and endowed with the right to self-governance. This education is usually contrasted with more traditional forms, such as the "informal modelling of elders to folklore, apprenticeship, and most formally, 'bush school'" (Mickelsen 419). The latter was aimed at maintaining and sustaining a communal, rather than an individual, identity. Consequently, the Western 'I' comes to blows with the African 'us'; the African 'us' promotes the sense of a collective identity that propagates sameness and uniformity, rather than the self-willed individuality extolled by the European 'I'. Yet, the novels of the third generation are often highly individualised. The sensibilities of the protagonists of this generation's *Bildungsromane* still combat with the hegemonic ideologies and values of their respective societies, even though the novels are set in (post)modern Nigeria.

The 'stages' of development, as well as the quintessence of the genre, are, therefore, rather similar in both the European and the African *Bildungsromane*, which were specifically

¹⁹ All three texts were later translated into English: *L'Enfant Noir* was later translated as *The Dark Child*; *Mission terminée* as *Mission to Kala*; and *L'Aventure ambiguë* as *The Ambiguous Adventure*.

²⁰ Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* was initially published in England, as the male editors of the publishing houses in Zimbabwe did not approve of her feminist perspectives (see Veit-Wild's *Teachers, Preachers Non-Believers* 331).

written during the period of colonial rule (Ngũgĩ's first stage). Both entail a dialectic relationship between the individual and a society which is conveyed primarily through the protagonist's relationship with other members of his family (the extended family in the case of the African *Bildungsroman*). An important difference, however, is that the first (and sometimes the second) generational African protagonists needed to negotiate with two societies: the indigenous society and the colonial. Since society is an important catalyst in the formation of identity, the individual becomes aware of culturally enforced boundaries. In struggling to reconcile his or her own needs and desires with the demands of the society, the individual comes to a greater understanding of his or her role in the existing social order.

However, understanding one's role within the broader society – for the African protagonist in the colonial era – did not necessarily mean that one was reconciled with one's designated role, as Camare Laye's *L'Enfant Noir* indicates. As the protagonists continue their secondary education, they become aware of their own ignorance, as well as of the apparent ignorance within their society, and of the 'limitations' and 'inhibiting' nature of their African culture, customs and beliefs. Such a realisation plunges them into an existential crisis, leading to their realisation that they will now always be at odds with both the Western and African cultures with which they are enmeshed. The existential crisis that ensues is also often marked by an intense sense of loss of, as well as alienation from, ancestral customs and traditions. Thus, in contrast to the European *Bildungsroman*, the protagonist of the African *Bildungsroman* can neither assimilate the beliefs and cultural practices of his or her society, nor mirror them, as he or she is neither part of the one, nor of the other, culture. The tension between the self and society in the African *Bildungsroman*, in contrast with the European, is simultaneously an embodiment of the tension existing between African modernity (manifested in Western education, capitalism, commoditisation, and a desire for agency, self-conscious subjectivity and self-governance) and African traditionalism (manifested in group identity, traditional epistemological belief systems, and the authority of ancestral tradition).

Irrespective of whether the metamorphosis of the genre in Africa is male- or female-centred, the African *Bildungsroman* is still primarily, and inherently, a novel of becoming, which is set within a specific society. The genre thus exemplifies the process of becoming, which is marked by a dialectic negotiation between individual inclinations and social expectations, norms and values. The crucial difference between the African and the classic *Bildungsromane* is that the protagonist in the African *Bildungsroman* does not necessarily become an embodiment, "sign" (as Moretti argues in relation to the European *Bildungsroman*), or allegorical subject of his or her specific society. In other words, though it

seems as if the African protagonist could be read as a sign of modernity, the African *Bildungsroman* often complicates such an oversimplified reading of its protagonist.

The reason for the occurrence of such a shift in the relationship between the individual and society in the African *Bildungsroman* lies in the difference between the symbolic and ideological value of the (classic) Western protagonist and that of the African protagonist. The Nigerian socius, as made clear in the focal works of this study, is a hybrid space, characterised by various intersecting modes of African modernity. The “dynamism and instability” (Moretti 5) that characterise modernity in the West are still two of the driving forces of African modernity. Moretti is of the opinion that youth, if seen as the material embodiment of modernity, is the most effective metaphor for explaining the similarities in the dynamics of both the *Bildungsroman* (in general) and the modern age, in which it was birthed. “Youth” alludes to a certain time or phase of a person’s life during which both physical growth and emotional and psychical maturation takes place. The *Bildungsroman*, because it carries within its narrative contesting structural elements of definite, though unstable, movement, encapsulates the essence of modernity. According to Moretti (5), “[i]f youth [...] achieves its symbolic centrality, and the ‘great narrative’ of the *Bildungsroman* comes into being, this is because Europe has to attach a meaning, not so much to youth, as to modernity”.

While modernity in the West is a uniform informative ideology, in Nigeria it is fractured and inconsistent. Applying Moretti’s thesis to the Nigerian situation might, thus, seem risky. However, if the *Bildungsroman* in the West was used as a means of understanding the workings of modernity as a national ideology, the *Bildungsroman* in Africa has merely become a vehicle by means of which to understand the various ways in which the different modes of African modernity inform Nigeria’s precarious and fractured nation construct and society.

Following Moretti’s train of thought, and applying it to the Nigerian *Bildungsroman*, it thus seems as though the development of the individual is overshadowed by an attempt to understand the flows and workings of modernity in Africa. The two most notable aspects of modernity that the *Bildungsroman* attempts to understand are “dynamism” and “instability”. The two aspects, both contained within, and exemplified by, the genre, can be understood in terms of two models of analysis, namely those of “classification” and “transformation”. According to Moretti (8),

it is clear that the two models express opposite attitudes towards modernity: caged and made exorcised by the principle of classification (focused dynamism), it is exasperated and made hypnotic by that of transformation (erratic instability). And it

is especially clear that the full development of the antithesis implies a split in the image of youth itself.

The classificatory narrative seeks to formulate a certain ending for the novel – not necessarily a complete and final ending, but one marked by resignation, illumination and understanding. The transformational narrative seeks to illustrate how “ending” or “closure” continuously opens up new possibilities of *Bildung* and development.

If the youthful protagonist of the *Bildungsroman* is reduced to being a signifier of modernity and, accordingly, only a vehicle by means of which modern society can be understood, the protagonist merely becomes an allegorical embodiment of societal norms and values, fleshed out in a modernistic guise.

Although Moretti might be correct in asserting that the European *Bildungsroman* does not present intimate journals of self-realisation, such a perspective does not apply to the *Bildungsromane* of the third generation. Should such an analytical framework be applied to the protagonists of the third generation, we run the risk of losing sight of the intimate nature of their journeys of self-discovery and development, as well as of disregarding the highly individualised nature of the persons they become.

Both Frantz Fanon and Frederick Jameson provide interesting theories regarding the relationship between the individual and his or her society and nation. Such theories might help to construct a more appropriate framework of analysis in terms of which to view the intricate nature of such a relationship.

In his description of the allegorical nature of third world novels, Jameson states that [all] Third World texts are necessarily [...] allegorical – and this in a very specific way: they are to be read as what [he] will call national allegories, even when, or perhaps [...] particularly when their forms develop out of essentially Western machineries of representation, such as the novel (in general). [...] [E]ven those narratives which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic, necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public Third World culture and society. (141-142)

According to Jameson, the three focal texts in the current study should be read as national allegories simply because they have emanated from, and are situated within, the Third World. He attempts to persuade us that the private and personal occurrences in the focal *Bildungsromane* are nothing more than allegories of national and political events. The

development of the individual in the context of the Third World, in Jameson's opinion, supposedly always parallels, or mirrors, the development, or 'becoming', of national identity. Jameson's notion of the allegorical nature of texts is helpful, especially since the focal texts occasionally invite such a reading, but they also render his over-generalisation problematic, as they are too individualised to conform to his expectations of them.

Obi Nwakanma, writing specifically about the allegorical nature of the work of the third generation, expresses his trepidation about over-hastily labelling texts allegorical. He argues that "[s]ometimes allegory fails, in its profound limitations, to convey the particulars of the expressive resonance of the meaning we summon, because of the symbolic structure imposed on the language of allegory" (8). Only towards the end of *Everything Good Will Come* (330), for example, it is stated that the protagonist, Enitan, was born in the year of her country's independence, thus linking her own birth to that of the start of Nigerian independence. So, though ultimately we are invited to read the text as an allegory, we are first asked to consider her personal and private biography before conducting such an allegorical reading.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon presents a different, albeit still a problematic, way of understanding the relationship of individuals to their nation of birth. Fanon writes that "[i]ndividual experience, because it is national, and because it is a link in the chain of national existence, ceases to be individual, limited and shrunken and is enabled to open out into the truth of the nation and of the world" (200). Seeing "[i]ndividual experience" as national and as, by implication, part of "national existence" appears to resemble more closely the way in which the third-generation protagonists' lives open out "into the truth of the nation". Since Fanon was writing about the actual situation in the postcolony, and not about literature, I will adapt his views to fit my purpose in the present thesis. Individual experiences, for Fanon, can open out into national experiences, as the former are inherently national. I, however, propose that individual experiences in literature are able to open out into the truth of the nation, since they are conceived as doing so at specific moments by their authors.

The relationship between individual experiences and the truth of the nation is an intricate and complicated one. Analysing such a relationship in terms of a singular and all-encompassing theoretical framework might result in a misreading of the text's engagement with personal and individual becoming, on the one hand, and with national-political concerns, on the other. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Jameson and Fanon, I will present three different ways in which to investigate this specific relationship. Firstly, all third-world texts are not implicitly allegorical, though the focal texts do, sometimes, invite such a reading.

Though allegorical readings will be pursued, such readings will only be carried out where the text invites the reader to do so, and will be seen as secondary to a focused reading of the individual's personal becoming. Secondly, though personal experiences are not necessarily national experiences, some experiences in the focal texts are constructed in such a way that they ultimately do open out into the truth of national experience. How personal experiences open out into, or reveal, national truths will be investigated, where such linkages are constructed. Finally, individual experiences and events sometimes merely parallel national events, rather than allegorising them, or opening out into the truth of such events. The paralleling of events is only mutually illuminating, rather than explanatory of, or embodying, the other.

The ideological conventions of the classical *Bildungsroman* also encourage one to view the becoming of the protagonist as allegorising the becoming of the nation. Societal conventions, in terms of which society is understood to function as a microcosm of the national milieu, inherently form part of the classic *Bildungsheld*. Such a reading is, however, subject to foreclosure, as such conventions do not always manifest themselves in the protagonists of the third generation. The focal texts in the current study deviate from the traditional first-generation African, as well as the classic European *Bildungsromane*, in this critical respect: their protagonists challenge, defy and (sometimes) overcome the values of their respective societies, rather than embodying them. The protagonists, furthermore, neither find closure in corrupt, staunch and fossilised, as well as exclusive, societal norms and values, nor do they strike a compromise between individual values and the values of the social order, as do the protagonists in many of the older African *Bildungsromane*. They endeavour, instead, to produce a new social order, in which the self can come into being in a just society, which they, in time, try to create. In other words, the protagonists not only represent society, embodying its values and norms, but rather actively engage with it, in order to remake it. However, their attempts to remake societal norms and values often do not succeed, as the closing chapters of the focal texts evidence. The constructed personal experiences of the protagonist might open out into the truth of society, indicating the way in which some societies in Nigeria still seek to stifle, inhibit and restrain individual attempts at self-expansion, in their attempts to resist change. Such aspects of the third-generational *Bildungsromane* illustrate not only some of the characteristics that the new modern Nigerian identity is adopting, but also some of the changes that the *Bildungsroman* genre is currently undergoing.

The third generation strives to encourage their readers to acquire a new identity, which is embedded in the notion of self-authoring, similar to that of their respective

protagonists. The self-authoring of the new identity resembles Mbembe's claim that Africans should negotiate unconventional ways in which to constitute and author their African identities. Though Mbembe neither comments on the work of the third generation nor on literature in general, his notions of 'self-styled' self-writing provide an apt framework in terms of which to understand and explore the identities propagated in the work of the third generation.

Mbembe investigates various forms of African representations of the self, and what the various forms enable or foreclose. The two dominant paradigms, which formed and informed African individuals and life-writing in the past, but which, according to him, fail to represent Africans and African self-writing as autonomous and independent of Africa's history.²¹ Mbembe notes two ways of breaking with such modes of self-writing, supplementing them with his own view of how the individual should "stylise" him/herself (273), since "stylistation" will, indeed, be free of any conceptual dependence on notions of authenticity or truth. The three modes of self-styling exemplify the way in which members of the third generation represent their protagonists' respective journeys of self-development.

Mbembe argues that the main hindrance to African self-writing is historicism, which he divides into two main subcategories: "Afro-radicalism" and "nativism", with its "burden of the metaphysics of difference" (240; emphasis original).²² The first premise of both Afro-radicalism and nativism is that the individual is alienated from self, due to the deforming impact of slavery, colonisation or apartheid. This sense of alienation is a persistent theme in the first-generation *Bildungsroman*. Members of the second generation generally experience a sense of alienation from the misrule of the neo-colonial government. Members of the third

²¹ Authors of earlier African *Bildungsromane* often embraced the two above-mentioned modes of biographical writing.

²² As made clear by Ngũgĩ, as well as Adesanmi and Dunton, colonialism, as well as the neo-colonialism of the postcolony, are decisive factors in the work of those of an older generation, as well as in that of the third generation, hence the inclusion of the historical overview in the introductory section of this thesis. However, the focal texts specifically function as examples of how authors move away from these traumatic histories. Each of the three father figures in the focal texts embody some or other element of their respective societies' history: Eugene Achike (*Purple Hibiscus*) embodies colonial missionary ideologies, whereas Sunny Taiwo (*Everything Good Will Come*) and Sunday Oke (*GraceLand*) exemplify ideologies of their respective indigenous cultural heritages. All three protagonists are shown to move out from under the patriarchal dominance (which will be shown to be historical constructs) which such father figures exercise over them. This rejection of historically constructed ideologies and traditions illustrates how the individuals concerned are no longer harassed by the various histories of the societies which they inhabit.

generation, in contrast, expressly attempt to negotiate their identities in such a way that they are overdetermined by neither national nor societal construction of identity, specifically because these construction of identity inhibits personal expansion and becoming.

The second premise of African radicalism and nativism is that African self-writing is dominated by a “discourse of dispossession” (257) by the other, resulting in an African form of self-writing that is marked by a sense of victimhood, historical degradation and humiliation. Both such modes of self-writing draw from “categories [of] the myths they claim to oppose and [thereby] reproduce their dichotomies” (257) of white *versus* black, civilised peoples *versus* savages, Christianity *versus* paganism, and so forth. The third generation also moves away from such “discourses of dispossession” by conflating the dichotomous terms produced by earlier generations, as seen in the characters of Auntie Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* and Elvis Oke in *GraceLand*.

Mbembe focuses on two attempts to break with the empty dream of asserting authentic personhood through Afro-radicalism and nativism. The first was an attempt to deconstruct tradition and, with implication, Africa, in order to show that both ‘Africa’ and its traditions are an invention and fabrication of the West. There is, consequently, no “original” (257) Africa, African tradition or African person. When Enitan Taiwo, in *Everything Good Will Come*, examines her Nigerian and African identity, she finds that Nigeria is a haphazard construction of the British empire, and that any sense of ‘Nigerian-ness’ is a fabrication aimed at artificially forging national unity. The second attempt to break with Afro-radicalism and nativism claims that, due to the formative nature of African identity, all Africans have both the ability and the right to choose that which makes him or her African. Enitan’s double, a mulatto girl Shari Bakare, serves as a good example of the aforesaid. She is secure in her African identity, even though she has an English mother, grows up in a polygamous Moslem household and appreciates the pop culture and fashions of the 1970s.

Mbembe ends his argument with his own notion of how Africans should present and write about themselves. He is of the opinion that Africans should “clear an intellectual space for rethinking those temporalities” (258) that determined their histories and consequent problematic modes of self-writing. In doing this, more than one possible future can be rendered accessible, thus opening up the possibility of several ancestries. Such exposure could enable Africans to write about, and represent themselves in, more than one possible future, as such a future is freed from its victimising past.

Lastly, there is a need to consider contemporary and everyday practices “through which Africans manage to recognize and maintain with the world an unprecedented

familiarity” (258). In such practices, the African individual remakes something into his or her own, thus opening up a way to converse and relate with the world in all its generality. Mbembe’s own notion of self-styling is particularly relevant to the modern, new identity, which is emerging in the literary body of the third generation, and which will serve as the primary framework of analysis wherever this new identity comes into play in the current study.

The focal texts in the present study share certain common threads, which are the primary subject matter with which the protagonists have to engage in their respective journeys of becoming. Gender and the right to negotiate one’s gender is a primary thread that runs through each such text. Traditions (religious, ancestral and societal) remain an ongoing concern, though they are most prominent in *Purple Hibiscus*, which deals with Roman Catholicism, Igbo traditionalism and Africanised Catholicism. *GraceLand* specifically takes issue with the hegemonic patriarchal tradition and international pop culture. Voice as a performative force is grappled with differently in each novel, though such a force is continuously linked with agency. A third thread that runs through all the texts consists of the construction of personal/private, public/political and individual/national identities. The *Bildungsroman*, as a vehicle that investigates the becoming of an individual, allows for the observation of how individuals engage with various threads in such a way as to produce, in and through them, a new, modern Nigerian identity.

Chapter One explores *Purple Hibiscus*, which focuses on the affluent upper-class Achike family. The chapter introduces the conflict that rages between various traditions, which are pitched against one another in a society which is dominated by intolerance and exclusion. *Purple Hibiscus* specifically takes issue with Eurocentric Roman Catholicism and Igbo traditionalism. The protagonist needs to negotiate an identity situated in a middle space between the two opposed traditions, hybridising them in such a way as to allow for the development of a more sustainable form of identity than either, by itself, would allow.

Identity is further explored in Chapter Two, in a discussion of *Everything Good Will Come*’s middle-class protagonist. The chapter explores the way in which identity is negotiated by means of friction-ridden encounters. However, in this case the friction results from the clash between a national identity and an individual, personal one. The chapter is also concerned with female identity, as it explores the differences between African and Western feminisms, which face off against each other in Enitan’s society.

Chapter Three deals with *GraceLand*, which is set in the impoverished working-class slums of Lagos. It starts with an investigation into the ways in which a fraudulent and fractured African modernity keeps individuals, such as its protagonist Elvis, from realising

their dreams, while simultaneously presenting the individual with opportunities to negotiate multiple and alternative identities. Elvis attempts to negotiate an alternative masculine identity, but finds out that traditional patriarchal male identity is beset with anxiety about those individuals who endeavour to fulfil a freer, open and more cosmopolitan masculine identity. This fear is then transferred to violence, which is perpetrated against any individual who performs any masculine identity counter to the hegemonic norm.

Patriarchy is presented by the three texts as one of Nigeria's most prevalent social and cultural problems. In Chapter One a violent patriarchy is introduced which goes almost unchallenged by the protagonist, who is utterly subject to it. In Chapter Two, the existing patriarchal establishment is openly challenged and defied by the protagonist. Contrasting attempts to negotiate, compromise and manipulate patriarchy offer alternative ways of responding to patriarchal domination. The discussion in Chapter Two concludes with acknowledging that the hybridised form of the two approaches, as presented in the text, might present a better way of dealing with a patriarchal system. Chapter Three concludes the discussion on patriarchy by illustrating, by means of a discussion of the role of the protagonist, the difficulties that individuals face if they wish to break with traditional hegemonic patriarchy. The chapter proposes the ideal as a benign and reproducible male identity, which builds its foundation on commonalities that exist between the two genders.

The need for the development of such an identity is illustrated through the protagonist's complete ignorance of her Igbo cultural heritage, and her ensuing feeling of being incomplete and culturally isolated. Chapter Two explores the modern Nigerian identity, which is first presented in Chapter One, in greater depth, by elevating it to the national level. Chapter Three begins by exploring the hybrid nature of a modern Nigeria identity, as well as the various reasons for such a hybridisation. The chapter then moves on to expose the difficulties faced in negotiating this identity by the individual who is not born into a privileged social position.

In all three novels, private and personal space is usually associated with being silent or unvoiced, whereas public/political spaces are usually associated with having both voice and agency. The ability to negotiate both private/personal spaces and public/political spaces allows for a sense of personal and political agency, in terms of which one can author oneself. Yet, as the protagonists (most notably Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus*) find out, an imposed silence bars one from entering the public and political spheres, preventing one from securing the agency essential to the negotiation of one's own identity. *Everything Good Will Come* extends this theme, by illustrating how having a 'voice' and 'speaking' do not necessarily result in one's being heard, so that one's political agency can still be denied. *GraceLand*

finally exposes how an inferior economic and social position, which is symptomatic of modernity in Africa, prevents the individual from authoring self.

CHAPTER TWO: NEGOTIATING TRADITIONS, GENDER AND SILENCES IN *PURPLE HIBISCUS*

“A freedom to be, to do.” *Purple Hibiscus*, 16

This chapter consists of two sections. The first section will investigate how Kambili becomes a postcolonial subject. This will be done by considering how *Purple Hibiscus* engages with various traditions: the literary traditions of the *Bildungsroman* and Nigerian fiction, respectively; and the traditions of Roman Catholicism, as well as those of Nigeria’s traditional Igbo society. The discussion of literary traditions, which concurrently also illustrates how the third-generational *Bildungsromane* develop, will lead to a discussion of how Kambili renegotiates her individuality. She does this by distancing herself from the suppressive way in which her father interprets Roman Catholicism. Such distancing is achieved through her engagement with her ancestral traditions and an Africanised form of Roman Catholicism, as introduced by her cousins, her grandfather, aunt and the Igbo Roman Catholic priest, Father Amadi. Kambili, with the help of such characters, is able to re-negotiate her identity within a ‘middle space’ between the various traditions. The second section of Chapter Two, which builds on the insights developed in the first section, will examine how Kambili finds her voice, which is central to her journey of becoming. The journey is facilitated by her aunt Ifeoma, and her cousin Amaka, as well as by the way in which she shuttles between the two main framing spaces of the novel: the inhibited space of her parental compound and the ‘free’ space of Aunt Ifeoma’s flat. By means of her finding her voice, she is able, concurrently, to develop her own sexuality, as well as to re-negotiate her engendered identity.

Purple Hibiscus presents the journey of becoming of a young fifteen-year-old Igbo girl, Kambili Achike. She is the narrator of her own life story, which is largely set within the confining walls of her family’s compound in Enugu, South-East Nigeria. Within these walls, her father exerts his absolute rule over her life, which effectively silences her, as well as her mother and brother. Her father, Eugene, is a successful businessman and the owner of a Nigerian newspaper. Simultaneously, he is also a political activist campaigning against a corrupt military government. Although he sincerely loves his family and genuinely fights for the political freedom of the Nigerian people, he hypocritically and draconically rules his family with rigid religiosities and brutal violence. His violent behaviour, we learn, is the result of the violence he suffered as a child at the hand of the Roman Catholic priests who raised him; his social and political activism, on the contrary, also flows from his religious beliefs. Such contradictions serve to render any simple reading of his character problematic. His wife,

Beatrice, is portrayed as a silent, dutiful spouse, whose sense of self has apparently been beaten out of her by her husband. Yet, she too is not one-dimensional, for it is she who ultimately plans and effects her husband's murder. Kambili's seventeen-year-old brother, Jaja, is keenly protective of his sister and mother. This sense of protectiveness partly stems from his feelings of shame and guilt, due to his inability to do so. Ultimately, he takes responsibility for the safety of his mother and sister, when he claims to have murdered his father, for which he is consequently wrongfully imprisoned.

During a Christmas holiday at their country house in Abba, Kambili's flamboyant and intellectual aunt, Ifeoma, convinces her brother, Eugene, that Kambili and Jaja should visit her children before the new school year commences. In the first of three such visits, the liberating space of Ifeoma's flat in Nsukka allows Kambili and Jaja to embark on their respective journeys towards the cultivation of their own individualities. During the first visit, Kambili meets her cousin, Amaka, who is portrayed as a highly individualised character. Amaka is thus constructed to function as a foil to Kambili.²³ Amaka's confident, outspoken nature and critical engagement with her surroundings help Kambili to search for her own selfhood. Amaka, in effect, therefore, ironically mirrors Kambili's underdeveloped individuality, performing a similar function to that of Nyasha in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Zimbabwean novel, *Nervous Conditions*.

Kambili moves between her own home, which is a space of fear and isolation, and Ifeoma's flat, which is a space of freedom and constructive interaction. The juxtapositioning of the two distinct spaces provides a framework for the novel and illuminates Kambili's *Bildungsprozess*. Kambili needs to move (ontologically and physically) out of silent spaces, like her home, in order to be able to find out who she is as a person among other persons. Such a movement into society complies with the conventions of the classic *Bildungsroman*. However, the novel deviates from the classical form when the protagonist's movement into society becomes a shuttling between the silent spaces of her home and the vocal spaces of society.

²³ A "foil" is a secondary character, who is presented as the antithesis of the main protagonist, to the advantage of the latter (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). In the third-generational *Bildungsroman* specifically, the foil's highly individualised personhood underscores the need for becoming. The use of a foil also emphasises the rewards to be attained from the development of self by the chief protagonist.

The protagonist's shuttling between various spaces and traditions is contained within the circular plot structure, which consists of three main sections, all of which are set in the past and narrated in the past tense: "*BREAKING GODS, Palm Sunday*" (1–16); "*SPEAKING WITH OUR SPIRITS, Before Palm Sunday*" (17–254); and "*THE PIECES OF GODS, After Palm Sunday*" (255–292). The structure is finally disrupted in the fourth and final section, "*A DIFFERENT SILENCE, The Present*" (293–307), which is narrated in the present tense. The narrative structure not only serves to illuminate the nature of third-generation sentiments of *Bildung*, but also illustrates how the more mature Kambili can narrate her life from a critical vantage point.²⁴

"*BREAKING GODS, Palm Sunday*" starts with the events that transpired one Palm Sunday,²⁵ after Kambili and Jaja's return from a second visit to Auntie Ifeoma in Nsukka. Auntie Ifeoma sparked their desire for personal freedom during their first visit, later feeding the flames of such a desire still further during their second visit. Kambili begins her narration by disclosing what happened on this particular Palm Sunday, which fell roughly in the middle of her narrated life. If the events of the Palm Sunday in question had not taken place, Kambili would probably not have been able to tell her life story at all, since the specific event broke the contract of silence in her household. The reader is, therefore, from the very first pages of the novel, plunged into the crucial moment when Eugene's authoritarian and patriarchal power is challenged for the first time. By commencing the narration with the events of the specific Palm Sunday, the various forces at play in the novel are introduced at the very start.

In "*SPEAKING WITH OUR SPIRITS, Before Palm Sunday*", Kambili relates the events that transpired prior to her and Jaja's second visit to Nsukka. The section covers every aspect of their rigidly structured and inhibited lives, and includes episodes from her early childhood, as well as others to do with their time spent as part of a family, her school years, her father's political involvement and domestic violence. The "startling red" (*Hibiscus* 16) petals of the hibiscus in the Achike's front yard are constructed to be the only silent witnesses, initially, of the violence suffered under Eugene's patriarchal rule. The symbolism of the red petals echoes the red drops of blood that lie spattered on the white marble floors after Eugene has assaulted his wife (*Hibiscus* 33). Kambili then narrates the period she spent with her Aunt and cousins during her and Jaja's first visit to Nsukka. At Nsukka she observes the way in which individuals of a less inhibited household interact with one another

²⁴ This technique is also employed in *Nervous Conditions*. The protagonist, Tambu, reflects back on her life and narrates the events that lead up to her being able to narrate her own life story.

²⁵ Palm Sunday is the first day of Passion Week, which is an annual Catholic festival that commemorates Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, His crucifixion and resurrection.

outside the oppressive silence of her own parental home. She meets a Catholic priest, Father Amadi, who illustrates a reproducible – and generative rather than inhibiting – patriarchy. Father Amadi helps her to grow into a more autonomous individual. During the visit, Kambili's terminally ill paternal grandfather, Papa-Nnukwu, whom she is prohibited from seeing by her father (as he considers Papa-Nnukwu to be a 'heathen'), comes to live with Ifeoma. Eugene, on hearing of Papa-Nnukwu's presence in the household, immediately fetches his children from his sister's care, and punishes them severely for not informing him of their grandfather's arrival. Jaja plants a few of the experimental purple hibiscus cuttings, which he has brought from Ifeoma's garden, in their yard. After Kambili recovers from the extreme punishment, she is again assaulted by Eugene when he discovers her looking at a portrait (painted by Amaka) of her grandfather. As a result of the assault, she is hospitalised for weeks. Kambili then leaves for a second visit to Nsukka, in order to recover from the injuries inflicted on her by her father.

After this extensive narration, which takes up most of the novel, Kambili finally arrives at the actual events of Palm Sunday in "*THE PIECES OF GODS, After Palm Sunday*" (255–292). She tells of Jaja's rebellion, which sparked the 'falling apart' of their household. Brenda Cooper writes that Aunty Ifeoma's hybrid purple hibiscus cuttings "take root [in the Achike's front yard] and as they grow and flower, they act as a barometer, signifying the changes in the relationships with the family" (125). With the first budding of the purple hibiscus, Eugene's control over the lives of other family members is finally broken, and the silences with which they had been forced to live, start to lift. The 'lifting' of these silences and the breaking of their father's patriarchal power are beautifully evidenced by the purple hibiscus that starts to bud in the Achike's front yard in Nsukka. Eugene allows his children to return to Nsukka for a third and final visit to say farewell to Ifeoma and her family, who are immigrating to the United States, as the political situation in Nigeria has become unbearable. Their final visit, however, is cut short when their mother calls to inform them that their father has died. It is later revealed that his death resulted from the poison that Beatrice started mixing into Eugene's tea during the children's second visit to Nsukka. Eugene's death leads to the partial emancipation of Kambili and her family, which occurs at a high cost, as well as to Jaja's imprisonment, after he convinces the police that it was he who poisoned his own father.

The final part of Kambili's narration, "*A DIFFERENT SILENCE, The Present*" (295–307), is set in the narrative present. Although the section is not constructed to present an optimistic conclusion to the novel and Kambili's life, it does offer some hope in the form of the purple hibiscus growing in the Achike's compound, as well as in the coming summer rains.

Kambili relates how her brother is about to be freed after a prolonged incarceration. During his time in prison, Kambili had to pay numerous bribes to visit and supply him with food. Beatrice, who broke down emotionally and psychologically after her husband's death and Jaja's imprisonment, is now slowly showing signs of healing. Kambili plans to visit Ifeoma and their cousins in the United States. In this final section, Kambili still does not engage in conversation with others, including her mother. However, her silence is no longer the result of fear, but rather due to there being little to say. Her silence might also be the result of the trauma endured by the Achike household during the preceding months.

Even though *Purple Hibiscus* primarily tells the intimate and private story of a young girl, it is written in the evolving trend of the third generation. As such, it occasionally opens itself up to reveal something about the truth of the nation, or, at other times, might be read as allegory. This chapter is primarily concerned with the process of becoming by means of a negotiation of traditions, voice and gender, and, therefore, does not focus on allegorical readings.²⁶ However, since the current study also provides an analytical framework in terms of which to view the work of the third generation, the issue of allegory cannot be ignored. Sujala Singh, in her essay 'Postcolonial Children: Representing the Nation', believes that a child's point of view "becomes a means of commenting on violence legitimized at the level of the nation-state, often through compliant parental or familial silences" (15). The way in which Kambili's father silences her through his infliction of violence on her, accordingly, offers an allegorical commentary on the way in which the corrupt Nigerian government seeks to silence the voice of its people through the imposition of legitimised violence on them. Such violence is strikingly illustrated by the brutal way in which Eugene's editor, Ade Coker, is mutilated and killed by a letter bomb for speaking out against the government in his editorial in the *Standard*. The question of 'voice' in Kambili's becoming is, therefore, inextricably linked with the national-political arena, since voicing oneself, as Ade Coker did, has the potential of placing oneself within the political sphere, which is an important space for the third generation's politically minded authors to fill. Chapter Two, therefore, argues for an allegorical reading of the text, but only as far as the text invites such a reading, and it locates the allegorical as secondary to Kambili's personal experiences and journey of becoming.

Negotiating Traditions, Becoming a Postcolonial Subject

The third generation's efforts to redefine the literary genre of the *Bildungsroman*, as well as to shape a new contemporary Nigerian identity for their characters, becomes evident in the

²⁶ Chapter Three thoroughly investigates the use of, and reasons for, employing allegory in the literary body under scrutiny.

way in which their work engages with various traditions. This section starts by exploring how the structure of *Purple Hibiscus* redefines the conventions of the *Bildungsroman*, as well as the protagonist's *Bildungsprozess*. The discussion embarked on here will lead to an investigation of how Kambili re-negotiates her personal identity by engaging and vacillating between the various traditions associated with Roman Catholicism and an Igbo cultural heritage within a context of African modernity, thereby constructing a 'new' contemporary Nigerian identity.

The ways in which the third generation alters the structure and conventions of the classic *Bildungsroman*, as well as their dialogue with earlier Nigerian (and African) writers and texts, is as significant as is the individual's own development. *Bildungsromane*, in general and irrespective of subgenre, follow the linear structure inherited from the original European *Bildungsromane*. Such a structure illustrates the chronological development of the protagonist, and assumes that the development that takes place is, indeed, linear. In contrast, Adichie refuses to follow a linear structure. Instead, Kambili's life story is plotted onto a cyclical structure that encompasses three different timeframes, all set in the past. However, the narrator steps out of the timeframes when the narrative leaps to the present. Such structural innovation reveals how the third generation reinterprets and reshapes genres, such as the *Bildungsroman*, to fit their purposes. The subversion of the linear structure is used to illustrate the complexity of *Bildung*. Rather than being a linear progression, Kambili's *Bildungsprozess* is shown to be the result of moments of rupture in her immediate society, rather than a smooth introduction into society, as occurs with the traditional male protagonist. In keeping with the other two focal texts of the current study, *Purple Hibiscus's* a-chronological structure leaves Kambili's life open-ended, without final closure or resolution. Such open-endedness is largely due to two factors. Firstly, the protagonist in the classic *Bildungsroman* is socialised by society, since such socialisation entails him becoming a responsible member of society, embodying its idealised values and traditions. As evidenced by all three focal texts, the various societies in which the three protagonists grow up are, in fact, far from ideal. Should a third-generation protagonist, thus, become inducted into his or her society, such an induction might imply a growing embodiment of the violent, corrupt and unjust values of the societies that they inhabit. Secondly, the societies that are encountered in the focal texts are ever-changing and permanently in a state of flux. A protagonist is extremely unlikely, therefore, to find closure within the given societal traditions, as such traditions are seldom constant. However, *Purple Hibiscus* ends with the promise of possible future events (such as Kambili's pending visit to the United States and Jaja's release from prison), which might serve to further the protagonist's *Bildungsprozess*.

Complementing the structural subversions of the genre, the nature of the *Bildungsprozess* also serves to redefine it. Fiona Moolla rightly points out that the female *Bildungsroman* in Africa “often involves a journey inward, a spiritual awakening or self-discovery” (4). The journey is, furthermore, always set within the “wider community” (Moolla 4), in contrast with the traditional European *Bildungsromane*, which has a male protagonist and “charts the hero’s journey outward into society” (Moolla 4). *Purple Hibiscus* combines the ontological inward and physical outward movement of *Bildung*.²⁷ *Purple Hibiscus* parallels the inward journey, as seen in the female subgenre, with the outward movement into society that hallmarks the journey of the male protagonist in the classic form of the genre. Similar to the older European female *Bildungsroman*, the protagonist’s journey in *Purple Hibiscus* is highly individualised and personal. However, the intimate journey inwards simultaneously moves outwards into society, as is the case with the European male protagonist. In combining the inward and outward journey of the protagonist, *Purple Hibiscus* subverts the conventions of the *Bildungsprozess* of the classic male, as well as the female, *Bildungsroman*.

Such subversion not only reshapes the genre, but also illustrates the way in which the third generation perceives and, accordingly, constructs *Bildung*. The process of negotiating individuality, for the third generation, consists of an inward spiritual awakening, entailing engagement with society and societal conventions. Whereas the journey inward exemplifies a form of self-knowledge that leads to authorship over the self and self-stylisation, the outward journey illustrates the relational nature of *Bildung*, as seen in Kambili’s close relationship with Amaka and Aunty Ifeoma.

Whereas Adichie’s engagement with the literary traditions of the past illustrates a new approach to *Bildung* on the part of the third generation, Kambili’s engagement with various religio-cultural traditions in her society points to the way in which such *Bildung* manifests itself. Kambili’s father, due to his interpretation of religious tradition, assumes the role of exclusive author of her life. In such terms, he tries to make her as he wants and expects her to be: namely, a submissive Roman Catholic girl who obeys his wishes for fear of divine retribution. Eugene believes that his actions are his God-given directive, just as was the mandate that was given to the priest who raised him. By achieving such an objective, Eugene believes that Kambili’s development and upbringing should be complete. No further

²⁷ Chapter Two examines how *Everything Good Will Come* also combines the two different approaches to *bildung*, but in a way that is different to *Purple Hibiscus*, even though it is also an African female *Bildungsroman* of the third generation. The difference in approach illustrates the diversity contained within the field of third-generation female *Bildungsromane*.

Bildung should then be required, as he would have 'authored' her Roman Catholicism to a fitting completion. Consequently, Eugene does not give Kambili any leeway to negotiate her identity autonomously and, in so doing, attempts to force her into a mould of which he approves – he foists identity onto her. At first, Kambili accepts her father as her source of identity and allows him to shape her. Daria Tunca writes in "Ideology in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" that Kambili "has literally internalized his values and authority, for his ideas cannot be distinguished from hers" (124). Eugene has succeeded in indoctrinating her up until this point. However, her fear of punishment can be seen as being just as much the motivation for her acquiescence as is her need for his approval. Since Eugene is initially ever-present in Kambili's life, it follows that her imposed *Bildungsprozess*, at the beginning of the novel, is also more or less constant and reminiscent of the developmental process in the traditional male *Bildungsroman*.

However, secondary influences on Kambili's identity consist of the unstable political, social and cultural forces that are operational within her milieu. Although Kambili's development is initially linear, as her father still authors her life (which is seen in the second section of the novel, "*SPEAKING WITH OUR SPIRITS, Before Palm Sunday*"), the erratic nature of the social, cultural and political forces that influence her life and world disrupt the linear developmental process. Such political unrest prompts her father to send her to her aunt, where she is exposed, for the first time, to different forms of religious worship, cultural practices and ways of social interaction. The new experiences and influences, while disrupting the patterned development prescribed for her by her father, presents her with ample opportunity for individualising her identity. Kambili's journey outward into society, thus, results in her inward spiritual awakening to a form of personal development that her father's linear path could not have offered her. Both inward development and outward movement are, accordingly, seen as being of equal importance in the protagonist's *Bildungsprozess*.

Moolla notes that the "black *Bildungsroman* affirms the potential for development throughout life rather than limiting *Bildung* to youth" (4). Though we see how Kambili starts to claim authorship of her own life in the closing section of the novel, her future still remains uncertain. Instability in her surrounding society is marked by the death of the head of state, political demonstrations and the coming into power of a new government by the end of the novel. The unstable nature of such forces creates a world in flux, which, in turn, forces the individual to negotiate his or her identity continuously in order that he or she might adapt to the changing society. Any opportunity for closure and resolution is, accordingly, foreclosed. Thus, *Purple Hibiscus* propagates a form of *Bildung* that is erratic and unstable, yet which is

continuous and never-ending, as it constantly has to adapt to new socio-political and cultural forces.

Similarly to the way in which members of the third generation draw from, build on, and subvert classic genres, they derive the substance and fabric of their work from previous generations of African, including Nigerian, writers. Their investigation of such issues occurs through a contemporary lens and draws upon previously unexplored viewpoints. Such a reinterpretation of the literary subject matter creates a form of intertextual dialoguing. The dialoguing maps the changes in Nigeria's body of literature, as well as providing a contemporary take on individual character formation. Third-generation protagonists mirror characters found in the work of previous generations. In conjunction with the changes that the third generation inserts into the structure of classic genres, the new perspectives on how identity is negotiated help to steer contemporary Nigerian writing in a new direction. *Purple Hibiscus*, accordingly, specifically enters into dialogue with Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Anthills of the Savannah*, as well as with Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and Ama Ata Aidoo's "The Girl Who Can".

Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel, *Nervous Conditions*, explores the relationship between public/political and personal/private spaces and is, thus, of primary concern to a discussion of the way in which Kambili re-negotiates her identity between various traditions. Although *Nervous Conditions* plays out in a colonial setting and *Purple Hibiscus* in a postcolonial one, the principle of an authoritative father figure that embodies certain aspects of the corrupt government stays the same, strengthening the similarities between the two texts. Some of Susan Z. Andrade's comments on *Nervous Conditions* are, accordingly, also relevant to Kambili as character. Andrade states that "Nyasha's very failure as a coming-of-age subject raises questions about subjectivity, power, and control that go beyond the private domain of home and family to the public one of nation and state" (46). Kambili's coming of age, like Nyasha's, is severely hampered by her father. Eugene functions as a partial embodiment of the corrupt postcolonial military government. The relationship between the individual and her father-cum-state requires consideration of the relationship between the becoming of the individual and that of the state.

Andrade states that although "the genre of the *Bildungsroman* involves a progression or quest in the development of a self, that quest need not entail only the making of individual subjectivity but might also encompass self-realization in the service of a larger ideology" (47). Kambili's self-realisation occurs in the service of an ideology that propagates a state in which individuals are neither victimised nor exploited by the government: a state in which individuals have the freedom to speak for themselves. As seen from the lack of closure and

final illumination at the end of the novel, whether Kambili does, in fact, manage to come of age is debatable. The traditional *Bildungsroman* hails societal norms and traditions as facilitating personal development and illumination. However, Kambili's problematic process of *Bildung* questions the prevalent norms of her society, as such norms constrain, rather than facilitate, her development and illumination. Kambili's journey, consequently, allows for an explication of the forces (norms, values and traditions) that she, as well as other silenced victims, have to face in order to become independent individuals. Her life story can thus be read, to some extent, as political allegory, where 'political' implies not only the politics of state, but also those related to the home, society, tradition, custom, religion, and gender.

In such a political context, Eugene, just like his literary predecessor Babamukuru in *Nervous Conditions*, is of particular interest. Writing on the allegorical nature of *Purple Hibiscus*, Hewett states that

Adichie reveals recurring concern[s] with the postcolonial mayhem that underlies the domestic world of her characters, and her observations about one family's private struggle extend into the realm of political metaphor. As a domestic tyrant, Eugene becomes a figure for the novel's unnamed political tyrant who stages a coup and takes over the country. (89)

In reading *Purple Hibiscus* as a "political metaphor", the character of Eugene, as Hewett points out, only embodies the corrupt neo-colonial state. To limit Eugene's character to such a political context seems to be a serious misreading of the text, as well as of Eugene's character. I argue in contrast for the acknowledgement of the complex and conflicting relationship that exists between the protagonist and her father, who is, paradoxically, simultaneously portrayed as a despot at home while being a fearless spokesperson for the poor and downtrodden of the community at large. Eugene's newspaper, the *Standard*, is, for instance, one of the very few media through which the voices of the oppressed people of Nigeria can be heard, as it allows them to speak out against injustice and corruption. Father Amadi says that the "*Standard* is the only paper that dares to tell the truth" (*Hibiscus* 136). Contrary to Eugene's domestic persona, his public persona is the antithesis of that of a despot. In fact, he is portrayed as having won an Amnesty International award for his prodemocracy activities (*Hibiscus* 137). Outside the domestic sphere, he is a hero, while remaining a villain at home, where the members of his family are imprisoned in silence. Such a discrepancy makes his character and familial relationships complex, ensuring that he cannot be read as a mere allegorical figure.

Kambili is confined by her father to abiding by the ultra-rigid doctrines of Roman Catholicism, which cut her off from both her ancestral cultural traditions and other members

of her extended family. *Purple Hibiscus*, therefore, as Chris Abani argues in his essay, 'Of Ancestors and Progeny', "engages the tyranny of the family as a reflection of the tyranny not just of the state but of that often ignored problem in Nigeria, religion" (25). Eugene's cloistering of Kambili deprives her of any additional frame of reference in terms of which she might perceive herself as 'normal', inhibiting her *Bildung*. She needs to engage with an alternative epistemological system, since such an alternative system might allow her to reflect on that of her father. Becoming aware of more than one religious tradition might then open up more possibilities for her *Bildung*. Only an outward journey into various religious and cultural traditions will provide her with the necessary perspective on her own self and her society to allow her to re-negotiate her journey of individualisation. Such a movement outwards into society is foundational to the *Bildungsprozess*, as well as to the conventions of the classic *Bildungsroman*. In this regard, Kambili's *Bildungsprozess* conforms to the literary expectations and conceptions of the self inherited from the previous literary traditions of the European *Bildungsromane*. Before Kambili's journey outward into a wider community can be mapped, it is essential to gain an understanding of the domestic situation in which the outward journey of her *Bildungsprozess* commences.

After adopting the Catholic faith as a boy, Eugene renounced his traditional Igbo belief system, attended a mission school, and became a fundamentalist Roman Catholic. His rejection of traditional faith is reminiscent of the way in which Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, in *Things Fall Apart*, also rejects his father and the traditional Igbo belief system in favour of the apparently more peace-loving Christian faith. Nwoye's conversion to Christianity results in an irreconcilable rift developing between himself and his father, which leads to a complete breakdown of the family unity.

Convinced that Christianity is superior to his indigenous Igbo traditional beliefs, which favour the male as patriarch and ruler of the house, Eugene converts to an imported religion, in which the male is doctrinally established as the ruler and master of his own household. Roman Catholicism, accordingly, legitimises Eugene's control over his own family, allowing him to become the sole ruler by divine right. By internalising and reifying such beliefs, he feels that he is acting on God's behalf when he severely punishes any apparent violation of Biblical or Catholic precept. In an interview with Norah Vawter, Adichie states that Eugene's severe punishments stem from his sincere belief that he was doing 'the right thing': "Inside the home, [this] drives him to hit Kambili, because he needs to show her the right way. The need to do right makes him punish his wife, because she needs to know the right way to act." By guarding his exclusive enclave from any threat of contamination, Eugene enforces and indoctrinates his family members so that they almost become non-entities. They appear to be

empty selves, merely mouthing his ideologies and perceptions of them, and acting out the roles he has assigned to them.

Probably the most severe punishment we encounter in the novel is when Eugene throws boiling water on Kambili's feet as punishment for not informing him of her grandfather's presence in her aunt's flat. Before he does this, he tells her how the priest that looked after him when he was young once poured boiling water over his hands as a punishment for his sin. Eugene is thus a victim himself, acting in the way in which he was taught, and perpetrating the same type of violence that he suffered. His constant fear of God's wrath for unconfessed sin plunges him into an almost permanent state of stress and anxiety.

Jean Paul Sartre's preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* may shed light on our understanding of Eugene's nervous condition. According to Sartre, the suppressed native experiences anger towards the empire. Should "this suppressed fury fail to find an outlet, it turns in a vacuum and devastates the oppressed creatures themselves. In order to free themselves they even massacre each other. The different tribes fight between themselves since they cannot face the real enemy" (16). Eugene is, like the suppressed native, the victim of colonial trauma and abuse, which he himself in turn comes to perpetrate on vulnerable victims. Brenda Cooper agrees with such a reading when she confirms that "[we] begin to understand Papa's abuse of his own family, given that he was himself horribly abused as a child, in the name of punitive Christianity" (119).

Achebe's final novel, *Anthills of the Savannah* (1978), sheds further light on the reasons for Eugene's conduct. The novel explores the lives of five characters who have to survive the dictatorial rule of a one-time friend. One of the characters, Beatrice (after whom, we might hypothesise, Adichie names Kambili's mother), grows up on a mission station, where she is subjected to severe beatings by her father, who is the headmaster of an Anglican mission school. Beatrice refers to "his whip... [being]... famous not only in our house and in the schoolhouse next door but throughout the diocese" (85). Beatrice's father's conduct explicitly illustrates the abusive pedagogical approaches of certain individuals in the mission employ, illustrating the kind of abuse Eugene might have suffered. As a result, Eugene seems to feel that his worth and validation (in terms of public opinion, his religious community and God) depends on the extent to which the behaviour of his wife and children exemplifies Catholic traditions. Any incomppliance on the part of the latter is, therefore, severely punished.

Kambili, thus, needs to move out of this abusive private and personal space into a freer public and political space to become her true self. Ato Quayson makes it clear that “[w]hereas for men, the movement between private and public is smooth and largely unremarked, for women, the movement into the public sphere is often registered as posing danger” (41). Kambili, accordingly, encounters fierce opposition on entering public space,²⁸ where she finds that her identity is multi-layered and fluid, rather than singular and set.

Coming to understand how identity is generally formed enables further investigation of the novel’s notion of identity, as propagated by the third generation. Kwame Anthony Appiah explains the genesis of identity in ways that shed light on its ‘invented’ nature:

Every human identity is constructed, historical; every one has its share of false presuppositions, of the errors and inaccuracies that courtesy calls ‘myth’, religion ‘heresy’, and science ‘magic’. Invented histories, invented biologies, invented cultural affinities come with every identity; each is a kind of role that has to be scripted, structured by conventions of narrative to which the world never quite manages to conform. (105)

Roman Catholicism and the traditional belief system of the Igbo, too, are “invented”. Appiah continues: “[I]dentities are complex and multiple and grow out of a history of changing responses to economic, political and cultural forces, almost always in opposition to other identities” (90). As is evident in the text, both Eugene and Papa Nnukwu appose Roman Catholicism to Igbo traditionalism, with Eugene condemning his father’s epistemological system as “myth”, whereas Papa-Nnukwu considers his son’s adoption of another faith “heresy”. Papa-Nnukwu’s views are clear when he says that he thinks that “it was the missionaries that misled [his] son” (*Hibiscus* 84). This binary relationship is deconstructed and contested through the characters of Ifeoma and Father Amadi.

Since identity, according to Appiah, is historically constructed, Kambili’s ensuing lack of insight into her historical Igbo identity complicates her negotiation for her personal Igbo identity. An ‘authentic’ African identity is only plausible if it is founded on a past marked by an idyllic cultural and ethnic heritage, as is indicated by both Mbembe and Appiah. In *Things Fall Apart* the Igbo people are represented objectively, taking into account the ‘brutality’ of the traditional belief system, which eradicates any notion of an idyllic cultural past. According to traditional Igbo beliefs, as presented in the novel, twins are, for example, left in the ‘evil forest’ to die, because they are ‘evil’. As shown by *Things Fall Apart*, the past is not idyllic;

²⁸ Judith Butler (132) paraphrases Douglas, who “suggests that all social systems are vulnerable at their margins, and that all margins are accordingly considered dangerous”, since they are permeable.

hence, *Purple Hibiscus* does not assume to hark back to any notion of a pristine cultural heritage in an attempt to negotiate a modern identity.

For the third generation, knowledge of one's cultural and ethnic heritage aids in the construction of a present and progressive identity, as one's identity is inseparable from one's past. Hewett writes that "Kambili must literally 're-member' herself – she must end her alienation from her own voice and body – by putting together a coherent narrative of her *past and present*" (84; emphasis added). Such 'putting together' includes Adichie's engagement with literary traditions. By engaging in dialogue with earlier writers, she creates a coherent narrative from past to present that illustrates the nature of the changing society and the consequent need to live out adaptable individual identities.

The theme of traditional collapse present in *Things Fall Apart* also runs through *Purple Hibiscus*. However, in the latter work, both Igbo traditionalism and Christian tradition are seen to collapse. Whereas the two religious traditions were opposed to each other in the colonial context, *Purple Hibiscus* encourages a re-evaluation of both traditions, which gives birth to a fuller and more sustainable religious identity.

In a striking intertextual reference, the theme of collapsing traditions is introduced in the opening sentence of the novel, when Kambili narrates that "[t]hings started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion" (*Hibiscus* 3). Her brother's defiance signals the first crack in the Achike household's Roman Catholic observance. Similarly, the dilapidated state of Papa Nnukwu's compound illustrates the 'falling apart' of the Igbo traditional belief system. Cooper explains that "Papa-Nnukwu's age and frailty and his death [...] are indicators that his way of life is one that is passing and not, by itself, the solution for the future" (119). Kambili must, thus, re-negotiate her own identity in a middle space between the two traditions. The middle space allows for, and incorporates, both of the traditions in a way that is constructive and progressive. Identity for the third generation thus can be seen as a continuously developing continuum of 'identity layering' of past and present traditions, events and experiences. Each stage is as important and (in)formative as the other.

Obi Nwakanma argues that there

is today a 'doubleness' of Igbo nationalism – its radiating between cosmopolitanism and localism – a self-conscious existence at the margins of Nigerian postcolonial history. There is thus reflected in the nature of Igbo identity and its inscription in the contemporary Nigerian novel an ambivalent desire to imagine and constitute a nation within and outside these margins. (8)

Nwakanma's observation provides some insight into the way that third-generation characters construct their identities. Aunty Ifeoma represents the "doubleness", or middle space, to which Nwakanma points. She negotiates her identity from within and without national and cultural borders, vacillating between the local and the cosmopolitan. She appreciates and understands the *mos maiorum* (the traditions and beliefs of the ancestors), while simultaneously, and comfortably, inhabiting a modern Africa. Her womanhood does not prevent her from attaining a Western-style education and academic career. By appropriating from various traditions, experiences and histories the building blocks of her identity, she is able to layer different aspects of her identity. Ifeoma's identity is inscribed to "imagine and constitute a nation within and outside [the] margins" of postcolonial history. The imagery of Ifeoma's purple hibiscus effectively conveys the sense of "doubleness" that she herself embodies. Just as the purple hibiscus is a hybrid flower, cultivated by crossing generic varieties, so too is Ifeoma's religio-cultural tradition a hybrid mix of the dominant traditions in Nigerian society. The way in which Ifeoma negotiates her identity, accordingly, represents the way in which the third generation would like to negotiate its identity on the national level. Recognition of the "doubleness" of identity might break down the binaries that the individuals and societies involved choose to construct between their respective traditions, as is seen in *Purple Hibiscus*. In this way, conflict might be averted on both the societal and national level. By recognising the various conflicting elements that have given rise to her identity, Kambili is able to "re-member" herself and piece together the diverse histories of her culture, tradition and religion. Her newly formed identity will also help her to situate herself within a middle space between the traditional binary structures, within which she grew up. Starting with Kambili's understanding and appreciation of her historic Igbo identity, Ifeoma helps Kambili to embark on her journey of becoming.

Kambili's desire to embrace a layered identity becomes evident in her description of Papa-Nnukwu's relationship with Amaka: "They understood each other, using the sparest words. Watching them, I felt a longing for something I would never have" (*Hibiscus* 165). Amaka, growing up with much more awareness of her Igbo heritage than Kambili has, understands the specific Igbo context and cultural paradigm out of which her grandfather speaks. She, therefore, does not require as much explanation as Kambili does. On a more superficial level, Kambili's relatively inadequate command of the Igbo language might prevent her understanding the nuances implicit in the communication between her cousin and grandfather. She laments the fact that she "would never have" this kind of connectedness with her heritage, not only because she is deprived of the background that her cousin has enjoyed under Ifeoma's pedagogical approach, but also because her father has denounced Papa Nnukwu as a "heathen".

Kambili's reluctant departure from Amaka and Papa-Nnukwu reveals the inner conflict between what she desires and what she feels obliged to do. Her disclosure that she feels that her "legs... [do]...not belong to [her]" (*Hibiscus* 165) indicates her dilemma. Another intertextual reference to *Nervous Conditions* explains her resistance to move still further. When Tambu's uncle, Babamukuru, decides that her parent's traditional wedding is not legitimate, as it was not sanctified by the Christian Church, he forces his sister and brother-in-law to remarry in the Church. Tambu then feels that she is bastardised by a religious tradition that does not acknowledge the legitimacy of her parent's traditional marriage. On the day of the 'official' Christian wedding, Tambu is unable to get up from her bed to accompany her uncle to her parents' wedding. Kambili, in contrast, becomes aware that her ancestral cultural heritage is bastardised by a historically alien tradition that deems it pagan. Though eventually able to walk away, her hesitation indicates that she is starting to reposition herself in such a way that she is able to incorporate elements of both the traditions, as Ifeoma and Father Amadi do.

On Kambili and Jaja's first evening at Nsukka, they are introduced to the "doubleness" of Ifeoma's family's religious practice. Ifeoma leads their evening devotion in a way that is completely new to Kambili and Jaja. After the first decade, Kambili's "head snapped back when [she] heard [a] raised, melodious voice. Amaka was singing!" (*Hibiscus* 125). This, according to Kambili's upbringing, is a serious transgression: "You [do] not break into song in the middle of the rosary." Jaja and Kambili do not join in the sporadic Igbo singing during their devotions, leading Ifeoma to ask "if they knew any of the songs". Jaja answers that they "don't sing at home", to which Ifeoma curtly responds, "[w]e do here" (*Hibiscus* 125).

The form of worship that Ifeoma observes is an Africanised version of Catholicism, which is in stark contrast to the staunch purist and Eurocentric nature of the Roman Catholic masses Kambili attends in Enugu. In his essay on Catholicism in *Purple Hibiscus*, Anthony Chennells writes that "[t]he missionary tradition in which Eugene has been raised encouraged mimicry of all things European, because these possessed a particular power to invoke the true God" (4). Such a Eurocentric and ossified form of Catholic tradition seems exclusive, incongruent and displaced within the postcolonial Nigeria in which Eugene lives. The masses are only celebrated by white priests, and follow the precepts and liturgy of Roman Catholic doctrine to the letter. The new mode of worship that is encountered in Ifeoma's household allows for greater leniency and freedom to be introduced into the Roman Catholic practice. Chennells also points out that "Ifeoma's God transcends the religious divisions of different cultures" (6). Ifeoma's Christian religious tradition inclusively blends in

elements of her Igbo heritage. In the process, the binary opposition between the two traditions is collapsed, and Ifeoma is able to negotiate an identity that is layered and constructed from various diverse elements gleaned from both traditions. As Cooper asserts, “[t]he future [of religious traditions in *Purple Hibiscus*] rests rather with Catholics like Father Amadi [...] and Aunty Ifeoma and her family, who attempt to integrate the spirituality of Papa-Nnukwu, and his beliefs and rituals, into their Catholicism” (119). Obiora, Aunty Ifeoma’s son, also negotiates and constructs an inclusive identity for himself. Though he observes and practices Roman Catholicism, he is inducted into the spirit world when participating in traditional Igbo rites. He is, consequently, able to move freely between Igbo traditionalism and Roman Catholicism.

Ogaga Okuyade explains the impact that Eugene’s religious beliefs have on his children:

It is Ifeoma who gives Kambili and Jaja the exclusive benefit of knowing their grandfather beyond the atheistic portraiture their father has cartographed in their mind. Kambili observes her grandfather, Nnukwu with filial attachment from a distance because she has been zipped up by her father’s doctrinaire stance towards Papa Nnukwu which is informed by Kambili’s father’s inebriated religion. (14)

Before Kambili can negotiate an inclusive identity, she needs to break with her “father’s inebriated religion”, which excludes others. Kambili can only overcome the fear of being polluted by her “heathen” grandfather once she understands that Ifeoma’s tolerance and love for Papa-Nnukwu’s traditions are born of a commonality that exists between Roman Catholicism and Igbo traditionalism.²⁹ When Kambili sees her grandfather making his “itu-nzu, his declaration of innocence, in the morning”, she “remembered Ifeoma’s words from the day before, about Papa-Nnukwu being a traditionalist and not a heathen” (*Hibiscus* 166). What strikes Kambili is when Papa-Nnukwu prays: “Chineke! Bless my son, Eugene. Let the sun not set on his prosperity. Lift the curse they have put on him” (*Hibiscus* 168); she “was surprised that he prayed for [her father] with the same earnestness that he prayed for himself and Aunty Ifeoma” (*Hibiscus* 168). Kambili thus becomes aware of her grandfather’s spirituality, as well as of his love for her father, even though the latter completely rejects him and his beliefs. She becomes increasingly aware of her father’s lack of love for, and

²⁹ Commonality is presented as redemptive in both *Purple Hibiscus* and *GraceLand*. In *Purple Hibiscus*, such commonality occurs between the two respective religious traditions, whereas in *GraceLand*, it occurs between the two genders. Commonality functions as the adhesive that holds together the various layers of third-generational identity, which are marked by a sense of “doubleness”.

tolerance of, his own father, who still loves him unconditionally. Love and repentance are common themes in both the Catholic and Igbo belief systems. When visiting her grandfather's compound, she notes that his shrine, "where Papa said Jaja and [she] were never to go near", "looked like the grotto behind St. Agnes, the one dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes" (*Hibiscus* 67). By becoming aware of the various commonalities between her faith and his, she is alerted to their shared humanity. No longer regarding him as a threat to her sanctity and religious purity enables her to bridge the gap between them. Her desire to connect with her grandfather is also a desire to know about her own cultural heritage and history, since he is the primary link that she has with her cultural past.

Kambili's cherishing of the half-finished portrait that Amaka painted of Papa-Nnukwu before he died indicates that she is undergoing a *Bildungsprozess* and negotiating a layered identity. Kambili confirms such a development when she states that "all changed after Nsukka" (*Hibiscus* 209). However, when Eugene finds Kambili looking at the portrait, he brutally assaults her.

For all the severity of the assault, Kambili mentions that "it was what we wanted to happen, Jaja and I, without being aware of it" (*Hibiscus* 209). She wants something to break, to be talked about, and to be opened up, without knowing what, or how to articulate such a desire. In short, she implicitly wants her father to acknowledge and be aware of the changes in her and Jaja's lives. Confronting him directly is impossible, so she decides to let him find out by himself how they changed in Nsukka.

Jane Bryce argues, in third-generational novels, that we find "women who no longer have anything to gain by dissembling, by avoiding confrontation. They offer a subjective, individualized point of view on the violent distortions of the body politic, meeting visceral pain with clear-eyed pragmatism" (58). In his turn, Okuyade believes that "*Purple Hibiscus* has a feminist thrust but the brand of feminism is subtle" (13). The novel's feminist stance is indeed "subtle", in the sense that Kambili does not directly confront her father. Her actions might rather be described as a form of passive aggression. However, Adichie openly challenges the issue of patriarchy by confronting it in her novel, *Purple Hibiscus*. Adichie exposes "the violent distortions of the body politic" to which women are subjected in her exploration of domestic violence. Kambili's body, by means of the adoption of "a subjective, individualized point of view", becomes a symbol of the suffering of the oppressed Nigerian people under a government that tolerates no opposition. Yet, "Kambili's handling of the pieces of the painting symbolizes the collapse of her father's system and, by extension, patriarchy" (Okuyade 16). The collapse of the patriarchal system exemplifies the way in which the new identity, which

the third generation is propagating, is confronting, resisting and overcoming adversity in Nigeria today.

Once back in Aunty Ifeoma's flat, where Kambili recuperates after the assault, Kambili is seen to be radically altered. Kambili narrates that "Aunty Ifeoma's experimental purple hibiscus [are] rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom" (16), showing how the purple hibiscus, as symbols of her new identity, took root in Enugu. The freedom that the flowers symbolise accompanies her growing individualisation, as well as the increasing number of challenges that it issues. The section of the novel that covers Kambili's second stay at Nsukka commences on page 217, starting with a telling event. When it rains, the flying ants, *aku*, emerge and dot the sky. This occurrence is significant, since Kambili has now shed her former identity (by defying and collapsing, to a certain extent, Eugene's patriarchal dominance), similarly to how the ants metamorphose from termites into flying ants. Kambili is now, metaphorically speaking, growing wings, like the ants, which enables her to launch herself into a new character and into a life situated between opposing cultural traditions, rather than being situated in one alone. The nature of the middle space is explained in the way in which the ants are eaten. *Aku* are fried and eaten, wrapped in leaves, and regarded by the Igbo as a delicacy. On the first day of Kambili's second visit to Nsukka (after she took the decision to author herself by challenging her father's authority), she is immersed back into a culturally hybrid space. Such an immersion is indicated by the way in which she is confronted with an 'authentic' cultural event, namely the habit of catching and frying flying ants. Her ability to observe the children catching the *aku* illustrates the manifold links that Kambili still has with her cultural heritage. That Ifeoma is unwilling to fry the ants in her kitchen is just as telling. Although they eat the ants, the fact that they do not fry them, indicates a changing African culture: hence, we find a modern African culture that merges the old with the new to create a living and adaptable tradition. Such is the cultural position into which Kambili is gradually moving. Yet, just as some ants do not live to complete their life-cycle, so Kambili's metaphorical wings do not guarantee her freedom.

Through Kambili's journey of becoming, she is able to negotiate an identity that consists of an amalgamation of different traditions. Although her identity is still relatively incomplete, the process of her becoming is set in motion. Two further aspects of her becoming with which she still needs to grapple are her voice and gender identity. Gaining control of voice, the ability to speak and author herself, might provide her with the necessary potential for authoring her future as a woman. Kambili's quest is for her own voice and gender identity, which are aspects of her self, which might serve to strengthen her metaphorical wings.

Negotiating Silences, Becoming a Female Subject

In tandem with her journey to discover her cultural heritage and to become part of a religio-cultural tradition that is sustainable in a modern African context, Kambili also needs to come to voice and re-negotiate her engendered identity. The urgency with which she strives to voice her gender identity is conveyed by the intensity of the silences in her family home.

Becoming voiced implies that Kambili no longer mouths and embodies her father's ideologies, but acts and speaks out of her own self-negotiated sensibilities. In living out her own female gender identity, which is simultaneously both intimate and social, she is able to gain sufficient power to resist her father's patriarchal hold over her life. Kambili's coming to voice and her negotiation of her assigned gender identity become parallel processes that concurrently inform and shape each other. The section under discussion begins with investigating the relationship between 'voice' and gender, which leads to a discussion of the reasons for the silences in the Achike household, as represented by the 'contract of silence'. This contract causes Kambili to become an empty vessel, mouthing her father's ideologies. Only a form of 'solidarity' with other women can facilitate her process of voicing herself and of re-negotiating her engendered identity. Kambili's budding relationship with Father Amadi, which complements her feelings of sisterhood with Ifeoma and Amaka, also facilitates her gender becoming. After discussing such burgeoning relationships, I show how her voice and gender development are mutually constitutive. The section closes with an investigation of the allegorical significance of voice and gender development, as well as of the complexity of silence in the closing chapters of the novel.

Abena Busia investigates the imposed silences and un-voicing of black (African) women by white male colonial authors. She writes about the ways in which male authors keep women silent in their fiction, since women's access to voice and their expression of sexuality might empower them sufficiently to be able to threaten the authoritative position of the white male characters. Busia mentions that "sexuality and access to language together form part of the discourse of access to power" (87), pointing to the potential agency which can be found within the relationship of language and sexuality, if they are negotiated simultaneously. Busia continues to argue that "voicelessness is often a deliberate *unvoicing*, rather than any intrinsic absence of speech on the part of the women" (87; emphasis in original). Though *Purple Hibiscus* plays out in a very different context, the women characters are still unvoiced by men, even if the men are African patriarchs and fictional constructions. Adichie, however, presents her characters as such to very different ends. By constructing Kambili as silent and as inhabiting an, as yet, unexplored gender identity, Adichie illustrates how women are still kept silent in the postcolony, due to the prevalent patriarchal dominance

of men in their communities. Ogaga Okunyade also believes that silence is used as a tool for preventing women from entering the discourse of power, when he writes that “Eugene runs his home with a zero tolerance in its grossest and most intransigent sense, and this in turn reduces his family to a resonating silence in almost all their endeavours, outside and inside the home. Silencing becomes a strategy of keeping women on a leash even within the domestic site” (12). On an allegorical level, Kambili’s constructed silence thus bears testimony to the generations of women, who, like her mother, and those before her, were silenced in a bid to keep them from negotiating their gender identities. Kambili’s *Bildungsprozess* and journey to find her voice can, therefore, be regarded as an attempt to voice the silences imposed on her by her father, as well as the silences imposed on the women of previous generations.

The significance of the practice of silencing – and of the ensuing silences – in *Purple Hibiscus* is as telling as are Kambili’s sparse words. Understanding the nature of the silence into which she is locked is essential to a comprehensive appreciation of the text. Near the beginning of the first chapter, “*BREAKING GODS, Palm Sunday*”, Kambili mentions that “Mama had realized that she would not need the figurines anymore; that when Papa threw the missal at Jaja [that shattered the étagère which housed the figurines], it was not just the figurines that came tumbling down, it was everything” (*Hibiscus* 15). The glass étagère functions as a symbol of the ‘contract of silence’ in the Achike household. Eugene is clearly portrayed as being responsible for his wife’s miscarriages, as well as for her occasional bruises. Rather than talking about the brutality of her family’s lives, Mama chooses to polish the figurines after each assault by her husband. The fragility and delicacy of the figurines represents what Beatrice wants for her family. The beautiful dancing figures embody a dream of happiness and serve as an acknowledgement of the beauty of life that is so rarely experienced. After the étagère and the figurines are shattered, Beatrice realises that she will no longer need to polish the figurines as a release from the domestic violence about which she cannot talk, since their mutual silence has been shattered, along with the figurines. Kambili mentions that “Nsukka began to lift the silence” (*Hibiscus* 16), which led to the breaking of the contract of silence, as well as to their father’s murder, in Beatrice’s last desperate attempt to free them from the tyranny of violence to which they have been subject.

Just as the contract of silence binds the Achike household in silence, the patriarchal system and Roman Catholic doctrine (as Eugene interprets it) similarly dictate and bind their gendered identities. In accordance with his rigid interpretation of religion, Eugene abides by dogmatic principles governing the status, dress code and comportment of his women. Accordingly, Kambili is not allowed to wear trousers or shorts, since they are perceived as

masculine attire; she has to cover her head during all church activities; she may not wear any make-up; and she is placed under constant adult surveillance. Consequently, Kambili can neither experiment with, nor explore, her gender identity and sexuality, as she has to conform to her father's view of conservative Roman Catholic womanhood. Similarly, Nyasha, in *Nervous Conditions*, is severely inhibited by her father and the mission education to which she is subjected. Yet, unlike Kambili, she challenges her father as much as she can, which ultimately leads to her mental breakdown and ensuing anorexia. The intertextual reference illuminates the repercussions that authoritarian patriarchy and religion, with its implicit control and violence, have on females who desire to express and explore their gender identities in environments where it is not considered 'proper' for them to do so. Kambili needs to transgress the clearly defined and controlled gender boundaries set by her father, so that she can position herself as an autonomous woman, capable of expressing her sexuality and gender identity free of any inhibiting powers. The consequences of her doing so, however, might be dire, as seen in Nyasha's ultimate failure to negotiate her own individuality. Whereas Dangarembga illustrates the failure of patriarchal dominance to facilitate female *Bildung*, Adichie explores the possibilities of female solidarity as a more favourable environment in which girls can negotiate their gender identities.

Finding her voice proves just as difficult a challenge for Kambili. Though she is physically present in the text, she seldom speaks before she finds her voice in the liberating space of Ifeoma's flat. Jaja and Kambili possess a silent form of language, speaking with their eyes that which is 'improper' to verbalise (*Hibiscus* 22). Kambili utters only responses pre-programmed by her father: "Thanks be to God". It was what Jaja and I said, what Papa expected us to say" (*Hibiscus* 20). Her identity is so tied up with that of her father that his approval of her is the only form of affirmation that she requires. Kambili is thus forced to remain silent, for fear of saying something offensive, or of saying something of which her father disapproves.

Kambili's first critical self-assessment of her 'un-voiced' state is when her flamboyant and outspoken aunt and boisterous children come to stay with the Achikes over the Christmas holiday. She is especially attracted to Ifeoma's boldness and self-assurance. Kambili says: "I watched every movement she made; I could not tear my ears away. It was the fearlessness about her, about the way she gestured as she spoke, the way she smiled to show that wide gap between her teeth" (*Hibiscus* 76). Kambili also wonders how her cousin Amaka, who is the same age as she is, can "open her mouth and [have] words flow easily out" (*Hibiscus* 99). Speaking fearlessly is completely foreign to Kambili, not only because her father disapproves of loud talking in his presence, but also because she does not know that it

is possible for a woman to speak 'like a man'. Her fears, mixed with awe, are deepened by the way in which Ifeoma asks her father if she and Jaja may spend time with her and her family. Instead of submitting to her brother's authority, Ifeoma challenges it by forcing him to listen to her. Kambili is not yet capable of conversing so freely, since the contract of silence in her household has not yet been shattered. During this stage of her *Bildungsprozess*, she is just starting to become aware of the alternatives to the silence to which she is accustomed.

Peter Elbow, in *What Do We Mean*, sheds some light on Ifeoma and Amaka's ability to speak out and express themselves as freely and effectively as they do. Elbow believes that "resonant voice" fully captures unconscious intentions and feelings (17). In *Writing with Power*, he writes that the individual can only speak with resonant voice if the "acceptable self" (301), the self that is constructed only to seek the approval of others, is completely dismantled. Kambili is amazed at how her cousins apparently do not have to present their "acceptable self", as they are unconditionally accepted by their mother. Ifeoma, in turn, does not have to project her "acceptable self" either, as she neither seeks, nor needs, her brother's approval. With her growing exposure to such relative freedom, Kambili begins to realise that she needs to break down her "acceptable self", which has only been constructed to please her father, if she wishes to speak with a "resonant voice".

Kambili's journey to find such a voice and to dismantle her "acceptable self" is facilitated within a wider community of women. Society and community are important facilitators of becoming in the traditional male *Bildungsroman*; societal values and traditions are presented as the norm, to which the male protagonist eventually becomes eager to conform. Such is, however, not the case in more recent female *Bildungsromane*. Andrade writes of *Nervous Conditions* that "the older Tambu perceives her psychological development and social success to have been made possible through the community of women in whose company she comes of age" (139). Rita Felski similarly claims that the "feminist *Bildungsroman* [...] combines the exploration of subjectivity with a dimension of group solidarity which inspires activism and resistance rather than private resignation, and makes it possible to project a visionary hope of a future change" (139). The becoming of the girl in the female *Bildungsroman*, therefore, requires a group of women to challenge, rather than to acquiesce to, societal norms and values. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Amaka's *Bildungsprozess* is closely facilitated by her mother, to whom she already shows a "striking resemblance" (*Hibiscus* 79). The relationship between mother and daughter provides an ironic parallel to the relationship that exists between the voiceless Kambili and her silenced mother. Amaka functions as a foil for Kambili, which forces her to grapple with the question of the extent and depth to which *Bildung* is possible at their age. Kambili realises that Amaka's freedom to

open “her mouth and...[have]...words flow easily out” (*Hibiscus* 99) stems from her closeness to Aunty Ifeoma.

Kambili’s quest for individuality will thus, to some extent, depend on the relationship that she establishes with Aunty Ifeoma and Amaka. The relationship exceeds the boundaries of mere family to become one of intimate friendship and solidarity. Such a sense of solidarity ultimately helps her to oppose the silences that her father forces upon her. The solidarity with her aunt and cousin inevitably leads to “activism and resistance”, as opposed to Kambili’s current “private resignation”. By means of activism Kambili is able to find her (resonant) voice, which foreshadows “visionary hope of a future change”. However, activism in Kambili’s case does not refer to an overt and outright challenge of her father’s authority, but rather to her growing freedom to construct, speak and express herself ‘actively’ as her father’s hold over her life dwindles.

Kambili’s gender identity, similar to her own ability to speak, depends on her affiliation with two other women, Ifeoma and Amaka. Beatrice fails, as a mother figure, to facilitate her daughter’s journey to find her own resonant voice, as well as to lead her into an autonomously negotiated gender identity. Her failure is the result of the limitations that Eugene places on her gender identity. Kambili, thus, has to turn to Ifeoma and Amaka to aid her in her quest for an autonomous gender identity.

The relationship between language and gender, as well as the way in which Kambili looks to her female relatives for guidance in her negotiation of her identity, is vividly expressed in the following exchanges. When Ifeoma demands from Eugene that Kambili and Jaja accompany her on a road trip, Kambili discloses that she wanted to “press [Aunty Ifeoma’s] lips shut” (*Hibiscus* 77), since she is arguing with a ‘saint’. Yet, she simultaneously wants to “get some of that shiny bronze lipstick on [her] fingers” (*Hibiscus* 77). After their road trip, Kambili states that “[a]lthough I tried to concentrate on Mass, I kept thinking of Amaka’s lipstick, wondering what it felt like to run color over my lips” (*Hibiscus* 89). Ifeoma’s mouth, the ‘tool’ with which she voices and ‘speaks’ herself, is painted a “shiny bronze”. Lipstick is a creative way of expressing and fashioning one’s gendered identity. Ifeoma’s ability to negotiate her own gender identity and her freedom to voice herself, thus, support each other. Such support is symbolically expressed by Adichie in the image of Ifeoma’s painted mouth. Hewett quotes Unoma Azuah as stating that “sexuality or sexual independence [is] a form of empowerment” (81). Ifeoma and Amaka strongly express their gender identities and sexuality, which empowers them to be bold and ‘fearless’. Kambili is drawn to the empowerment of sexuality and gender identity, rather than to the actual expression thereof in the form of lipstick. After only initially wanting to touch it, Kambili later

comes to want to know how it feels to “run color over” her lips. Kambili’s association with her aunt and cousin provides her with the safe space in which to commence her negotiation for an individual gender identity and voice, and, by implication, the empowerment that accompanies it.

Ifeoma personifies the maternal principle that instructs Kambili in the process of her coming of age. Ifeoma knows that the greatest obstacle to Kambili’s personal expansion is her lack of a “resonant voice” and her hesitation to break through the silent borders instated by her father. Her awareness is evident when Ifeoma asks Kambili to help Amaka prepare *orah* leaves. When Kambili does not know how to do so, Amaka rebukes her. Ifeoma says: “O *ginidi*, Kambili, have you no mouth? Talk back to her” (*Hibiscus* 170). Kambili then tells Amaka that it is unnecessary to reprimand her, as she is willing to learn how to prepare the leaves. Happy to hear her cousin speaking out for herself, Amaka finally assists her. The solidarity that Kambili experiences with these women, which is encouraged by Ifeoma, prompts her to converse with others. Her initial interaction with others is proof that her inward journey (to find her voice) is complemented by her journey outwards into society (in her social interaction with others).

The first person outside her family with whom Kambili interacts is Father Amadi. While still at Nsukka, he encouraged Kambili to participate in athletics, and, by so doing, inspired her to engage in social interaction with others. Kambili first engages with the wider community when she joins in the volleyball games at her school, after her return from Nsukka. Irrespective of the smirks of the other girls, Kambili waits till she is picked to play for a team; she sees “Father Amadi’s clay-colored face and [hears] only ‘You have good legs for running’” (*Hibiscus* 205).

Father Amadi’s comment on Kambili’s legs is reminiscent of Ama Ata Aidoo’s short story “The Girl Who Can”. Adjoa, the protagonist, is a seven-year-old girl with very thin legs. Adjoa’s grandmother is of an older generation and tradition, which believes that a female’s most important vocation is to bear children. She, therefore, constantly complains that Adjoa’s legs will not be able to support her during pregnancy. Adjoa’s mother, like Kambili’s, remains silent and does not defend her daughter. By the end of the story, Adjoa wins her school’s athletic trophy for “best all-round junior athlete” (Aidoo 16). In response, her grandmother cries while she chants “thin legs can also be useful [...] then who knows?” (17). Adjoa’s grandmother comes to the realisation that childbearing is only one aspect of a woman’s identity, and incorporates ‘running legs’ into her worldview. That Adjoa’s legs are finally appreciated by her grandmother at the end of “The Girl Who Can” strengthens the claim that a girl’s becoming is more easily facilitated in the company of women, than it is under the rule

of men (of which Eugene's inability to relent of his preconceived ideas about womanhood forms part).

Kambili's first visit to Nsukka "lifted the silence", when she started to renegotiate her gender identity and voice through both an inward spiritual awakening and an outward move into society. On her return to Nsukka, she is a very different person. Standing with Amaka on the veranda, Kambili feels that the "old discomfort was gone" (*Hibiscus* 219) between the two of them, making it easier for them to converse with each other. Amaka asks: "It was Uncle Eugene who did that to you, *okwia?*", referring to the injuries her father inflicted on her when he found the painting of Papa-Nnukwu in her room, "Yes. It was him" Kambili answers (*Hibiscus* 220). No one had previously asked Kambili what had happened to her. With this open acknowledgement that her father is not a saint, Kambili can finally divulge some of the secrets and silences of their home, which initiates her much-needed emotional healing. After admitting that it was her father who assaulted her, she is also able to acknowledge her feelings towards Father Amadi, which demonstrates how the ownership of her voice supports her negotiation of her gender identity and sexuality.

Asked whether she has a crush on Father Amadi, she answers in the affirmative. However, she states that naming her attachment to Father Amadi a crush "did not come close to what I felt, how I felt" (*Hibiscus* 219). Later on, she affirms her connection to him, "saying that [I loved Father Amadi], letting the words roll off my tongue" (*Hibiscus* 220). She is able to talk about her affection for a man, which transgresses the sexual boundaries established by her father. Such disclosure effectively illustrates how Kambili has renegotiated her voice to the point where she can 'speak' for herself and begin to re-negotiate her gender identity. Yet, though Kambili's acceptable self is somewhat dismantled, she still does not possess a resonant voice. In confirming Amaka's speculation, she still does not capture the full scope of her emotions, as she admits to herself. At the end of the novel, most of what she narrates still consists of her thoughts, rather than being words that she speaks aloud to others. The absence of a resonant voice points towards her still incomplete *Bildung*, which is a hallmark of the third generation's *Bildungsromane*.

That Adichie keeps Kambili relatively silent in the closing chapters of the novel can be read on a number of levels. Possibly, the trauma that Kambili suffered is so great that she is not yet ready to voice herself. Her lack of resonant voice might also indicate that a description of a complete *Bildung* cannot be contained within the limited scope of a novel, as it is a lifelong process, which conflicts with the traditional view that such a process is complete by the time that the *Bildungsheld* reaches adulthood. Anthony Oha stresses the appropriateness of an allegorical reading when he writes that "Kambili's silence represents

the restless silence of the African people in their inability at challenging those things that trample on the personality of African peoples” (205). The failure of Africans to challenge the authorities keeps them locked into a “relentless” silence. *Purple Hibiscus* expands on the existing state of the nation in its closing chapters, in which yet another coup is described. The political turmoil that exists in the country is also reflected in Ifeoma’s move with her family to the United States, which is also partly due to her wish to escape the corruption at the University of Nsukka, at which university she taught.

The rather bleak take on Kambili’s (and the national) silence in the face of what appears to be prevailing corruption and violence is, however, not without all hope. For Kambili, silence takes on a different meaning now that she is in the process of becoming voiced. For Kambili, however, becoming voiced merely means the commencement of a different silence as the final section of the novel, pointedly titled “A DIFFERENT SILENCE”, indicates. When she sits on the veranda with Amaka, she reflects an image much closer to that of her cousin than to the Kambili to whom we are introduced at the beginning of *Purple Hibiscus*. Kambili “smiled. [She] had never felt the companionship [she] felt sitting next to [Amaka], listening to her Fela and Onyeka cassettes on the tiny tape-player-radio [...] [She] had never felt the comfortable silence [they] shared” (*Hibiscus* 247). The silence no longer indicates the presence of fear or an inability to speak out but, rather, reflects the intimacy of friendship that does not require words, which is the kind of friendship that Amaka and Papa-Nnukwu shared at an earlier stage.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, the relationship between silence and voice is thus intricate. Kambili’s journey to find her voice does not follow the conventional (feminist) trajectory of moving from being silent to being voiced, which then allows the individual to performatively speak and assert the self. The conventional voice–silence binary also does not apply, as is made clear by Kambili’s experiencing silence as “comfortable”. The amendment of traditional conventions brings a complexity to Kambili’s becoming, and helps to establish this *Bildungsroman* as a third-generation text that redefines the genre in its own process of becoming.

The development of the character of Jaja presents yet another form of silencing, as opposed to the comfortable silence that is shared between Kambili and Amaka. Jaja’s desire to protect his sister and mother from all harm results in the imposition of a code of silence that is reminiscent of that of his father. Kambili tells Father Amadi that she wanted to talk to her father on the telephone, but Jaja would not let her. When telling Father Amadi this, she “whispered, so Jaja wouldn’t hear” (*Hibiscus* 268). Possibly, she fears his disapproval of her wanting to talk to her father, even after the contract of silence and, by implication, her father’s

despotic authority, is broken. Jaja accordingly silences Kambili, by forbidding her to talk to their father over the phone, and later prohibits his mother from telling the truth about the murder of her husband. Jaja, despite having the best of intentions, reduces the women in his family to playing the role of helpless victims who need his protection to survive. He, accordingly, although not as severely as his father, reproduces in himself the same kind of 'ownership' that his father exerted over them. Such a *volte-face* complicates the gender/power, silence/voice issue presented in the novel and refuses to permit closure. Rather than Eugene's death signalling the end of a dominating patriarchy, the transition is made to yet another form of patriarchal dominance, albeit one that is more benign. This textual consideration stresses a sense of continuous omnipresent *Bildung*, rather than restricting *Bildung* to a certain period, as a shaping force, even when the force is negatively construed.

On an allegorical level, Jaja's reproduction of his father's dominance and rule is also a reflection of the socio-political world in which the novel is set. Okunyade laments that the nation state in Africa continues to wobble in crisis. Misrule and corruption seems to be deeply entrenched in the psyche of the rulers, provoking widespread scepticism of an idyllic future. This in turn leaves the ruled mired in the economic sodden of the continent, where they are sustained in a supine state. (1-2)

Though not to the same extent as his father, "[m]isrule and corruption seems to be deeply entrenched" in Jaja's psyche, irrespective of his good intentions. The impact of such negative forces causes Kambili and her mother to be "mired" in misrule and "wobbl[ing] in crisis". Africa is locked into a form of perpetual silence, which can be seen in Kambili's silence and subordinate position to Jaja at the end of the novel. Jaja's reproduction of his father's patriarchal dominance, moreover, ensures that there is no possibility of "an idyllic future", just as in the case of Kambili's incomplete *Bildung*. Since patriarchy, corruption and misrule are such prevalent forces, the subjected (female) individuals always have to adapt to their circumstances in a continuous process of becoming.

The final chapter of the novel, "A DIFFERENT SILENCE, *The Present*" (293–307), similarly stresses the continuous nature of personal development and expansion when it proceeds beyond the circular structure onto which Kambili's becoming is initially plotted. Such a break with the circular movement keeps Kambili's development from coming full circle, thereby effectively resisting closure. This resistance to closure, however, also seems to create a form of stasis or entrapment within which Kambili is locked. Accordingly, the "comfortable silence" that Kambili experienced in Nsukka is replaced by a "different silence": a silence in which she does not speak to her mother and a silence which, in a different way

'devoices' her communication with others, effectively 'trapping' her in silence. The only form of communication engaged in between Kambili and Father Amadi is through writing letters. This "different silence" is also a silencing of love. Father Amadi left for Germany as a mission worker, forever stifling the possibility of a love relationship with Kambili that might have otherwise moved beyond the boundaries of the merely platonic. Though Kambili writes emotive letters to him, her love is silenced by its being unrequited. Her gender identity, similarly to her voice, remains in a state of becoming. Rather than following the traditional *Bildungsroman* in reaching towards a fully developed subject, Adichie concludes her narrative with her protagonist still in an ongoing state of becoming, suggesting both the constraints on *Bildung* that Kambili continues to experience, as well as the productive potential of an identity that does not reach a state of stasis.

Such a "different silence", nevertheless, holds a glimmer of hope in the prospect of Jaja's release and in the few positive changes that Kambili observes in her mother's conduct. More importantly, the "different silence" allows Kambili to feel that she "can talk about the future now" (*Hibiscus* 306). In the final section of the novel, Kambili's narration shifts to the present tense. The shift from past to present tense calls attention to the differences existing between the past, undefined identity of the narrator, and the more mature and developed narrator in the present. The shift in narrative tense might also be due to the differences between the past and present forms of silences. The present silence facilitates speech. In the past, Kambili's future was always determined by her father. If Kambili, of her own accord, is now able to talk about the future, she is clearly claiming full authorship of her own life. She, furthermore, realises that the current silence "is a different kind of silence, one that lets [her] breathe" (*Hibiscus* 305). Such a silence is thus the opposite of the silence into which she and her mother were locked during the years after Eugene's death, and is reminiscent of the comfortable silence which she shared with Amaka. The new form of silence might allow for a comfortable space in which Kambili can continue to negotiate her becoming. Having more authorship over her own life now than in the past, Kambili, accompanied by her mother and Jaja, is able to plan a trip to visit Ifeoma and her family in the United States. Ultimately, then, she is able to embrace life, even though she, her mother and Jaja are all emotionally and psychologically scarred.

The novel ends with Kambili observing the sky: "Above, clouds like dyed cotton wool hang low, so low I feel I can reach out and squeeze the moisture from them, the new rains will come down soon" (*Hibiscus* 307). The "new rains" are ushering in a new season that will rejuvenate nature. Similarly, the new season in the lives of the Achike family is marked by

rejuvenation, in which emotional healing can occur, thus opening up the next chapter of becoming in Kambili's *Bildungsprozess*.

Conclusion

This chapter has mapped the way in which Kambili articulates her own life story, using the genre of the *Bildungsroman* as a vehicle. Despite loving her father, she is unable to negotiate her own identity under his authoritarian rule. Having grown up in an exclusive Christian and Eurocentric tradition, she experiences a sense of loss for her ancestral Igbo culture, as represented by her grandfather. However, just as her father's brand of exclusive Roman Catholicism is not sustainable in a modern multi-traditional Nigerian setting, so too is her grandfather's outdated form of Igbo traditionalism also not sustainable. Her aunt and cousin, as well as the charismatic priest, Father Amadi, introduce Kambili to a middle space. This middle space is one of an African modernity where cultures, traditions and religions conflate into a hybrid and sustainable culture, represented by Ifeoma's purple hibiscus, which provides the individual with the freedom to negotiate an identity relatively free of the baggage of any one exclusive and fossilised tradition.

While Kambili is negotiating for herself a socio-religious culture that will enable her to become her own person, she also has to renegotiate her gender identity and find her voice. Her growing feeling of solidarity with Ifeoma and Amaka draws her out of her silent inner world. When she eventually speaks, she is able to voice the trauma induced by domestic violence, thereby initiating her own emotional healing. Furthermore, her budding feelings for Father Amadi allow her to start becoming a woman.

Adichie dextrously alters the structure of the *Bildungsroman* by plotting Kambili's life onto a cyclical structure, out of which she then steps in the final section of the novel. *Purple Hibiscus*'s structure is fractured, in the sense that events are not in chronological order, as in the traditional concept of *Bildung*, and the novel does not end with the protagonist's coming of age. Such structural amendments indicate that the *Bildung* of women in post-colonial Nigeria is not linear, as is the case with the classic European male protagonist. Kambili's becoming is instead sporadic and fractured (as represented by the text's achronological structure) and always in a process of becoming (as illustrated by the novel's resistance to closure).

CHAPTER THREE: **EVERYTHING GOOD WILL COME AND BECOMING A NATIONAL INDIVIDUAL**

“! Am! Not! Satisfied with these options!” *Everything Good Will Come*, 200

Sefi Atta’s novel, *Everything Good Will Come*, maps its protagonist, Enitan Taiwo’s, journey of becoming a woman; Enitan’s journey, in turn, articulates the new modern identity with which the third generation grapples. The first section of this chapter will examine how Enitan negotiates her national identity as a Nigerian. This is undertaken by exploring the arbitrary and haphazard ‘invention’ of Nigeria by colonial administration when drawing the country’s regional and national boundaries. Enitan negotiates her ‘imagined’ national identity not only as an actor who constitutes ‘nation’ by performatively enacting it, but also as an individual who is subjected to the nation. The second section of this chapter will specifically focus on how Enitan negotiates her identity as a woman in, and of, Nigeria. She finds that ‘nation’ is always an engendered construct that forces women, through patriarchal domination, into socialised gender roles. In order to articulate a female identity that would enable women as political actors, a new feminist stance is adopted that hybridises African and Western modes of feminism. This new feminist stance also redefines the traditional role of marriage and motherhood to produce women who are (relatively) free from patriarchal domination and who can, consequently, become individuals in their own right. Where relevant, both sections will engage with the extent to which the text casts Enitan and her foil/double, Sheri, as national allegories in their respective journeys of becoming self-authoring selves.

Everything Good Will Come is set in Lagos between 1971 and 1995. Similarly to *Purple Hibiscus*, Enitan is the narrator of her own life story, which is told in the form of a *Bildungsroman*. Enitan’s story commences in the early 1970s, when she defies her mother’s dictatorial authority by visiting neighbours with whom she is forbidden to socialise. Her mother’s strictness is the result of Enitan’s brother’s death at an early age, which is made even harsher by the rigid religiosity of the cult her mother joined following her brother’s death. Enitan becomes conscious of the inhibiting force of society through the character of her dominating and manipulative mother, who enforces strict house-rules that comply with the accepted social conventions of gender and ethnicity. Her intense dislike of her mother, which is taboo in her society, is partially instilled in her when her mother forces her to do house chores, and is accentuated when her mother takes her for a ‘cleansing’ ritual at her syncretic church, which completely traumatises her. In this way, she is introduced to the destructive side of the cultural hybridisation that is so positively rendered in Ifeoma’s

inclusive brand of Roman Catholicism portrayed in *Purple Hibiscus*. Enitan is initially closer to her father, a lawyer who studied at Cambridge University and who runs a successful practice in Lagos. He is adamant about the need for the liberation of women from their traditional domestic role, as well as the need to redress their lack of political, social and economic agency. Although not as complex as Eugene Achike, Enitan's father is similarly hypocritical, displaying a telling discrepancy between his beliefs, on the one hand, and his actions, on the other. He uses his patriarchal power to control his wife's economic independence, while simultaneously being a strong advocate of change. Such discrepancy in his character is indicative of the dualism that often results from the complexities of liberation and the becoming of the neo-colonial state.

Enitan forms a close relationship with Sherifat (Sheri) Bakare, the neighbours' daughter, who is her deceased mother's only child and a mulatto. Sheri, similarly to Amaka in *Purple Hibiscus*, is constructed as Enitan's foil. Sheri introduces Enitan to new fashions, to western pop culture, to her polygamous Muslim father (Enitan is used only to a nuclear family) and to the Muslim way of life. Sheri thus initially functions as Enitan's instructor in comparable ways as Auntie Ifeoma does to Kambili. Though observing Muslim customs, Sheri continues to express herself in ways that seem to contradict her religion (such as wearing tops that expose her midriff). Sheri's engagement with cultural hybridity and African modernity is much more creative and constructive than that encountered by Enitan in her mother's church. Though initially following Sheri's lead, Enitan later, due to the influences of her Westernised cultural development and the resultant ability to express herself, comes to view Sheri's approach as 'weak'. The two characters are continuously played off against each another. However, after both have grown up and established their respective identities, each finds her own middle course, showing mutual respect for the path taken by the other.

Enitan's and Sheri's paths first separate shortly after Sheri's rape by three boys at a teenage gathering in Ikoye Park. Enitan then moves to London to study law. On her return, after finishing her studies and worked in London for some years, she meets another lawyer, Niyi Franco, whom she marries. Although they love each other, their relationship is constantly placed under strain by their opposing notions of the respective roles assigned to men and women in society. Niyi in principle, like Enitan's father, does not object to women entering public-political spaces, but objects when Enitan strives to do so. Enitan's political involvement eventually becomes a source of conflict between them, especially when it leads to her imprisonment. Niyi would prefer Enitan to fill the traditional role of mother, housekeeper and cook. Though Enitan wants to become a mother, she does not wish to confine herself to traditional 'motherly' duties, such as cooking and housekeeping.

A synthesis between the private/personal and public/political spaces is created when Enitan meets Grace Ameh, a political activist and journalist, who helps Enitan to participate in matters of national concern. After Enitan is released from prison, she finally – after several miscarriages – gives birth to a daughter, whereupon she decides to leave Niyi. Her leaving should be read as an act of self-emancipation: she experiences Niyi as hampering her political endeavours and quest for (independent) gender formation. As in the case of *Purple Hibiscus*, *Everything Good Will Come* leaves Enitan's story open-ended. The novel, nevertheless, ends on a lighter and more optimistic note than does *Purple Hibiscus*.

Enitan comes to believe that the deepest rift in Nigerian society, which keeps the nation from attaining unity, is that caused by historically constructed gender differences and prejudices. While growing up, she awakens to the limitations and boundaries imposed on her by a patriarchal society, and comes to realise the difficulties that women face when attempting to author their own lives. Through the construction of Enitan's character, the text argues that such restrictions on becoming female have serious implications for the formation of a healthy unified nation, as personal identity precedes and informs national identity. In a review of *Everything Good Will Come*, Tanure Ojaide writes that the "individual's will or self-assertion [...] can break the jinx of [...] inaction, submissiveness, subjugation, and low self-esteem [...] This, Atta suggests, has implications not only for the individual but also for the society at large and the entire nation in the various struggles" (63). The individual's engagement with aspects of, and influences on, identity, such as "inaction", "submissiveness" and "low self-esteem" thus also carries implications for both the society and the nation. Ojaide's views thus strengthen Fanon's arguments that personal identity is able to "open up into" national identity, illuminating our understanding of the latter.

Reflecting on her difficult journey of (continuous) becoming, Enitan contemplates how she "called out to her voice" (*Everything* 179). The "voice" to which she is calling refers primarily to her right to speak her self for herself – to be listened to and to be considered a person worth listening to. However, she first needs to gain access to a language and voice before she can performatively speak herself. As is the case with Kambili, the process of finding voice and gender development mutually inform each other. As seen in the previous chapter, the ability to assert one's sexual independence and to negotiate one's sexuality provides Enitan with the necessary agency for accessing language and voice. She then utilises her language, voice and sexual independence to performatively speak and construct her self. Language, which is inherently (per)formative, is a speech act that constructs reality, carrying within itself the potential for change, as well as the potential for 'new life', in the sense of allowing for the construction of new ways of thinking, doing and being.

The power of language and sexuality as performative forces in the becoming of individuals is revealed in Sheri's rape. Three boys pin her down; they cover her mouth, and then proceed to rape her. Neither Sheri nor Enitan is able to speak about the event afterwards. Sheri's rape can, hence, be viewed as an act that not only violates her sexual autonomy, but also as one that silences her, leaving her bereft of almost any form of power and agency that she might have had to speak herself. The rape also robs Enitan of the power and agency to speak her self, even though she, herself, is not physically violated. Enitan and Sheri alternate as double and foil of each other.³⁰ Sheri's doubling of Enitan robs Enitan, by implication, of power and agency, leading her to become obsessed with washing herself after sexual intercourse, and being unable to speak about the incident until many years have passed.

In order to find her voice and negotiate a personal gender identity, Enitan needs to engage with her patriarchal society by means of the adoption of new subversive feminist strategies. Enitan realises that there is no single category of Nigerian woman, preventing her from being able to speak for all the women in the country (*Everything* 284). Recognising diverse personhoods emphasises how unrealistic it is to attempt to impose any one theoretical approach, such as 'African feminism', on a group of diverse people. Atta, through her construction of Enitan's feminist approaches to *Bildung*, expresses the opinion that women-directed theories thus lose their analytical and explanatory power if they seek only to engage with collective, rather than with individual or specific situations. When Enitan calls out to her voice, she is calling out to an emancipationist feminist voice. The voice is a feminist one unique to each woman, characterised by a hybridisation of various subversive feminist strategies.

The act of incorporating the genre of the *Bildungsroman* into the new feminist stance also entails an act of protest against the homogenisation of individuals, specifically because the genre focuses on the becoming of the individual and not on the forging of group identity. Such an act of protest also echoes Moolla's argument that the journey of the female protagonist is inward and personal, being individualistic rather than homogenising. This

³⁰ The role of the *doppelgänger* (literally a "double-goer") has its origins in German folktale. The double usually appeared as an apparition, and "[t]o meet one's double is a sign that one's death is imminent" (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). In modern literature, as well as in the focal texts, a double is a character who functions as the 'other half' of the protagonist. Doubles function as alternative selves, so that, whatever happens to the one, also happens to the other, though not necessarily in a physical way. Such functioning broadens the scope of personal experience and of the journeys of becoming.

individualistic journey, however, does not imply that society no longer plays a vital part in the protagonist's *Bildungsprozess*.

Rita Felski departs from the general assumption that African women (and Africans in general) are more collectively and communally orientated than the European men who constructed male *Bildung* as an attempt to assert their independence in the classical *Bildungsromane*. "The notion of community [therefore] emerges as an [...] insistent theme in recent black writing, which explicitly relates the destiny of the individual subject to that of the group" (139). Female *Bildung*, although not inextricably tied up with the destiny of the group, relates to the society in which it takes place. Female *Bildung* is, therefore, also relationally mediated and facilitated through other male or female characters.

The incorporation of other characters in the journeys of female becoming encapsulates the sentiments of African feminists (see the approach taken by Anthonia Akpabio Ekpa in *Goatskin Bags and Wisdom* 2000, and that taken by Obioma Nnaemeka in *Sisterhood, Feminism and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora* 1998). Female *Bildung* in Africa is, consequently, not completely independent of male *Bildung*, as male characters still play a central part in the becoming of female characters. Their doing so is partially due to patriarchal and hegemonic cultural practices, and, possibly, to certain African forms of 'benign' nego-feminism.³¹ Irrespective of the relational nature of female development in the African *Bildungsromane*, Enitan's call for her voice is still a call for a more individualised and independent *Bildung*.

Independent *Bildung*, in the history of the genre, is traditionally associated with a male protagonist. When Atta describes a female character whose journey of becoming resembles male rather than female *Bildung*, she advocates a form of female becoming that is relatively free of the influence of male characters. By personifying and 'customising' Western and African modes of feminism, as well as the genre of the *Bildungsroman*, Enitan can negotiate both a relational/public and personal/individual identity. When Enitan negotiates her collective identity as a Nigerian, she is negotiating a relational identity because her collective identity as a Nigerian is always negotiated and mediated through, and with, other

³¹ "Nego-feminism", as explained by Obioma Nnaemeka and Anthonia Akpabio Ekpa, is a brand of African feminism that articulates itself through compromise and negotiation, rather than through challenge. This brand of feminism proposes that men should be invited to struggle alongside women for equality and liberation. Such feminism also includes motherhood and marriage as potentially positive aspects of feminist strategy. Nego-feminism is discussed in greater detail in the second section of this chapter.

individual Nigerians. When she negotiates her identity as a Nigerian woman, she engages with gender, which is a personal identity.

The text's structure also forms part of its emancipatory thrust. *Everything Good Will Come* is divided into four sections: "1971" explores Enitan's childhood; "1975" covers her secondary school years, focusing on Sheri's rape; "1985" starts with the loss of her virginity during her tertiary education in London, and continues through to her young adult life in Lagos; "1995" covers the last and lengthiest section of the novel, starting with her engagement to Niyi, her imprisonment for her political activities, and concludes when she leaves Niyi, accompanied by her baby daughter. *Everything Good Will Come* thus shares a linear and progressive structure with the classical *Bildungsroman*. However, unlike in the case of the classic *Bildungsroman*, the linear structure is disrupted by the four un-narrated time-lapses between the sections. The first three sections of *Everything Good Will Come* are marked by various setbacks, or "awakenings to limitations", as is the case with the older versions of the female *Bildungsromane*: consider the characters of Jane in *Jane Eyre*, Fanny in *Mansfield Park* and Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, for example. The conventional structure of the text, which creates certain expectations in the mind of the reader, is subverted by the last section of the novel, which describes female *Bildung* in more independent terms. The structural subversion manifests itself in the gaps between the various chapters which, similar to those in *Purple Hibiscus*, indicate that female *Bildung* is fragmentary and sporadic. Each of the four sections of the novel exhibits a defining moment in *Bildung*. The sporadic nature of such moments of *Bildung* shows that single acts of becoming do not lead to an epiphany. Enitan is in her thirties by the end of the novel, extending far beyond the traditional timeframe set for the *Bildungsroman*.

In short, *Everything Good Will Come* simultaneously draws from African feminism's understanding of self and society in order to subvert the classic *Bildungsroman*, while subverting this analytic framework through its focus on a woman as an individual, rather than on women as a group. The process of becoming 'woman' (as part of a collective) and 'individual' is set within, and played out in between, the borders of the respective private/personal and public/political spaces. The *Bildungsroman*, as a genre of personal expansion, thus functions effectively as a vehicle that transports the individual from the private to the public sphere. Whereas Enitan initially has to fight for her right to enter the public/political sphere, she is able, in the closing pages of the novel, to shuttle back and forth between private and public spaces.

Finally, Enitan's negotiation of her self as 'a Nigerian' and a 'Nigerian woman' can be seen in Atta's introduction of a mirroring double, in the character of Sheri. Jane Bryce (59-60)

maps out the literary motivation for shadowing a female protagonist with a double, asserting that the latter forms an “intimate other half of a protagonist in quest of her own identity and self-hood. [The double is also] – both literally and figuratively – [...] the text of contemporary social reality [that] is haunted by traces of a repressed past” (59). Sheri functions as a foil to Enitan, exemplifying the latter’s lack of independent and self-assertive becoming in the introductory chapters of the text. Enitan is inspired by Sheri’s self-willed *Bildung* and attempts to make use of the same strategies that Sheri uses in her own *Bildungsprozess*. Sheri also functions as Enitan’s “intimate other half”, through whom Enitan experiences the same events as Sheri does, thereby concurrently facilitating Enitan’s *Bildung*. Sheri’s physical barrenness (due to her self-performed abortion) is, furthermore, established to illustrate her social ‘death’, since both men and women of her society regard childlessness as shameful and Sheri, thus, as unmarriageable. What happens to Sheri finally also illustrates how women’s journeys of becoming are rather awakenings to limitations, haunting Enitan with “traces of a repressed past” that bind her in silence.

This chapter will, accordingly, explore the ways in which the individual negotiates the multi-layered identity of being a Nigerian, and of being a Nigerian woman. Enitan’s ability to embody both identities is based on achieving the necessary agency to be able to oscillate between public and private spaces. By subversively adopting a fresh feminist stance, the historical genre of male becoming, the *Bildungsroman*, is appropriated to suit the feminist ideology.

Becoming (a) Nigerian

Seeing where and how Enitan situates her country – historically, spatially and politically – opens the way to understanding how a contemporary ‘situated-ness’ continually informs and feeds the problematic construction of the Nigerian state and nation. Enitan narrates: “We had no sense of continent really, or of nation in a country like mine, until we travelled abroad; no sense of the Africa presented outside. In a world of East and West, there was nowhere to place us” (*Everything* 261-262). According to Enitan, Nigeria falls neither in the East, nor in the West. Enitan portrays Africa as a fabrication, with no single genesis or inherent reason for its collective name as a continent. She draws on the ‘constructedness’ of geographical space, demarcated by, for example, the Cold War divisions of the First and Second World, as well as by the colonising Western empires, to express the dilemma implicit in the forging of African identity in its broadest sense.

When Enitan shifts from the African continent to the Nigerian nation in her narration, she touches on the arbitrary relationship between different geographical spaces, and the

national identity that is attributed to part of that space. Benedict Anderson's foundational text on nationalism, *Imagined Communities* (1983), sheds some light on the arbitrary nature of nationhood and on the borders that contain it. Anderson defines "nation... [as]...an...imagined... [political community]...both inherently limited and sovereign" (15). A nation is "imagined" because its subjects do not know everyone else in it, though they conceive themselves as living in "communion" (15). A nation is "limited" due to its boundaries, and "sovereign" due to its origin as a "divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm" (16).

The Nigerian nation, as such, is a creation of the British Empire. Enitan states that Nigeria has "thirty-six geographical states, from the triad of North, West, East regions [of the country] the British created before I was born" (*Everything* 299). For such diverse conflicting cultural groups to "imagine" living together in "communion" seems impossible. Radically different people-groups had nationhood thrust upon them in a form of imported parliamentary rule which was intended to replace the indigenous dynastic rule of the local chieftains. Within such bounds, Nigerians like Enitan are compelled to start imagining the transformation of the constructed and arbitrary idea of a 'state' into that of a 'nation'.

In *Everything Good Will Come*, national identity implies sameness, comprising a unification and homogenisation of an agglomeration of diverse individuals into a single 'Nigerian' category. The individual, in this case Enitan, can, however, not be contained within a single category. She believes that the identities of the diverse people living in Nigeria should not be restricted to their national status. She asks herself: "What was the country I loved? The country I would fight for? Should it have borders?" (*Everything* 299). Enitan finds that her identity is too multi-layered and fluid to be contained within a single spatial category. In the same way in which personhood and identity cannot be boxed in, one cannot draw borders around a national identity.

Anderson, however, asserts the need for a nationality (14). In terms of such an outlook, Enitan has to grapple with her national collective identity, irrespective of how borderless she imagines it to be, simply because she "will 'have' a nationality" (Anderson 14). The disparity between the state (as a political structure), and the nation (as an imagined identity) is once more visible. Enitan situates Nigeria within a postcolonial struggle between various kinds of modernities and indigenous cultural and religious practices, a moment in which the state persists in complicating any attempt by the individual to imagine itself a nation.

Enitan states that “[p]olitics in England played out on a continuum from left to right wing [, yet] [p]olitics in our country was a scuffle between the military and politicians” (*Everything* 77). According to Edwin Madunagu, the “scuffle” crystallised in six successful coups (with an additional eleven attempted coups or coup-related incursions into state institutions), three political assassinations, numerous successive violent military governments, a civil war, continuous riots and revolts, and religious tension. Politics in England (according to Enitan) is, thus, to a certain extent, one-dimensional, in the sense that it is always negotiated in terms of the country’s constitution and common law. Such consistency has led to the development and maintenance of a relatively stable society, in which the ‘sameness’ of a collective identity is more easily imaginable. Such an approach is starkly contrasted to the multidimensional approach to politics in Nigeria. The Nigerian state is known to breach and violate its own constitution, governmental institutions and laws persistently. The average Nigerian, often victimised by such illegitimate governmental practices, struggles to imagine the state as a nation. After all, the collective identity of nation implies sameness of a kind, something that the inconsistent state is unable to reproduce.³²

In their pursuit to negotiate a national identity, the third-generation *Bildungsromane* alternatively allegorise personal experiences, or construct these experiences in such a way that they open up into the truth of the nation. By means of paralleling individual events and experiences with those of the nation, the third generation is, furthermore, able to comment on the becoming of both the individual and nation simultaneously.

In his essay, ‘Historicizing National Identity’, Prasenjit Duara (161) states that “if we are to understand national identity more fully, it needs to be studied in relation to other identities, as part of the generalized category of political identity.” He suggests that “the ambiguities [...] changeability [...] and interplay of national identity with other forms of identification can be as subversive of the nation-state as it is supportive”. In short, nationality is thus, firstly, a relational identity and, secondly, “subversive”, as much as it is “supportive”.

³² The almost constant “scuffle” between the various forces of power negatively influences the socio-economic situation in the country (an insistent theme of the third generation, according to Nwakanma), and makes the imagining of a coherent nationhood almost impossible. However, such political manoeuvrings offer opportunities for individual development. Such opportunities for *Bildung* are reminiscent of the way in which the three focal texts refuse to construct an ending for their protagonists that is marked by closure. The continuous “scuffle” places the country in a state of flux, continuously opening up new liminal spaces between the ever-changing power structures. The protagonist is, thus, constantly presented with new creative opportunities for *Bildung*, but will not be able to reach illumination, being continuously forced to adapt to new and evolving challenges.

Third-generational authors propagate a multi-layered form of identity, with the self being constituted out of the intersection of the different layers. If one layer of identity is negotiated, other layers of identification are also influenced and shaped concurrently. Taking the national and political concerns of *Everything Good Will Come* into account, it becomes evident that personal constituents of identity and those of national identity will overlap, forcing the individual to grapple with national identity. Duara supports a reading that incorporates other voices in the national construct when he states:

Indeed we may speak of different 'nation-views,' as we do of 'world-views,' which are not overridden by the nation, but actually define or constitute it. In place of the harmonized, monologic voice of the Nation, we find a polyphony of voices, overlapping and criss-crossing; contradictory and ambiguous; opposing, affirming and negotiating their views of the nation. (161)

Rather than propagating a 'grand allegorical narrative', which encompasses and explains the Nigerian nation, various polyphonic "nation-views" serve to "define", "constitute" and build the nation. Such minor allegories are individual and moment-specific, briefly linking personal/private spaces to political/public national spaces, and thereby illustrating the relationship that the individual has with the nation.

Duara's second contention is that nationality is simultaneously constructed and subversive. The intersection between these two distinct layers of identity allows Enitan simultaneously to be both subjected to, and a subject in and of, the nation. By acting out what it means to be Nigerian, Enitan, as a national actor, builds the nation, such that nation-building becomes the focus of *Everything Good Will Come*. Enitan's actions and experiences open up into those of national experience, thus implying that her experiences are constructed by the author to reveal, albeit briefly, the truth of the nation. Moment-specific allegory, in conjunction with the way in which experience opens up into the nation, links national and personal identity, and confirms Enitan's view of identity as being multi-layered. Such a multi-layered identity also echoes Mbembe's point of view that stylised self-representation is only possible through focusing on the individual and his or her specific relationship with his or her surroundings (in this case, the nation). Two specific moments (those of Sheri's rape and Enitan's first attendance of a political meeting) in the text exemplify the individual–nation relationship, as well as draw into focus the possibility of being both a subject of, and actor within, the nation.

Though Enitan admits that she was only hurt by association (*Everything* 33), the violent rape of her double, Sheri, profoundly shapes her own process of becoming. Enitan witnesses how Sheri's agency and her right of choice about her own body are suddenly and

mercilessly taken away from her when she is subjected to the violence of the three boys. It is possible to read this rape scene as a national allegory that mirrors the way in which earlier male authors allegorically depicted rape in their works. However, though the text initially invites an allegorical reading, it eventually undercuts such a reading through the textual emphasis on the experience of rape as being both intimately personal and private.

In Florence Stratton's analysis of rape as allegory in Armah's novel, *An African Fable* (1968), she asserts that "it tells of the new ruling elite's imitation of their colonial predecessors in defiling Africa's cultural heritage" (44).³³ In *An African Fable*, a young warrior journeys through Africa towards the sea, on whose shores he sees a beautiful woman. Since he is frustrated by his impotence, he walks away. On his return, he sees an older warrior raping the woman. After killing the other man, he is so invigorated that he proceeds to rape the woman. In Armah's novel, according to Stratton, the body of woman represents the "authentic African social-political systems" (44), which are first violated by the older warrior (representing the colonial powers) and then by the younger warrior (who represents the elite neo-colonial government).

In the same way in which Sheri experiences how her individual agency and right to choose are ignored, so does the Nigerian nation experience how its right to freedom and political agency is ignored. Such an allegorical reading, however, is limited to explicating how Sheri is made subject to the nation, rather than leading to the acknowledgement of her role as a national actor as well. Her *Bildungsprozess* and own gendered experience of rape is personal and should not be constrained within the artificial limits of merely being a sign of the nation. In an interview with Ike Anya, Atta confirmed that the focus of the novel was more on the individual within his or her community than on the state, though the latter should not be ignored.³⁴

By regarding Sheri's traumatic personal experience as an opening up into the truth of the state of the nation – marking a move from Jameson to Fanon – a bridge is created that provides a link between the personal/private and the public/political spaces. Though Enitan was only hurt by association, it is by such association that she is encouraged to access political and public life.

³³ Florence Stratton investigates how previous (male) generations depicted rape in allegorical ways in *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (1994).

³⁴ In this interview with Anya, Atta commented: "I'm not trying to trivialize the politics of the State, but what sets our heartbeat racing on a daily basis, who stops us from speaking our minds? Not the state. The small communities we exist in, our families, our friends and the repercussions of not fitting in. I tell this story in my novel, but I also write about a dictatorship and Lagos society, not just domesticity."

As a primary means of accessing political life, Sheri's rape forces both Enitan and Sheri to renegotiate their respective approaches to political life and to the nation-state that they both simultaneously represent and resist. Sheri, who was viciously made subject to the nation-state (as represented by the three boys) is constructed to illustrate how individuals bereft of choice have to opt for manipulation as a primary means of engaging with political and public life. Enitan, on the other hand, is able to directly challenge the existing status quo. The divergent personal approaches to self-assertion as autonomous Nigerians illustrate how both characters can be seen as actors and subjects of the nation, with each being determined by her particular nation-view. Enitan expresses a belief that it is through acting out nationhood that one can become a self-determined subject of the nation. As her nation-view favours radical social change, she is seen as continuously challenging societal conventions, thereby becoming an individual Nigerian acting out social change. In contrast, Sheri is constructed to express the belief that one becomes a nation(al) actor by enacting the role of national subject of Nigeria, resulting in her negotiating and compromising from a subject(ed) position.

However, both Enitan and Sheri's approaches are informed by their particular subjected positions as women of, and in, the nation, showing that their national identities are relationally determined by their gender.³⁵ Their understanding of the concept of being women of the "nation" is accordingly part of "a polyphony of [...] [nation-views], overlapping and criss-crossing; contradictory and ambiguous; opposing, affirming and negotiating their views of the nation" (Duara 161).

The positioning of Sheri's rape in the opening chapters of the text focuses attention on the divergent approaches taken to the nation-state, while indicating how the two leading characters are impacted on by the past, as well as managing to overcome it. Initially, Enitan and Sheri (as her intimate other half) are reduced to subjection by means of Sheri's rape. Yet, Enitan, through her *Bildungsprozess*, moves from such a position to that of a national actor.

The transition (from subject to actor) only takes place many years later, after Enitan's marriage and her multiple miscarriages. Enitan is invited by Grace Ameh to attend a reading group. Enitan "*decided* to go to the reading" by various artists, since she "wanted to be around people who are taking a stand against [their] government" (*Everything* 260; emphasis

³⁵ Though the following section of this chapter will specifically focus on Enitan and Sheri's gender identities, it should be noted that their gender comprises the next layer of their relational national identity.

added). The artists are *speaking out* for what they believe is right. When Enitan decides to become politically involved, after attending the reading group, she crosses the boundaries between personal/private space and public/political space. Such an act of protest underlines Enitan's autonomy and establishes her as a national actor, engaging with the nation on an individual basis. Her adoption of such a self-willed course of action starkly contrasts with the subjected position in which she and Sheri found themselves after Sheri's rape, pointing to the *Bildung* that has taken place in Enitan's identity.

Enitan's 'Nigerian-ness' is thus relationally determined. Her national and political consciousnesses are both stimulated by, and negotiated through, her own, as well as other people's personal experiences. Such stimulation and negotiation occur sometimes by means of allegory and sometimes by means of an opening up onto national-political life. Enitan's voice, alongside other individual voices, thus forms part of a polyphony of a national Nigerian identity.

Yet, as Duara argues, a polyphony of voices does not necessarily override the discourse of the nation and Enitan is reminded of the fact that she is still subjected to the nation when her act of protest (attending the reading group) leads to her imprisonment (*Everything* 264). The prison cell into which Grace and Enitan are thrown – which is described as dark with a “smell of shit” and decay (*Everything* 266) – is allegorically transformed to represent the Nigerian state. The state is presented as being rife with corruption. It is ill-guarded by corrupt politicians, with its inmates being left with no hope either of freedom or of a fair trial.³⁶ Yet, for Enitan, it is the defining moment of her epiphany. The public and the political become intimately personal and private, and vice versa. Allegory is made manifest in a form of horrifying reality, when Enitan is subjected to the violent injustices of the political regime that she tries to change by taking a political stance. Her personal experience is not only an allegory of the political situation in the county, but also serves as a commentary on the difficulty of imagining the contemporary Nigerian state into a cohesive nation.

The political situation described in *Everything Good Will Come* thus seems to redefine Duara's definition of a 'nation'. The Nigerian nation struggles to come into being, as the state continuously attempts to override the polyphony of voices that are trying to imagine it as nation. However, these voices cannot be snuffed completely as the final chapters

³⁶ Unlike the other prisoners, Enitan is released on the following day. The shortness of her detention in prison only allows for a transient allegorical reading of the incident.

evidence, allowing Enitan to act and construct the nation from a subjected position within its borders.

Though Enitan manages to obtain some agency as a national actor, she is presented as finding that the process of becoming a self-determined, self-authoring Nigerian is severely hampered by her engendered female identity. She comes to realise that one of the greatest rifts still keeping Nigeria from national unity is that resulting from gender differences.

Enitan regards the political tension in the country as only one of a number of different forces shaping identity. She says that Nigeria is “[not only] a country struggling with religious and government structures imposed on it, but also a country that struggle[s] to reconcile foreign familial structures with that of the indigenous cultures” (*Everything* 247). When juxtaposing the familial and the national, Enitan is linking the difficulties within the family construct to that of national concerns, thereby opening up domestic, personal and private spaces in the national-political arena. Thus, while negotiating her identity as a Nigerian, Enitan also has to grapple with her own gender identity.

In discussing the role played by gender and nationalism in ‘making’ a nation, Ann McClintock writes that:

[a]ll nationalisms are gendered, all are invented and all are dangerous – dangerous, not in Eric Hobsbawm’s sense of having to be opposed but in the sense that they represent relations to political power and to the technologies of violence [;...] they are historical practices through which social difference is both invented and performed. (260)

According to McClintock, nationalism (in all its forms) is dangerous, insofar as it is always an engendered invention.³⁷ It follows that “political power”, as represented by nationalism, specifically refers to male political dominance, as well as to men’s relationship to the “technologies of violence”.

The construction of gender differences (which inevitably leads to gender divisions) has created, according to Enitan, a rift in the nationhood of Nigeria. The construction of gender differences and the disparities present in represented power relations are of critical importance to Enitan’s mapping out of the process of becoming ‘Nigerian’ and ‘woman’ in a nation that is founded on “prior constructions of gender differences”. Enitan’s gender identity is, therefore, a layer of her identity that intersects with her identity as a Nigerian national.

³⁷ McClintock states that “the representation of male national power depends on the prior construction of gender difference” (261).

When negotiating her identity as a Nigerian, she will, thus, inevitably have to negotiate her identity as a Nigerian woman, as her identity is constituted from within the shared intersection.

Becoming a (Nigerian) Woman

Elleke Boehmer, in *Stories of Women*, articulates the relationship between daughters and the nation as it plays out in various female *Bildungsromane*. Boehmer mentions that by articulating their own struggles for selfhood [...] they not only address their traditional muteness and/or marginality in the national script [...] [they also] rewrite their role within it. By *rewriting themselves* [...] they rework by virtue of who they are the confining structures of the national family to encompass alternative gender identities. (108; emphasis original)

Boehmer suggests that any focus on the attempts of various women to 'author' their own life-stories through "articulating their own struggles" shows how female protagonists address their marginalised positions. According to McClintock, men assign women to such positions in terms of pre-existing gender constructions. By rewriting themselves, women redefine their roles in the national construct and, by so doing, construct and negotiate their own identities as women within the nation. Rewriting themselves, furthermore, also provides the necessary agency for formulating and articulating "alternative gender identities" not previously possible. *Everything Good Will Come*, as a *Bildungsroman*, is thus literally used by Atta as a vehicle in terms of which to rewrite her female character's place in the national script in Nigeria. On a secondary level, Atta brings previously marginalised female characters to the fore, thereby addressing their "traditional muteness" and constructing for women (through the character of Enitan) a new contemporary identity.

Moretti writes that, in the classical *Bildungsroman*, "there is no conflict between individuality and socialization, autonomy and normality, interiority and objectification" (16). This is in stark contrast to the outright challenges that Enitan launches at societal attempts to socialise individuals into certain constructed roles. She is at odds with, rather than representative of, her society, not only because of her 'wayward' inclinations, but, in part, simply because of her gender. The focus on gender construction in the first passages of the novel emphasises that the gender identity described here is of the most formative and basic type, already being a social construct.

Enitan narrates that the first person to tell me my virginity belonged to me was the boy who took it. Before this, I'd thought my virginity belonged to Jesus Christ, my

mother, my society at large. Anyone but me. My boyfriend [...] assured me that it was mine, to give to him. (*Everything* 73)

The three spheres that Enitan identifies – religion, patriarchal family structures (enforced by women in this case), and society – represent different spaces of gender socialisation. The first space of socialisation relates to the role of religion (in this case, Christianity), which demands that the wife should be submissive to her husband, just as daughters should be to their fathers. The second mode of socialisation is that of the domestic space, as represented by the figure of the mother, who is complicit in maintaining patriarchal structures. Enitan also finds that “society at large” ‘owns’ her virginity, in the sense that she, as a young woman, is bereft of choice when it comes to her reproductive capabilities, because of her gender and age. Yet, on a more figurative level, Enitan’s virginity, as a sign of reproduction, is ‘owned’ by society in the sense that the society at large neither allows her to reproduce within herself what and who she prefers to be, nor to live this performance creatively and performatively.

Mapping her girlhood years, we see how her nuclear family (as a microcosm of society at large) attempts to socialise her in a certain way – ‘making her a woman’ according to the rules of society. Enitan says, in the opening paragraph of the novel, that her “worst was to hear [her] mother’s shout from her kitchen window: ‘Enitan, come and help in here’” (*Everything* 7). Enitan’s mother forces her to help out in the kitchen, the domestic space assigned to women. Enitan’s mother does this in an attempt to socialise her into the role to which her society confines her, that of mother and housekeeper.

Enitan’s mother represents the Victorian colonial model of a wife in African society. Her primary duties are those of housekeeper, cook, mother and nurturer within the domestic space. She, therefore, insists that Enitan should learn how to prepare food for her future husband. Enitan’s father, in contrast, believes that “young girls” (*Everything* 21), such as Enitan, should be left to do as they please. However, her mother notes that Sunday, Enitan’s father, although apparently “for the liberation of women” (*Everything* 21), never explicitly asked her *not* to work in the kitchen, thereby exposing his hypocritical stance.

We see her mother’s attempt at socialising Enitan again when she talks to her about puberty just before Enitan leaves for secondary school:

She told me the most awful thing about blood and babies and why it was a secret.

“I will not marry,” I said.

“I will not have children.”

“Yes, you will. All women want children.”

Sex was a filthy act, she said, and I must always wash myself afterward. (*Everything* 23)

From an early age, Enitan is 'inducted' into the taboo nature of female sexuality. Sexuality is suppressed by society (through the person of her mother), as the normal functioning of the (specifically female) body is made taboo, effectively othering women. Othering female gender and suppressing female sexuality estranges women from their bodily experiences and their sexuality. Such estrangements have serious implications for female becoming. When talking to Sheri about the mechanics of sex, the latter convinces her to look at her genitals. She "dragged [her] panties down, placed the mirror between [her] legs. It looked like a big, fat slug" (*Everything* 33). At age eleven, certain parts of her female anatomy are still foreign to her, as the result of sexual estrangement due to pedagogical approaches that render sexuality taboo.

Stepping into the role of wife and mother is assumed to be the only path that any girl should choose. Such an assumption informs and shapes the pedagogical approaches of caretakers, which influences the worldviews and thought-structures of the girl child. Such socialisation strongly resembles the classificatory model of *Bildung*, in terms of which the genre seeks to construct a certain ending for a novel. Society 'classifies' the individual in order to guarantee their effortless induction into society. Accordingly, Enitan is classified from an early age as a female, being seen as a potential mother, as well as an instructor of female societal values. Classifying, or socialising, her should, then, help her to fit effortlessly into the role. Such attempts by society to socialise individuals conflict with youthful instability as characterised by the model of transformation. Enitan's initial path toward self-expansion is, therefore, demarcated by the model of classification, but made slightly more possible by the model of transformation. She continuously challenges, with the help of Sheri, the way in which she is 'classified'. The friction between socialisation and the desire for uninhibited personal expansion creates the conflict that helps to give rise to Enitan as an individual. The conflict calls for a closer look at Enitan's development within her assigned gender identity, as well as her contestation of such an identity.

Enitan's foil, Sheri, is constructed as a primary agent of transformation and instability in Enitan's early life. Accordingly, she introduces her to ways of subverting her socialisation. Perceiving how her mother continues to cook for her father, even though there is no love between them, Enitan becomes aware of the normalising nature of tradition and the social construction of gender, which splits the private domestic sphere from the public sphere. Enitan sees the "mobility", and, by implication, the agency, presented to her by her father's more modern view of the status of women, yet even such mobility is not without its

ambiguities. Her father claims that he is “for the liberation of women”, but, even after he and Enitan’s mother are divorced, he still refuses to sign over his two duplex houses to his wife, as agreed in the divorce settlement, thereby excluding her from attaining economic independence. Accordingly, while Enitan grows up resenting the inhibiting gender role ascribed by culture and society (as embodied and enforced by her mother), she is more positively inclined to the liberating promise of modernity, as represented by her father’s views of gender roles, yet she remains anxious about its ambiguities and failure to deliver on its promises.

Like Sunday, Sheri also exhibits the ambiguities of African modernity – but from the female perspective – illustrating how women can also ‘exploit’, like Enitan’s father, the cracks in both the traditional and modern societies in similar ways as do men, yet for different ends. African modernity, marked by multiculturalism as the result of conflated cultural discourses, also holds the promise of independent self-governance. While growing up (and prior to her rape), Sheri is presented with an array of cultural markers that she can assimilate into her identity in various configurations. Yet complete freedom is denied her by certain social and cultural organisational structures, like that of the Muslim culture in which she grows up.

Sheri is immediately introduced as a “half-cast”, wearing “a pink skirt and her white top ended just above her navel. [...]. I noticed she wore pink lipstick” (*Everything* 13-4). Being a mulatto and a Muslim, who engages in pop culture, Sheri shows the extent to which she is ‘hybridised’ by the multicultural world in which she grows up. She also shows her degree of ‘hybridisation’ by how she chooses to style herself. Intrigued by Sheri, Enitan deliberately disobeys her mother’s orders never to visit the Muslim family next door. There she applies some of Sheri’s lipstick, and “mumbled, ‘Your stepmothers, won’t they tell?’”, Sheri replies: “I kneel for them, help them in the kitchen. They won’t tell” (*Everything* 35). Sheri, accordingly, has the freedom to negotiate and style her self, which is made possible due to the degree of African modernity present, yet, due to the gendered social and cultural organisational constructs, she, nevertheless, has to acquiesce, to a certain extent, to the patriarchal authority of her stepmothers. Such acquiescence should, however, not be mistaken for submissiveness or obedience. It should rather be read as a strategic performance, by means of which she can create a space for herself. This strategic and subversive performance, furthermore, grants a sense of agency that leads to *Bildung*. Sheri is, therefore, only a ‘modern’ self-made person insofar as she is able to manipulate others around her, as well as the organisational constructs of society and culture.

Growing up in a traditional Muslim and patriarchal family, Sheri needs to adhere to its structural and dogmatic principles. Yet, in terms of African modernity, boundaries become

permeable; opening up such boundaries enables the individual to enter other systems (like that of the pop culture), without necessarily having to 'break' with the initial system (in this case, that of Islam and patriarchy). *Bildung* is thus achieved through a process of vacillating between various discursive systems, exploiting and manipulating the nooks and crannies that are created by their friction and conflation. Such an 'alternative' way of negotiating selfhood is partially adopted by Enitan, who realises that this approach might provide more agency and mobility than that of the gendered role which her society prescribes for her. However, the securing of agency guarantees neither freedom nor safety, as Enitan and Sheri both learn from Sheri's rape. Not only is the event one of the most traumatising incidents in both of their lives, but it is also formative, in the sense that it shapes their respective journeys of becoming woman.

The extent to which women are suppressed and oppressed by the patriarchal systems in Nigeria is graphically illustrated by Sheri's rape. Enitan describes the incident in short staccato-like sentences, just as through it consists of snippets of a film that she can never forget (the consequences of which will revisit them in the *Bildung* still to come): "Sheri was lying on the seat. Her knees were spread apart. The boy in the cap was pinning her arms down. The portly boy was on top of her" (*Everything* 62). Though Sheri is initially seen by Enitan as a confident self-made person, she is the one who is subjected to rape, suggesting to Enitan the near impossibility of women being able to free themselves from patriarchal domination. The rape, therefore, not only initially allegorises or opens up into the truth of the nation, but also simultaneously is an experience of gender power and disempowerment.

The most far-reaching consequence of Sheri's rape is her resultant infertility, due to her self-performed (almost suicidal) abortion after her rape. Enitan mentions that, in Lagos and Nigeria, it was "[b]etter to be ugly, to be crippled, to be a thief even, than to be barren [...] Marriage could immediately wipe out a sluttish past, but angel or not, a woman had to have a child" (*Everything* 102). The cultural importance of motherhood is clear. Patriarchal culture subordinates women, and does with them as it pleases, as is shown in Sheri's rape; it rejects barren women if they cannot comply with its demand for progeny, even if it itself is to blame for the infertility in the first place.³⁸ Though Enitan genuinely wants to have children, the latter are also seen as a form of security for woman. Children not only serve as an affirmation of a female's 'woman-ness', but also as a girl's rite of passage into womanhood. In her seminal text on motherhood, *Of Women Born* (1976), Adrienne Rich explains that

³⁸ The rapists are not 'father figures', but boys, which adds a sense of indictment of the way in which patriarchy reproduces still more violence.

“[m]otherhood is earned, first through an intense physical and psychic rite of passage – pregnancy and childbirth...” (xiv). Laying such stress on motherhood has serious implications for the *Bildung* of barren women, who are unable to pass through this rite of passage from girlhood into womanhood, and who, by implication, are denied the social construction of womanhood, motherhood. Not being able to bear children might result in a sense of incompleteness and of being stuck in ‘perpetual girlhood’, irrespective of the barren woman’s age. Rich explains that “[t]erms like ‘barren’ or ‘childless’ have been used to negate any further identity” (xiii), implying that childlessness, according to societal dictates, forecloses any possibility of barren women becoming women, effectively preventing them from developing any self-stylized sense of self. This negation of, and barring from, “any future identity” stresses the devastating social and personal consequences faced by the barren woman. These far-reaching consequences for the *Bildung* of personal identity, therefore, undercut the initial allegorical reading invoked by the text, bringing Sheri’s personal *Bildung* to the fore once again.

How Sheri’s rape influences Enitan’s girlhood is of immediate concern. After her rape, Sheri asks Enitan to wash her. Recalling how her mother told her that “[s]ex was a filthy act, she said, and I must always wash myself afterward” (*Everything* 23), Enitan believes that “[o]nce [the water] was clear, we would have survived. Instead it remained pink and grainy, with hair strands and soap suds. The sand grains settled and the scum stayed” (*Everything* 64). Enitan finds that being robbed of choice and agency is, like rape, a filthy act that permanently soils its victim. Her quest for gender and personal emancipation might be read as a way of trying to rid herself of the stain that would not otherwise wash away. Just as the “scum” remains in the bath tub, the stain of being sexually violated remains, binding Sheri and Enitan together in silence. They are unable to speak about the event, which, to a certain extent, can be equated with the glass *étagère* in *Purple Hibiscus*. Both Sheri’s rape and the glass *étagère* function as contracts of silence – the latter being a silencing of traumatic domestic violence (the violence experienced in personal and private spaces), and the former a silencing of traumatic sexual violence (the violence experienced in public spaces, though mediated through the intimately private). Sheri’s rape, consequently, becomes a determining moment that not only locks the two protagonists into a realm of silence, but which also sparks Enitan’s quest for gender and sexual emancipation, as well as for the recognition of her voice – her self and her autonomy – by the broader society. The desire for her voice to be heard stems from her desire to enter public and political spaces. However, she first needs to gain sexual independence and linguistic authority which, when combined, will provide the agency by means of which she can enter into the power discourses in which she will be able to articulate herself on the public level as well.

Enitan unites issues of sexuality and access to language in her negotiation for agency and personhood when she says:

People say I was hot-headed in my twenties. I don't ever remember being hot-headed. I only ever remember calling out to my voice. In my country, women are praised the more they surrender their right to protest. In the end they may die with nothing but selflessness to pass on to their daughters. (*Everything* 179)

The accusation made against Enitan of being “hot-headed” is the direct result of her desire to assert and ‘perform’ herself as a legitimate member of society, with the right to “protest”. Her desire is in stark contrast to the expectation of the society that intends her, as a woman, to “surrender” to mere “selflessness” and silence. Although Enitan “call[s] out to [her] voice”, a speech act that can potentially lead her to establish herself as an independent individual within the society in which she lives, she struggles to find her voice, with others rarely seeming to hear it, which hampers her *Bildungsprozess*. The question also arises as to the nature of the voice with which she calls out, if she does not yet, indeed, have a voice, in the metaphorical sense of the word. Calling out with an ‘empty’ voice illustrates the relative futility of the endeavour, with the act echoing emptily back from the vortex of the society that encapsulates it in silence.

It is at this moment that the distinction between the narrating and experiencing selves comes into play in yet another intertextual reference to Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Bildungsroman*, *Nervous Conditions*. The narrating Tambu is older and more mature than the experiencing Tambu, whose story is narrated. The narrating Tambu can thus comment on her own process of development with the benefit of hindsight, and, by means of meta-commentary is able to provide an extensive range of viewpoints. Similarly, two voices are heard in the above quotation: the silenced experiencing Enitan, who is searching for agency and voice, as well as the mature narrating Enitan, who reflects back on such events, voicing her story with the agency that she has since managed to obtain. *Nervous Conditions*, *Purple Hibiscus* (in which the same technique is also employed) and *Everything Good Will Come* are thus all three *Bildungsromane* that are structured so as to enable the female protagonist to voice herself, but only from a future position that they come to occupy in their respective journeys of becoming. All three authors stress the difficulty for a female protagonist of becoming and of finding her voice. When the voice, as well as the space in which the self can perform, are found, the protagonist obtains insight, self-knowledge and a spiritual awakening, surpassing that of the male protagonist in the classic form of the genre.

Enitan gains access to language, to some extent, when she breaks the taboo of male philandering by openly confronting her father about his promiscuity. In the breaking of the

taboo, she challenges not only her father, but also the conventions of her society as well. To gain linguistic authority, women must be able to voice topics usually only discussed by men. When describing Sheri's rape to her boyfriend, Mike (*Everything* 133), she accesses still more linguistic authority. Voicing the trauma of the incident helps her to deal with it, and, by implication, aids her with overcoming her fear of patriarchal power. Voicing a taboo subject, in conjunction with the breaking of the contract of silence, provides Enitan with the necessary linguistic and gender agency to negotiate her female gender identity with slightly more freedom.

As Enitan develops into womanhood, she faces a further pressing layer of prescribed gender identity, that of marriage. For women, the opening out to "the *outside*" (18; emphasis original) is imagined as something that can only take place through marriage. Moretti argues that the classic *Bildungsroman* must end with marriage, as entering into such a union forms a "pact" between the individual and the world, that reciprocal 'consent' which lies in the double 'I do' of the wedding" (22). The female European *Bildungsroman* of the 19th century traditionally ended in marriage or death. Moretti writes that "the classical *Bildungsroman* does not contrast marriage with celibacy, as would after all be logical, but with death [...] or 'disgrace'" (23). Commenting on the "narrative logic" of the classical *Bildungsroman*, Moretti mentions that "[i]t tells us that a life is meaningful if the *internal* interconnections of individual temporality ('the plot of life') imply at the same time an opening up to the *outside*" (18; emphasis original). The events of one's life, strung together, should, accordingly, open up and connect with the outside world, the world of that which is human and constructed by humans. The way in which "individual temporality" opens up into the outside world is strongly reminiscent of Fanon's notion that personal experiences open out into the truth of the nation. Marriage, as illustrated by Enitan marriage and break-up with Niyi, serves as a link in an ever-denser relationship with others, making her life "meaningful", and emphasises that *Bildung*, for third-generation female protagonists, is, to some extent, relationally determined. Marriage is, finally, a way in which personal experience opens up into the truth of the nation, revealing certain truths about the national experience of women.

The result of childlessness is painfully real to Sheri, who is unable to conclude the contract of marriage, and, in so doing, opens up her "individual temporality" to the Nigerian world of human relationships and the public sphere, thereby making her life "meaningful". During one of their conversations, Sheri asks Enitan "which single man from a normal family would have a person like me" (*Everything* 102), alluding to her infertility. Sheri is, accordingly, "disgraced" (a commonality between the classical *Bildungsroman* and the ethos of Nigerian societies). Such disgrace implies a social 'death', from which she suffers on all fronts,

ranging from the private to the public and political level. Sheri will be unable to conclude a 'pact' of marriage with her society, which implies that, according to the conventions of the classical *Bildungsroman*, her *Bildung* will be incomplete, since her individual temporality will not be able to open up to the 'human things' of concern to the specific society that she inhabits. The novel thus critiques marriage as being the sole means for women to "open up" to those societies in which they live, resulting in the social exclusion of women like Sheri, and the limiting of options for women like Enitan.

Enitan's marriage to Niyi, if we view it as an event in a string of other events which open her up to an experiencing of the world, consists of a complex relational identity establishing her in terms of her surrounding society and its culture, customs and beliefs. Her marriage, thus, provides Enitan with an access point by means of which she can engage with multiple relational identities, namely those of wife, mother, sister and daughter in-law. Not only is a multi-relational identity characteristic of the African and female *Bildungsroman*, but it is also an issue that is explored by the third generation as well, albeit with a different end in mind. The classic *Bildungsroman*, as mentioned, is constructed from the point of view that societal conventions, if abided by, present the possibility of total freedom. That to which one conforms is the norm, and the norm is accepted as being that which is to be desired. According to Moretti (19), "each moment [of the individual's life opening up to society thus] strengthens one's *sense of belonging* to a wider community" (emphasis original). For the individual, the moment of marriage becomes the defining temporal moment of the acceptance of conformity to societal structures. Enitan's "*sense of belonging* to a wider community" does not mean conformity to the traditions and customs that she challenges. The "wider community", which seeks to confine her to the rigid role of a traditional wife, like her mother, only temporarily succeeds in imposing even more restrictions and gendered expectations, such as domesticity and childbirth, onto her. Ultimately, she leaves the marriage, as she cannot accept the fact that a female's opening up to the outside world depends on her being married.

In contrast, Sheri is unable to attain the security that a marriage or child might have brought her. When society labels Sheri "barren", it refuses to acknowledge her womanhood, making her expendable, in the sense that men are willing only to use her, since she cannot provide them with progeny. Manipulation, therefore, becomes the only 'weapon' at Sheri's disposal with which she can attempt to counter patriarchal exploitation; she thus acts the part of a submissive domestic mistress for various men in exchange for their financial and material support. Enitan finds it difficult to reconcile herself to such an approach, given her own subversive approach of challenging her adversaries. Sheri and Enitan are estranged

from each other during the period of Enitan's tertiary education in London, as well as for most of her time in the civil service once she returns to Nigeria. Once their friendship recommences, Enitan discovers that Sheri is living with a Nigerian brigadier who provides her with luxurious lodgings, money, expensive clothing, jewellery and transport, in exchange for being his mistress. However, Sheri, well aware of the fact that his two wives are trying to recruit her as a third (since he is a Muslim, he is allowed to have four wives), still seeks to manipulate society's disregard of male philandering and the need to observe religious dictates regarding marriage.

Enitan's ability to have children leads to her having a different approach to marriage. Initially, by consenting to marriage, she seems to abjure her own beliefs on the need to develop independently. At first, she appears to consent to a *Bildungsprozess* dominated by manipulation and compromise, which is the course of action taken by Sheri after her rape. If Enitan were to acquiesce to leading a life of compromise and negotiation, her marriage would become the 'legal' or 'legitimate' way of accessing society.³⁹ However, unlike the worldview presented in the classic *Bildungsroman*, access to society for the third generation means not to *conform* to, but to *change*, society. Once married, Enitan realises how Niyi's domestic demands inhibit her own process of becoming and conflict with her desire to be independent. As soon as her child is born, Enitan leaves Niyi. Leaving her husband can thus be viewed as a final attempt to break with male power and influence over her life. By keeping her child with her, she is able not only to save herself from disgrace and social death, but also to reclaim the experience of mothering from the patriarchal institutions of motherhood.⁴⁰ Whereas Enitan's marriage to Niyi allowed her a legitimate entrance to society, the birth of Yimika, her daughter, seals society's approval of Enitan's womanhood. When Enitan leaves with Yimika, therefore, she is abjuring a point of entry to public and political life, but exiting through the open back door provided by Yimika. Rather than serving the patriarchal requirement of another generation of females to serve male wants and needs, Enitan, through giving birth, empowers herself, while, simultaneously, liberating the child from any attempt at patriarchal socialisation by taking Yimika with her.

Simone De Beauvoir's foundational text, *The Second Sex* (1952) may shed further light on the reasons why Enitan leaves Niyi. De Beauvoir mentions how girls are continuously told that they are made for childbearing, "and the splendours of maternity are forever being

³⁹ Marriage and childbirth, in Enitan's society, serve to validate a woman, as such events function as her rite of passage from girlhood into womanhood, and affirm her 'female-ness', manifesting her worth as a woman.

⁴⁰ See Rich xv.

sung to her” (491). A woman thus proceeds to marry and bears her first child which society tells her is her triumph.

And now here is man asking woman to relinquish her triumph as female in order to preserve his liberty, so as not to handicap his future, for the benefit of his profession.

The child is no longer a priceless treasure at all, to give birth is no longer a sacred function. (149)

It is clear that Enitan does believe that she is only made to bear children. Yet, for all the suffering that the miscarriages and Yimika’s birth have caused, Niyi will still not allow Enitan political freedom, but would rather that she stayed at home as housekeeper. In an emancipatory act, she leaves him.

Enitan, who bravely challenges patriarchy, is frustrated and disappointed by Sheri’s compliance with sustaining patriarchal power structures. However, such frustration reflects her disappointment with women who seek to negotiate and compromise with, rather than to confront, the dominating patriarchy. Though Sheri is initially constructed as a foil to Enitan, underscoring the latter’s relatively un-negotiated identity, Enitan, following Sheri’s rape, takes the route of challenge. She does so uncompromisingly, unafraid for her own safety, whereas Sheri, who has experienced the full force of patriarchal domination and violence, starts to compromise with patriarchy, rather than to challenge it. Sheri’s initial compliance with the patriarchal power structures strengthens Enitan’s dissatisfaction with the gender role forced on her by society. Such compliance, according to Enitan, implicitly denotes a subjected position, which is aimed at keeping women from self-actualisation and the freedom to negotiate their own individual identities. However, as Enitan learns through her imprisonment, direct challenge can be very dangerous. Enitan, therefore, adopts a new feminist stance directed at enabling her to change the nation, rather than to represent or reproduce it – a feminist stance that encompasses compromise, negotiation and challenge.

In the anthology, *Sisterhood, Feminism and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*, the editor, Obioma Nnaemeka, explains the difference between African and Western modes of feminism. She is of the opinion that one should not make the mistake of approaching African texts through Western feminist discourse, as many Western critics have attempted to do in the past. Doing so, she argues, has led to the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of African texts and characters. She is of the opinion that “African feminism is not radical feminism. [...] African feminism neither demotes/abandons motherhood nor dismisses maternal politics as non-feminist or unfeminist politics” (6). The language and diction of the two forms of feminism are, therefore, also different. “[The] language of feminist engagement in Africa (collaborate, negotiate, compromise) runs counter to the language of Western

[feminism]... (challenge, disrupt, deconstruct, blow apart, etc.)” (6). African feminism, nonetheless, also challenges, but by means of negotiation and compromise, rather than by acts of overt protest and subversion. In African feminism, men are not excluded from women’s issues; on the contrary, such feminism invites the partnership of men in issues of problem solving and social change.

In turn, Anthonia Akpabio Ekpa mentions that “[t]his new woman” (30) who follows an African feminist stance “is aware of her goals but is sometimes confused about how to get them” (30). She furthermore recognises a “common struggle with African men” (31) against the gender disparities that beset the African continent.

Everything Good Will Come interarticulates Western and African modes of feminism. The two modes of feminist thinking are initially established in the dichotomous relationship of Enitan and Sheri. Through a combination of factors – her Western education, her time in London, her regard for her father’s opinions about the rights of women, and her own inclinations – Enitan becomes acquainted with more Western ways of thinking and of ‘doing gender’, to use Butler’s phrase. Sheri, in contrast, initially embodies an African mode of feminism; she thus observes social conventions while, simultaneously, negotiating with her society. In this way, she can manipulate its conventions to obtain what she wants. The vacillation between the two feminist approaches, by the end of the novel, loses its prominence as they are, at least in part, interchanged.

The hybridisation of various feminist approaches is evident in Enitan’s rather unorthodox take on the nuclear (and extended) family, as well as in her performance of her domestic (wifely and motherly) duties. Despite the risk of being criticised by her society for self-centeredness, since her freedom is more important to her than is serving her husband, her final act of leaving her husband is in keeping with her frame of reference concerning her family. The act is one of self-fulfilment, by means of which she is able to lay claim to her own voice, body and autonomy. “I’m just saying” Enitan says, that “I don’t think family ties are as simple as people like to say they are, over here” (*Everything* 89). Enitan’s remark is directed at both ‘Western’ and ‘African’ familial structures. She criticises the West, whose colonial governments attempted to transplant their nuclear familial structure onto the indigenous African extended one, thus expressing a belief in the superiority of the former over the latter. She criticises Africans who accept the Westernised structure, while still holding on to the structures of their own tradition or religion. Some of the practices that she critiques are the polygamous marriages of Muslims and some indigenous cultures; the taboo on the unwritten traditional custom in African society, in accordance with which a man is allowed to have a

son outside marriage if his wife does not give birth to a male heir; and the maintenance of more than one household without the knowledge of the families concerned.

Though African feminist modes of thinking invite men to aid in problem solving and socio-political change, male characters in *Everything Good Will Come* noticeably refrain from helping to solve gender-specific problems. Although Enitan's father might argue in favour of female emancipation, his lack of action in this respect belies his words. When Enitan compares political prisoners to women entrapped by their fathers and husbands in 'home prisons', her father rebukes her, saying that she should not "make such a false and simplistic comparison [... between] a handful of kitchen martyrs [...and] people confined in Nigerian prisons" (*Everything* 327). He clearly betrays his own hypocritical stance on the matter, in that he differentiates between heroic (male) political prisoners and women in 'home prisons'.

Though challenging patriarchal structures does provide Enitan with some form of agency, she contradicts her own veracity by seeking to negotiate her position in relation to the same society by means of marriage and having a child. Enitan thus moves from a position of challenge to one of negotiation.

Sheri, similarly to Enitan, also changes in her approach to patriarchy when she starts to challenge the system, rather than to compromise with it. Sheri's *Bildung*, till this point, largely achieved by way of negotiation and compromise, crosses a boundary when she decides, like Enitan, to follow an openly confrontational approach to asserting selfhood, rather than inviting male partners to contribute to "problem solving and social change" (Nnaemeka 8). Their roles are inverted, with Enitan taking up the position of instructor in Sheri's life. When the brigadier, for whom Sheri is acting as mistress, raises his hand to her for not obeying his orders to stop striving to become politically independent, she beats him with a pot (*Everything* 170). When Enitan asks why he gave such 'orders', Sheri replies: "The man is jealous of me. Can you believe it? He's jealous of my success. With all he has. He wants me to have nothing, except what he gives me" (*Everything* 171). Sheri has also become a victim of the partial acknowledgement of personhood. As long as she remains a submissive "kitchen martyr" (*Everything* 105), she is acceptable, as her livelihood (and, by implication, her personhood) depend on the brigadier. Her identity as a self-asserting individual independent of him is not acknowledged. Any attempt to find a means to live independently is regarded as an unwelcome challenge to the male power structure. By hitting her brigadier lover with a pot, which is a symbol of her subordinate, 'inferior' and 'imprisoned' position, Shari shows that she is able to use an instrument of subordination to free herself from its associated dictates. Together with her two stepmothers, she subsequently starts a

catering business that flourishes, illustrating how her domestic skills now become an empowering weapon, by means of which she can assert herself economically.

Sheri is constructed to function sometimes as Enitan's double, and sometimes as her foil. Nevertheless, Sheri always remains a character in her own right. This illustrates how their different strategies of coping with the nation and its patriarchal society impact on one another. In their own ways, they both reach the same conclusion: challenge is sometimes necessary and can result in greater freedom to express and negotiate the self. Sheri is ultimately restored as Enitan's "intimate other", in keeping with Enitan's decision to self-emancipate. In this way, Sheri is transformed into a symbol of hope and life after death, as well as becoming a woman in her own right. Enitan and Sheri's acts of self-emancipation, thus, embody their triumph over the ways in which they are bound together by their shared past as 'twin protagonists', in terms of Sheri's rape and Enitan's patriarchal domination. Such triumph over shared adversity might serve to epitomise the feminist stance propagated in *Everything Good Will Come*. Though faced with difficult obstacles, both of the protagonists achieve a high degree of individualisation, as well as of political and social agency, indicating that there is more than one way of survival. Though achieved at a price, such an existence is self-authored, self-authorised and self-styled.

Nigeria's current modern and postcolonial socio-cultural milieu thus, to some extent, allows Enitan and Sheri to become. Within the existing socio-cultural space, master narratives, such as those of nationalism and patriarchy, are loosening their grip as the only authoritative discourses. These weakening master narratives give rise to numerous individual cultural, economic, social and political discourses, which collide and conflate, creating a society that is culturally hybrid. Such conflated discourses are less inhibiting and less engendered, enabling Enitan and Sheri to develop their gender identities while moving more freely between these discourses.

Conclusion

Initially, Enitan follows Sheri's lead, and compromises with patriarchy to gain her ends. This she does in order to escape from the strict ways in which her parents and her society attempt to socialise her. After returning from London, the older Enitan becomes aware of the various ways in which her country struggles with national identity, the major problems being the precarious 'inventedness' of the Nigerian state by the British empire and the postcolonial system of governance by various corrupt politicians and army officials. She comes to realise that the only way in which she can imagine national identity is by negotiating and acting out a

personal 'layered' identity. The individual first needs to negotiate who he or she wants to be as a person, and then who he or she wants to be as a Nigerian.

A further rift in national unity and identity is that of constructed gender divisions. Enitan becomes aware of the fact that she is restricted from becoming a national actor; she is only allowed to be a national symbol, subjected to the patriarchal authorities. She, thus, embarks on a course of fighting for her right to be heard, as well as for her right to negotiate her own gender identity. She does so by challenging the patriarchal system, though she eventually finds that an interarticulation of the feminist strategies of challenge and negotiation is more effective. She eventually claims full self-authorship, by leaving her husband, to live on her own and to fend for herself. Enitan's emancipation from male dominance and her chairing of a political reading group collapses the boundaries between the personal/private and public/political spaces. Though *Everything Good Will Come* ends on a more optimistic note than does *Purple Hibiscus*, the culmination of Enitan's existence is left open to further *Bildung* and development, in keeping with the typical characteristics of the third-generation *Bildungsroman*.

CHAPTER FOUR: GRACELAND AND THE NEGOTIATION OF MODERN MASCULINITIES

“This is a journey to manhood, to life; it cannot be easy.” *GraceLand*, 284

In his article, “Of Ancestors and Progeny”, Abani mentions that “the time has come to begin to imagine and deal with more home grown (albeit universal) concerns – gender, sexuality, familial tyranny, history and hybridism, among others” (286). Abani’s novel, *GraceLand*, the final novel investigated in this thesis, takes up this challenge in the fast-paced story of a slum teenager, Elvis Oke. Elvis’s story is one of trying to negotiate his identity as a young man in a chaotic context of crime and corruption, as well as within the cultural hybridity of his society, during his coming of age. Not only does *GraceLand* – like the previous two works dealt with in the thesis – rewrite the conventions of the *Bildungsroman* genre, but, similarly to *Purple Hibiscus*, it also engages in dialogue with the novels of previous Nigerian (and West African) generations of writers. Transgressing the conventions of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, Elvis’s life story is told by a third person narrator, who, moreover, fractures the traditional linear narrative structure by oscillating between the past and present, situated respectively in Afikpo and Lagos. *GraceLand* is divided into two parts: “Book 1” alternates between Elvis’s present life in Lagos (1983) and his childhood in the town of Afikpo (1972 to 1980). “Book 2” is set primarily in Lagos in 1983, with the action of two short chapters set in Abeokuta and Ijebu respectively. *GraceLand* traces Elvis’s *Bildungsprozess* in the respective localities by investigating how he attempts to negotiate an alternative modern masculine identity within the confines of a patriarchal society that is marked by intolerant hegemonic constructions of masculinity.

A number of features of the text might indicate the author’s evasion of the labelling of his work as a *Bildungsroman*. The most notable feature is that Elvis does not mature beyond sixteen years during the narrated time of the novel, and, thus, is unable to attain manhood. Though the novel does develop along chronological lines, it continuously circles back to the year 1983, which is the novel’s present time. The novel’s textual structure thus locks Elvis in stasis, illustrating the limits imposed on his *Bildung*. Similarly to the previous two texts dealt with in the current study, *GraceLand* also resists closure in the final chapter, leaving the novel open-ended, so as to indicate the never-ending process of *Bildung*. Other features that trouble its status as a *Bildungsroman* are the presence of an omniscient narrator, and the fracturing of the narrative. I argue, however, that such features form part of the creative and innovative thrust of the third generation’s corpus of *Bildungsromane*, specifically due to such

deviations. The epigraph that introduces “Book 1” is a quote from Bessie Head’s novel, *A Question of Power* (1974): “It seemed almost incidental that he was African. So vast had his inner perceptions grown over the years...” (*GraceLand* 1). By referring so directly to the development, expansion and growth of the individual’s “inner perceptions” the text is affirmed as a particular kind of *Bildungsroman*, albeit an unconventional one.

The resistance to closure that we find at the end of the novel is foreshadowed by the epigraph to “Book 2”, which comes from Ayi Kwei Armah’s classic second-generation novel, *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* : “...and above all the never-ending knowledge that this aching emptiness would be all...” (*GraceLand* 221).⁴¹ Armah’s novel deals with the neo-colonialism that ensued after Ghana obtained independence. In the novel, the “Man” often seeks the advice and counsel of “Teacher”, who instructs him on how he should live and cope with the atrocities involving corruption and violence that are prevalent in his daily life. Yet, the Man’s situation never changes and Teacher becomes completely emaciated. Abani’s epigraph, thus, indicates the power of the neo-colonial state and of the unbending society to limit the growth potential of the individual, leading to an almost nihilistic view of the individual’s future.

“Book 1” of *GraceLand* traces Elvis’s life from the age of six to fourteen, when he is raised in the town of Afikpo in eastern Nigeria. The chronological, linear development of his early childhood is, however, interrupted by the stasis he reaches at age sixteen in Lagos. In Afikpo, he is brought up by his loving mother, Beatrice, and grandmother, Oye. Elvis’s father, Sunday Oke, struggles to cope with his wife’s terminal breast cancer, as well as with the failure of his political campaign. As a result, he starts abusing alcohol, which leads to the deterioration of his relationship with his wife, son and mother-in-law.

Elvis is stimulated and influenced by the different kinds of music (Western pop, rock, blues and country) to which his parents listen, as well as by the American and Indian films that he regularly watches. These Western and Eastern cultural forms are juxtaposed with Igbo cultural forms, such as Elvis’s first steps of initiation into manhood, which are quasi-farcical. The juxtaposition of Western cultural expressions with that of African cultural expressions, set within a strictly gendered society, serves to expound a central theme of the text: the interplay of modern African culture and (historical) constructions of hegemonic male masculinity.

⁴¹ Armah’s novel can be categorised as a second-generation text, if Ngũgĩ’s model of generational demarcation is applied. See Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o 1994.

Elvis's search is for alternative modes of (gendered) self-fashioning, results with him becoming mesmerised by the ability of make-up to transform a person. Yet, he is severely manhandled by his father when he persuades his aunt, Felicia, to dress him up in her clothes and make-up. Furthermore, Elvis witnesses, more than once, how his uncle, Joseph, rapes his daughter Efu, later becoming a victim of such violence himself. His victimisation also influences his notions of hegemonic masculinity and his negotiation of his own gender identity.

Elvis's life in Lagos is narrated in both "Book 1" and "Book 2", though the narration in "Book 1" oscillates between Lagos and Afikpo. "Book 1" comes to a close after Beatrice's death, on the very night of Sunday's failed political campaign in Afikpo, which serves as the catalyst for their move to Lagos. Once in Lagos, Sunday becomes an unemployed alcoholic, with Elvis dropping out of school to pursue a career as an Elvis Presley impersonator. "Book 1" introduces Lagos as a cultural melting-pot; the city is presented as a hybrid space that opens up new possibilities of becoming, in contrast to the more insular society of Afikpo. The culturally hybrid space of Lagos presents Elvis with various conflated and contesting cultural paradigms that comprise the cultural make-up of its society. Yet, contradictorily, it also forecloses some of its own possibilities, leading Elvis to negotiate his identity in an ambiguous environment.

GraceLand's structure effectively juxtaposes anthropological information relating to traditional precolonial Igbo society with that of the vibrant, modern and hybrid Nigerian societies. Each chapter is preceded by epigraphs consisting of Igbo proverbs, or pertaining to their mathematical and cosmological theories, to the various times and occasions on which kola nuts are ritually shared and eaten, as well as to their notions of manhood. The epigraphs demonstrate the extent to which Nigerian society has changed since the advent of colonialism. Their interjection breaks the flow of the novel, illustrating how traces of traditional culture are still discernible within the new environs, though seemingly displaced within the modern context. Sunday embodies some of the earlier traditional ideologies, which, like the epigraphs, cause friction between him and his modern son, Elvis.

Sunday, Elvis's primary initiator into manhood, believes that being a man entails being tough and hard working, caring for one's family and defending the family honour. The hegemonic masculine identity which he represents is, however, fraught with contradictions clustered around an overstressed sense of family honour. Despite Sunday caring for his family, he, nevertheless, allows his niece to be repeatedly raped, and orchestrates the murder of his nephew, in order to preserve the family honour. Sunday's contradictory

pedagogical approach, as well as the trauma that his niece and nephew undergo, become crucial events in Elvis's *Bildungsprozess*.

Elvis's *Bildung* in Lagos is chiefly facilitated by Redemption and The King of the Beggars. The two characters play similar roles, and their relationship to Elvis resembles that of the character "Teacher" to "Man" in Armah's second-generation Ghanaian novel. Similarly to Teacher, both the King and Redemption coach Elvis in the ways of life in Lagos and impart different notions of masculinity to him. More so than Teacher, their advice is ambiguous, which makes it difficult for Elvis to live a life untarnished by the corruption embedded in his society. Abani's message, like that of Armah's, is brought to the fore: it is, effectively, impossible to remain 'pure' in a corrupt, violent and 'impure' society. Redemption is both Elvis's best friend and his initiator into a life of crime. He propagates the belief that it is necessary to gain material wealth by any means possible, even if such means require abdicating moral and ethical responsibility, in order to attain manhood. The King of the Beggars, on the other hand, challenges Elvis to pursue his dreams. The King, furthermore, encourages Elvis to act against corruption, and to accept accountability and responsibility for what he believes in, which, in contrast to Redemption's views, comprises the King's notion of masculinity. The King and Redemption are as ambiguous as their instructions. The King is presented as the 'king' of his morals yet, as Elvis finds out, he eventually uses violence as a means of fighting corruption, abdicating his own notions of masculinity in his own act of 'honour killing'. Redemption, in contrast, though unashamedly corrupt, 'redeems' Elvis's hopeless situation by giving him his visa and (forged) passport, enabling Elvis to leave for the United States.

'Book 2' commences with Elvis and Redemption conversing about a commission that they have received from the Colonel, a corrupt army official. In accepting his job offer, they become, inadvertently, complicit in child trafficking. When realising what they were doing, they escaped from the job. Elvis joins the King's theatre troupe in an attempt to hide from the Colonel. On their return to Lagos, they find that the government is about to bulldoze Maroko, the slum in which they live, and that the local community is planning protest action. Before the slum is demolished, Elvis is caught by the Colonel, while he and the King watch political activists speaking at a public protest. He is tortured by the Colonel, who wants to know everything about the King and his apparent conspiracies. Meanwhile, the community's attempts to stop the government from invading Maroko fail dismally, and both the Colonel and the King die in the process. Maroko is bulldozed, and Sunday suffers a brutal death. Elvis, having been ejected from the prison shortly after the protests, is now forced to move to Bridge City, where Okon (a beggar for whom Elvis once bought food) helps him to become a

guardian of street children. Redemption, who also fled from the Colonel, finds Elvis at Bridge City, where he offers Elvis his forged passport, so that Elvis can go to the United States. Though Elvis is reluctant to accept the illegal document, he agrees with Redemption that he is not born for a life on the streets of Lagos, and should follow his dreams of becoming a professional dancer in the United States, though he doubts whether he can, in fact, realise such a dream. The novel ends in the departure lounge of Lagos airport with Elvis, posing as Redemption, being called to proceed through the departure gates.

Chapter Four investigates the milieu in which Elvis negotiates his identity by focusing on Lagos's fractured African modernity and its hybrid cultural forms, as well as on the opportunities the city presents or negates in the course of Elvis *Bildung*.⁴² The exposition of the cultural flows of Lagos will provide the necessary backdrop for an inquiry into Elvis's negotiations of masculinity which will be conducted in the second section of this chapter. His gender identity becomes the site of a continuous clash between traditional hegemonic notions of masculinity and more 'modern', urban and diverse notions thereof.

Fractured Modernities, Cracked Selves

In his entry "Modernity in Africa" in the *Encyclopaedia of African Literature*, Simon Gikandi writes that "colonialism was to be the major agent for transforming traditional precolonial societies into modern polities" (337). Though *GraceLand*, like *Purple Hibiscus* and *Everything Good Will Come*, is set specifically in a post-independence society, it inhabits the aftermath of the transformations brought about by colonialism. The worldviews of modernity and modernisation, set off by colonialism, introduced traditional societies in Nigeria to the technologies which made it possible for the Nigerian people to gain access to a pantheon of diverse foreign cultures, modes of cultural expression and institutions. The most notable element of modernity introduced to the traditional societies is the notion of a free, self-governed and self-conscious individual, who becomes, in his/her turn, the subject of *Bildung*. The most notable of the modern institutions introduced under colonialism (as perceived in *GraceLand*) include: the modern nation-state; mass media technologies; Western-styled education; and a culture of capitalist accumulation. The importation of such foreign

⁴² Throughout this chapter, 'fractured modernity' refers to the 'fruits of modernity', as it were; it indicates the uneven spread of wealth and capital among a modern society, due to the way in which opportunities for economic endeavour are just as inviting and accessible as they are foreclosed.

institutions and forms of cultural expression rapidly transformed a traditional world into a modern, transcultural and hybrid one.⁴³

Colonialism, and the various technologies it brought to Nigeria, made it possible for Nigerians to communicate with other cultures and societies, in inscribing them into the global world. Explaining the cultural hybridisation that transculturation brought about globally, Wolfgang Welsch mentions that “forms of [cultural] entanglement are a consequence of [...] worldwide material and immaterial communications [...] interdependencies and dependencies” (198). Cultural entanglements are, thus, a consequence of Nigeria’s communication with the world which, inevitably, leads to hybridisation. Such hybridisation makes possible the fashioning of vehicles, like the “molues” presented in *GraceLand*, which provide a vivid and insightful example of the extent to which Lagos is a locale for cultural entanglement:

molues were 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 yellow sardine tin. (*GraceLand* 9)

Bits and pieces from all over the globe are assembled and tinkered together by Nigerians, creating a hybrid and magical vehicle. Though precarious, the vehicle is effective for everyday use, illustrating how diverse parts of machinery, though not originally made to fit together, can become a working unity through a creative, and almost playful, reassembling. The hybrid vehicle functions, moreover, to shuttle people from one socio-economic and

⁴³ The terms “hybridism” and “transculturation” are used interchangeably by different authors. Drawing from Wolfgang Welsch’s essay, ‘Transcultural Place’, transculturation can be viewed as the process by means of which a culture transcends its own borders through “material and immaterial communication” (Welsch 198), thereby becoming a part of other cultures through assimilation. The concepts of “newness” and “otherness” between different cultures disappear, as neither is ‘new’ or ‘other’ any longer. Transculturation thus changes both cultures. Hybridisation is the process by means of which an indigenous cultural element is fused with that of a foreign cultural element to produce a new product or ideology, in which traces of both originals are still discernible, though blended (Nyairo 16). Transculturation is, thus, the process of cultural exchange, whereas hybridity is its result.

cultural space to another, such that it becomes an embodiment of bridging cultural, economic and social boundaries.

Writing about modern Mozambique, Mia Couto mentions that “[o]ur wealth arises from our ability to accomplish cultural exchange with others [...] This magic is born of our ability to exchange cultures and produce variety. This magic is born of our capacity to be ourselves, being others” (1). The ‘magic’ of hybrid identities, according to Couto, is, thus, that it produces selves that are simultaneously ‘other’. Yet, we are told that “magic” is the only thing that keeps the molues from falling apart, in an allusion to Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. Certain segments of the society presented in Achebe’s novel ‘fell apart’ because it could not simultaneously be self and other within the society’s traditional context. Third-generation individuals in modern Nigeria, however, are enabled to negotiate their selves within a modern context, since they possess the “magic” of hybridised identities that allow them to be both ‘self’ and ‘other’.

Yet, the molue also illustrates the way in which the people of Lagos, lacking the capital to purchase new buses, have to make do with the “scraps” they find in order to assemble a vehicle. The molue reflects the impoverished state of Lagos’s poor communities, an impoverishment that can be blamed on modernity’s foreclosure of opportunities for capitalist accumulation by various social, economic and political structures of organisation (such as neo-colonial corruption, as illustrated in Armah’s novel).⁴⁴ The molue, accordingly, becomes not only a metaphor for the creative and positive potential of a hybrid identity, but also for the tragic state in which Lagos’s poor communities find themselves.

Just as physical materials from diverse cultures become entangled in the molue, so, too, does the commuting and dialoguing of immaterial ideas lead to entangled ideologies. These immaterial ideologies, *in tandem* with material communication, serve to shape hybrid identities. Such ideas and ideologies are often communicated by means of lyrics, films and books, demonstrating how transculturation influences the thought structures of individuals, resulting in a personal form of hybridisation. A wide range of artists, music, books and films

⁴⁴ Koomson, a friend of the Man, who has become a rich and corrupt minister, agrees to the Man’s mother-in-law’s request to buy a fishing-vessel for her, in return for dividing the proceeds of the catches with her. According to Koomson’s socialist party agreements, he may not possess much material wealth, as such ostentation might give the party a bad name. The Man’s mother-in-law agrees to sign the contract, only to find out that Koomson has no intention of keeping his word. The incident illustrates how a corrupt neo-colonial government continuously forecloses on opportunities for its citizens to partake in the economic freedom which is offered to them by African modernity.

are mentioned in the novel, including the music of Gloria Gaynor, “Wham!, Sade, Duran Duran and Peter Tosh, and [...] indigenous music”, as well as that of Edith Piaf (*GraceLand* 26, 28, 43). The books Elvis reads are from across the globe: the Koran as well as the writings of Chinua Achebe, Mongo Beti, Charles Dickens, Dostoevsky and James Baldwin (*GraceLand* 46, 111–112). These cultural flows are complemented by an endless stream of films from both Hollywood and Bollywood. The varied forms of cultural expression, as well as the ideas and ideologies that they embody, to which Elvis is introduced and exposed from a very young age, refuse to allow for the development of a singular cultural master narrative.

Nigeria’s “increasingly [...] cosmopolitan and universalist” (Nwakanma 13) societies invite the individual to partake of the syncretism that has become the cultural and social fabric of Nigeria’s cities. Explaining how identity is formed in a transcultural and hybrid world (in her focus on Kenya), Joyce Nyairo explains that

[w]hat we have been generating ever since our encounter with Western modernity are complex hybrid creations that capture the flux of revision and signal traditions and identities that are always in the making rather than ones that are sacred, static evocations of a purist Africa. (16)

The same applies to the hybrid world presented in *GraceLand*. In contrast to Elvis’s hybrid world, the classic European *Bildungsroman* of previous centuries was always set within a specifically demarcated society. The cultural paradigm in which the protagonist develops is, thus, marked by a singular frame of mind and governing ideology, channelling his/her *Bildung* into the dominant cultural discourse. The protagonist’s *Bildung* is completed at a certain age, or with the performance of a certain rite. Along a similar vein as Nyairo suggests about urban Kenyan identity, Elvis’s *Bildung*, in contrast, is “always in the making”; his identity is a “complex hybrid creation” (the result of transculturation), which is an ongoing process that never reaches a point of final illumination. Through the process of transculturation, for example, Elvis is introduced to American pop culture. As Welsch mentions, cultural expressions, such as those of American rock, blues, certain styles of dancing and clothing, which are described in *GraceLand*, are able to be assimilated because they are no longer “exclusively ‘own[ed]’” (189) by the specific culture in which it originated. Elvis, thus, is seen to absorb certain elements of the culture, mingled with his Nigerian environment and cultural paradigm, resulting in his hybrid identity. Such an identity enables him to become an Elvis Presley impersonator, as part of his effort to realise his dream of becoming a professional dancer.

Though only one scene in the novel portrays his Elvis Presley impersonation for tourists on the beach, it is disclosed that this has been his occupation for some time. In this

scene he is not recognised as Presley; the one tourist says: “I think he’s doing an Elvis impersonation”, to which another replies: “He doesn’t look like any Elvis I know. Besides, ain’t that wig on back to front?” (*GraceLand* 12). Elvis’s act is not recognisable to the tourists, specifically because it is such a hybrid creation: his attempt at impersonation is a mix of his own interpretation of Elvis Presley’s and Bollywood dance moves, as well as of different kinds of clothing, made up to represent a Presley costume. It must also be remembered that Elvis Presley, like Elvis Oke, was himself a hybrid creation. Presley was “inspired by local African American composers” (Wikipedia). During the early stages of his career, many assumed that Presley was, in fact, of African American origin. His music assimilated and re-interpreted African American music and genres, which were, in turn, hybrid creations of African and Western styles of music. The figure of Elvis thus emphasises that cultural flows are not unidirectional, but rather discursively shape one another.

When discussing the hybrid nature of Lagos, the narrating voice mentions “[n]ame it and Lagos had a copy of it, earning it the nickname ‘One Copy’ ” (*GraceLand* 7–8). Like the molue, Elvis’s act is, therefore, unique to Lagos, though being made up of diverse cultural elements from across the globe. The existence of such an anomaly illustrates not only the notion that nothing is entirely foreign or novel in transcultural Lagos, but that everything is simply a (unique) copy of another copy – just as Elvis Oke is a copy of the “copied” Elvis Presley. (Concurrently, such a paradigm insists that the United States is also not the original source of the cultural flows that emanate from it.)

There are, however, pitfalls to modernity’s otherwise creative and constructive possibilities of hybridised identities. The pitfalls have their roots in Nigeria’s colonial past, and still affect the majority of Nigeria’s populace. The promises presented by modernity, as well as the cultural changes it brings about, are experienced quite differently by different people. Gikandi writes that “it was colonialism that introduced what were considered to be the institutions of modern life in many African communities (337). In *The Invention of the Americas*, Enrique Dussel, in turn, writes that modernity’s “[c]onceptually modern rationality affords an emancipative potential to civilizations with less developed instruments, technologies, practical politico-economic structures, and capacities for subjective expression” (65). African communities, thus, not only gained access to “institutions of modern life”, which brought about greater “capacities for subjective expression”, but also presented such communities with modernity’s “rationality” of “emancipative potential”, whereby they might seek to free themselves, not only from any one cultural or traditional master narrative, but also from colonial rule itself.

However, the prospects held out by capitalist accumulation and self-governance to the colonial Nigerian were bleak in the face of colonial rule. Thus, Gikandi states, that modernity “at the same time depriv[ed] people of the rights that were associated with the project of modernity itself”, since it was “difficult to reconcile the notion of free self-conscious individuals with colonial domination” (337). Dussel agrees with Gikandi, saying that, while presenting individuals with the discourse of the emancipator, modernity “hides the domination or violence that [it] exercises over other cultures” (65). Thus, there is a duplicity in the discourse of modernity, as presented in and to Africa(ns). African modernity might initially be perceived as the discourse of the emancipator, which stimulates subjective expression and provides the technologies by means of which it might be possible to obtain physical freedom (from colonial rule, for example). However, ultimately the individual comes to understand that the discourse is also that of a domination that hides the way in which it subjects other cultures (such as the indigenous cultures of Nigeria) in order to stimulate its own desire for capitalist accumulation (in the sense of exploiting other subjected peoples and their environments).

Though Gikandi and Dussel specifically refer to the colonial moment, I wish to propose, taking Frantz Fanon’s notions of the colonial *comprador* into account, that a neo-colonial government, similarly to its colonial predecessor, deprives certain subjects of the freedom to engage fully in, and on, all levels of socio-economic and political life. By so doing, they seek to retain such privileges for themselves. The neo-colonial government employs the same discriminatory “modes of social and economic organization” (Gikandi 337) practised by colonial governments, enforcing its unique brand of “domination or violence” on its politicised subjects. In *GraceLand*, the figure of the Colonel is the most striking symbol of Nigeria’s neo-colonial government. He refuses to acknowledge Nigerians as “free self-conscious individuals” with the right to self-governance, deliberately setting out to inhibit and restrict their apparent “modern freedom”. Such negation of their rights is most evident in the way in which he stifles the public protest against corrupt governmental practices, as well as the way in which he tortures Elvis to try and find out what he knows about the apparent conspiracy in which the King of the Beggars is embroiled.

In an attempt to enrich himself, the Colonel, furthermore, fosters a culture of crime and corruption, which includes selling children for organ trafficking. He foists the “culture” of crime and corruption onto individuals who have no other financial prospects than those made available to them by participating in his endeavours. In this way, the Colonel’s modern culture of capitalist gain reproduces itself in others. Opportunities to become part of the

socio-economic and political life in Lagos and Nigeria are, accordingly, just as foreclosed (and corrupt) as they are inviting.

Sunday's political campaign also illustrates how opportunities for self-governance are foreclosed by neo-colonial rule. Nigeria is portrayed as holding its first independent democratic elections after having been governed by an interim civil government for a year. Sunday worked hard to be re-elected to parliament, though he knew that the army would probably take over the country. After the failure of his campaign, the army staged a coup, thereby wiping out the promise of self-government on the national level. Sunday's failed political campaign plunges him into debt, and, knowing that he will not have another chance to engage in politics, since the military will not be prepared to step down, he sells his land and takes Elvis to Lagos in an attempt to escape his resultant shame.

The ambiguous nature of modernity is also made manifest in the city's socio-economic disparities. In her article, "City, identity and dystopia: Writing Lagos in contemporary Nigerian novels", Rita Nnodim argues that "Lagos is written as the site of a multiple and sprawling heterotopias [...] landscapes of poverty intersect with more affluent neighbourhoods and middle-class spaces" (322). In *GraceLand*, Lagos is indeed presented as a space of contradictory socio-economic curves, with the impoverished slum dwellers living in close proximity to more affluent citizens. The socio-economic configuration of Lagos graphically illustrates how its urban society either has succeeded or failed in its attempt to secure the promises held out by modernity. Elvis mentions that "[h]e hadn't known about the poverty and violence of Lagos until he arrived. It was as if people conspired with the city to weave a web of silence around its unsavoury parts" (*GraceLand* 7). Elvis finds that the city has two faces: the lush green suburbs that "seemed transplanted from the suburbs of the West" (*GraceLand* 7), and the impoverished slum that most Lagosians are forced to inhabit. The city, "half slum, half paradise" (*GraceLand* 7), accordingly, becomes a site of self-conscious freedom and wealth, and the realisation of the dreams of its many inhabitants, while also, paradoxically, being the symbol of death, decay and deprivation for others.

Initially, Lagos is represented as providing an unrestricted cultural milieu, though it is soon revealed that Elvis's apparent freedom to negotiate his own individuality is still subject to a fractured African modernity. Elvis leaves his dreams of becoming a dancer behind, seeking another, more viable, vocation. Every venture to make money seems futile, potentially hazardous or illegal, which exposes the fraudulent and fractured nature of the modernity he inhabits. After his failed attempts to earn a living as an Elvis impersonator, Elvis turns to manual labour, but is fired from his job. Redemption then convinces him to wrap cocaine in plastic bags, so that they can sell it. Although they are paid a generous amount for

doing this by the Colonel, Elvis is disturbed by the illegal nature of the endeavour and decides not to do it again. Redemption then finds work for Elvis as a chaperone at a night club, where he accidentally bumps into the Colonel, who almost has him executed for the blunder. Irrespective of Lagos's unrestricted cultural milieu, opportunities of economic self-betterment, for Elvis, are incessantly foreclosed, restricting him to a low socio-economic status.

The inherent contradictions of modernity in Africa not only keep some from becoming economically and culturally empowered, but also impact on the individual's psyche in ways that might ultimately be more devastating than its material manifestations. Gikandi writes that modernity

has come to acquire a positive and negative narrative: the first insists on the ideals of self-conscious subjectivity and the desire for freedom; the other is driven by an acute sense of disenchantment and the splitting of subjectivity. (337)

Though Elvis finds a form of freedom in his self-actualising Elvis act, such freedom leads to "an acute sense of disenchantment", when he finds that he earns too little to sustain himself. His subsequent occupations are equally financially unrewarding (except when he wraps cocaine illegally). His sense of disenchantment is apparent in the following two extracts. In the first, Elvis ponders: "How did they come to this? [...] Just two years ago they lived in a small town and his father had a good job and was on the cusp of winning an election. Now they lived in a slum in Lagos." (*GraceLand* 6)

The second scene takes place shortly after a failed Presley impersonation. Elvis looks around his room, noting that the

stained walls had not seen a coat of paint in years. A magazine cutting of a BMW was coming off the far wall, its end flapping mockingly. The bare cement floor was a cracked and pitted lunar landscape. A piece of wood, supported at both ends by cinder blocks, served as a bookshelf. On it were arranged his few books, each volume falling apart from years of use. (*GraceLand* 4-5)

In this graphic description, the "flapping" end of the magazine cutting "mockingly" displays the luxurious life represented by the BMW, which seems to flaunt the possibilities presented by the modern world. Yet the disenchanting truth about this empty promise of modernity becomes ironically clear by its contextualisation within a physical space characterised by "stained walls" and a "cracked and pitted" floor. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson views the print media as a major contributor to modernisation and the development of nationalism. The book (as a vehicle of modern ideology) can, thus, be seen as an icon of

modernisation, carrying within its pages the traits of modernity – reason, logic and autonomy. However, the books on the shelf in Elvis’s room are falling apart, a detail which may be read as yet another allusion to Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. The reference exemplifies the cross-generational dialogue of the third generation with previous generations, providing a contemporary view of long-existing, yet enduringly prevalent, issues. Achebe’s novel is specifically about the ‘falling apart’ of a society once confronted with European modernity and modernisation. The tattered books in Elvis’s room, thus, become a silent, though powerful, comment on how Western modes of modernity perpetually fail in the African context.

Strikingly foreshadowed by the cracked lunar landscape of Elvis’s bedroom floor, *GraceLand* physically illustrates the cracking and splitting up of the individual’s subjectivity as a result of the duplicitous nature of modernity. Before Elvis applies make-up to his face to practise his skill at transforming himself into the image of Elvis Presley, he “held up the tin of talc, admiring the image printed on it – a white couple in evening dress dancing under a sky full of stars. That was the life, he thought” (*GraceLand* 77). The tin of talc, which is a commodity from the West, portrays what the manufacturer considers to be the ideal life. As portrayed by the dancing couple, the item seems to hold the power to transform and transport the individual into their world, by literally promising to make him white. Yet, when the talc is applied, a cracking and splitting of Elvis’s identity occurs. Perceiving his close resemblance to Elvis Presley, “[h]e smiled. It spread across his face in fine tendrils that grew wider as he laughed until his skin showed through”. Seeing his black skin showing through the white talc mask he is wearing, Elvis comes face to face with the illusion that the dancing couple holds for someone in his situation: “I look like a hairless panda, he thought. Without understanding why, he began to cry through the cracked face powder” (*GraceLand* 78). The realisation that make-up alone cannot transport him into the dancing couple’s way of life, and that such a lifestyle is utterly unattainable to him, brings Elvis to tears. The splitting of his identity, thus, becomes evident in the two faces that he sees in the mirror – the superficial powdered face of the glamorous ‘wanna-be’ Elvis Presley, and his own face, which shows through the cracks in the powder, which serve as an ironic reminder of his impoverished life, and, even more significantly, expose the limitations of his own becoming.

The scene is strongly reminiscent of Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Mask*, which explores the inferiority complex the black man experiences within the colonial world. Fanon argues that black men copy or simulate the culture of white people in order to compensate for feelings of inferiority brought on by colonial rule: “The black man wants to be like the white man. For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white. Long ago, the black

man admitted the unarguable superiority of the white man, and all his efforts are aimed at achieving a white existence” (9). *GraceLand* illustrates how such an “inferiority complex” plays out in the 21st century. The ‘culprit’ is no longer the white coloniser who seeks to maintain the “natives” in a subordinate position through force; rather the promises presented by a fraudulent African modernity. Elvis’s use of make-up to “become white” is thus not the expression of a desire to be white, but merely an attempt to make his performance more authentic, and thus, more lucrative. Whereas the individual in *Black Skin, White Mask* desires to be recognised as having an equal human worth, Elvis in *GraceLand* desires an equal standard of living, as he aspires to secure the freedom of the more affluent Lagosians for himself, which is a freedom founded on the promises of modernity.

Elvis’s cosmetically made-up face, therefore, illustrates the split between who Elvis really is and who he would like to be – in other words, the split between his real world environs and the imagined world of his dreams. A more serious and internal splitting of the self, however, occurs when he realises that he has been caught up in child trafficking. The narrating voice reveals, at this stage, that Elvis “felt strange, like there were two parts of him, each watching the other, each unsure. He watched from another place as his hands trembled and his left eye twitched uncontrollably” (*GraceLand* 242). If identity is to be understood as being multilayered, as has been argued in the previous two chapters, then we can postulate that the “cracking” of identity also takes place on various different levels. The first level of cracking is that of Elvis’s dreams and hopes, whereas the second seems to be the splitting of his innate self.

Shedding further light on such splitting, Gikandi states that, in addition to the disenchanting effect that modernity has on the individual and the consequent “splitting of subjectivity”, it also leads “to the spiritual impoverishment of the modern subject, who [i]s left unmoored in a world defined by psychological alienation and social displacement” (337). When Elvis becomes cognisant of the fracturing and splitting of his self, he also realises that he, in part, is becoming so spiritually impoverished as to become involved in child trafficking. On a secondary level, the splitting of his subjectivity also illustrates how he is psychologically alienated from himself, as well as displaced from the world in which he lives.

The classic *Bildungsroman* maps the protagonist’s journey into society through the process of socialisation. The *Bildungsheld* initially resists the pressures of society due to his youth. Yet, as he begins to understand the way in which modernity plays out in his world, he inevitably comes to acquiesce to societal norms and values. The more the youthful protagonist becomes a modern subject, the more he comes to exemplify, and even propagate, the norms and values of modernity (which are presented as being already

embedded in the ideologies of his society). However, as I have argued, such is not the case in Nigeria's third-generation *Bildungsromane*. According to *GraceLand*, and, to a lesser extent, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Everything Good Will Come*, the *Bildungsprozess* and journey into adulthood, in the context of African modernity, are problematic, if not impossible. This becomes even more apparent in the closing chapters of *GraceLand*.

After being tortured by the Colonel for his involvement with the King's protest theatre troupe, Elvis finds Maroko demolished and his father dead:

[He] traced patterns in the cracked and parched earth beneath his feet. There is a message in it all somewhere, he mused, a point to the chaos. But no matter how hard he tried, the meaning always seemed to be out there somewhere beyond reach, mocking him. (*GraceLand* 307)

The psychological effect of modernity's duplicity, as it plays out in the third-generation *Bildungsromane*, keeps the individual from finding closure within his or her society as "meaning always seem[s] to be out there somewhere beyond reach". If the classic *Bildungsroman* were an attempt to come to terms with, as well as an explication of, the coherent workings of Western modernity, then the failure to find meaning or closure in the third-generation *Bildungsromane* illustrates the partial failure of modernity to provide a progressive and viable narrative and ideology within contemporary Nigeria. African modernity, therefore, becomes a fractured narrative that splits subjectivity. Just as the clipping of the BMW in Elvis's room metaphorically "mocks" his unfulfilled dreams of a better life, so too does African modernity "mock" the individual who aspires to find meaning in the surrounding chaos. Meaning is always, accordingly, portrayed as being elusive and "beyond reach".

Elvis, however, not only suffers because of the emptiness of the dreams that he chases. His changing world presents him with creative possibilities for *Bildung*; yet, such changes also cause anxiety in those individuals who resist them. Some, like Sunday and Joseph, transmute their anxiety into violence, causing further suffering. In his essay, 'Identity and Difference in a Globalized World', Alberto Milucci discusses how "individual and collective identity is constructed in a complex [...] society where both individuals and groups are given increasing chances and resources for an autonomous definition of themselves" (58). Changes in societal and individual identity can, hence, be seen as part of global phenomena, and not as limited to the (post)colonial world. The effects of global cultural change are dealt with by the authors of the third generation, including especially Abani.

Milucci argues that

[w]e [the generic individual and group] enter and leave this [mono-cultural] system much more often and much more rapidly than we used to in the past [;...] we participate in an infinity of worlds. And each of these worlds has a culture, a language and a set of roles and rules that we must adapt to whenever we migrate from one to another. Thus we are subjected to mounting pressure to change, to transfer, to translate what we were just a moment ago into new codes and new forms of relation. (61)

The ability to adapt and change is, thus, crucial to the sustainability of a progressive, self-styled form of identity. Such an ability is even more important in the context of transcultural spaces, which not only present the individual with an influx of new and exciting possibilities and opportunities for personal development, but which also transform the physical environment, as well as the hegemonic thought structures in which the individual finds him/herself. The individual is, thus, left with no choice other than to adapt to the changing environment by choosing one of the options of being that his/her environment presents.

Commenting on the necessity for change, Milucci continues, stating that

[c]hange is a goal that we find desirable and towards which our search for the new and the different is directed. But change also threatens our security, and our established and habitual rules. Thus, when we are facing change, we are always torn between desire and fear, between anticipation and uncertainty. (63)

Rapidly changing cultural conditions, as well as the unique identities that they facilitate, are not received equally well by different strata of the population. Sunday, like Uncle Joseph, is willing to change, but only as far as the possibility of capitalist accumulation is concerned. Sunday and Uncle Joseph, accordingly, try to live a Western lifestyle. Yet, changing their thought pattern “threatens [their] security and [their] established and habitual rules”. Being in positions of power in their patriarchal society, both Sunday and Joseph experience “anticipation and uncertainty” about their authoritative positions, fearing that their changing thought structures might infringe or challenge such positions. The result of such anxiety, which is reminiscent of Eugene Achike’s nervous condition in *Purple Hibiscus*, is the willingness to perpetrate violence against any individual who expresses an alternative way of thinking, or who acts out of kilter with the patriarchal norm.

Elvis’s desire to negotiate a masculine identity that is contrary to what his father and Uncle Joseph establish as the norm results in him suffering severely at the hands of both. Yet, rather than being socialised through such abuse, he becomes even more resolute in his

efforts to oppose such violent forms of masculine identity. His struggle against hegemonic patriarchy becomes most evident in his negotiations to attain a full-scale masculinity.

Performing Gender, Becoming a Man

GraceLand, in keeping with the previous texts dealt with in this study, as well with the third-generation trend, voices previously silent spaces in Nigeria's literature and society. The text articulates the new modern Nigerian identity through exploring Elvis's journey of becoming. Once in Lagos, Elvis is, by virtue of his gender, a 'freer' individual than either Kambili or Enitan. Yet, Elvis is trapped by his traumatic childhood experiences of patriarchal violence, which have resulted from the performance of normative masculinity by grown men. The normative masculinity that surrounds him, furthermore, shapes the society in which he spends his teenage years. Altering the structure of the classic *Bildungsroman*, *GraceLand* illustrates how the gendered society stunts Elvis's development into manhood.

Youth is the primary concern of the classic *Bildungsroman*, as it is during this stage of life that identity is primarily formed. The classic *Bildungsroman* traces the individual's development from adolescence to young adulthood, at which time the protagonist is intended to become a responsible member of society. Such, however, is not the case in the *Bildungsromane* of the third generation. *Purple Hibiscus* maps only Kambili's adolescent years; *Everything Good Will Come* follows Enitan's development from adolescence well into womanhood, allowing gaps of a few years to transpire between the narrated sections; *GraceLand* explores Elvis's *Bildung* from childhood to adolescence. Elvis is stuck at the age of sixteen – though always on the threshold of adulthood, he never comes of age. The structure of the novel illustrates the ways in which the demands of normative masculinity attempt to keep Elvis from negotiating any form of gender identity other than the norm.

This section will begin by looking at Elvis's confrontation with normative masculinity, and how the father figure violently seeks to enforce such norms through a process of socialisation and gender policing. Contradictory encounters with cross-dressing (in Elvis's Elvis Presley act, his desire to wear make-up, and his tour with the King's theatre troupe) will be discussed to illustrate the performative nature of gender, as well as how gender can be subverted from within the act of performance. The abuse that Elvis suffers at the hand of normative masculinity, as well as his growing awareness that such conceptualisations of the masculine also condone murder in the name of honour, leads him to be dissatisfied with the normative performance of gender. He, therefore, explores alternative ways in which his gender can be performed. The available alternatives are, eventually, also found to be ambiguous and contradictory, as they still serve to underscore normative masculinity, rather

than to circumvent it. Even though Elvis finds that there is room for creative deviation, the alternatives only offer superficial solutions, or force him into harm's way. This realisation, among others, forces Elvis into self-exile.

In his article 'Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in Southern African Studies', Robert Morrell argues that

hegemonic masculinity silences or subordinates other masculinities, positioning these in relation to itself such that the values expressed by these other masculinities are not those that have currency or legitimacy. [...] Hegemonic masculinity is, according to Mike Donaldson, 'exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal, and violent'. (Morrell 608)

Elvis's father and Uncle Joseph are examples of males who portray a violent masculinity that preys on children, adolescents and women. Victor J. Seidler explains that the "'head' of the family is entitled to expect that his word will be obeyed without question. So fathers inherit a responsibility to keep that body of the family – women and children – under control, as they cannot be trusted to know what is good for them" (79). That the father is "'head' of the family" exacerbates the situation of male dominance, since "[t]raditionally a sense of male superiority has worked to legitimate male violence against women" (Seidler 26). Such legitimising of male superiority consequently provides the father figure with "legitimate" cultural and societal authority to enable him to control other members of his family tyrannically – a practice that I call "the reign of the father". Central to the reign of the father is the form of gender socialisation required in order to produce the next generation of men, who will continue to uphold the patriarchal creed.

In his essay, 'Masculinity and Nigerian Youths', Egodi Uchendu writes that "masculine gender attitudes and roles are learned from infancy [...] through the process of socialization" (282), a process through which gender is "manufactured" or produced. One of the first instances in the novel where Elvis is subjected to socialisation occurs when his father and uncle force him to perform the first phase of the Igbo rite of passage into manhood: "He had no idea why he had been asked to strip down to his underwear, or why Uncle Joseph first strapped a grass skirt on him and then began to paint strange designs in red and white dye all over his body" (*GraceLand* 17). Once he is in "traditional" dress, Elvis is made to hang an arrow-impaled chick from a tree which is already littered with other dead or dying chicks. This initial rite by means of which to enter manhood is Elvis's first official induction into the world of male violence, which, in turn, sums up the narrative of normative masculinity as presented in the novel: to kill is to be a man. After the ceremony, Elvis drinks a Fanta in a bar with his cousins, Godfrey and Innocent. Observing how they "tease[d] the girl behind the counter,

Elvis felt like a man” (*GraceLand* 22). Normative masculinity, accordingly, seeks to socialise boys into a life marked by violence, as seen through the killing of the chicken, as well as by chauvinistic practices, such as teasing a girl, which make Elvis “feel like a man”.

By extension, the process of socialisation also entails a violent breaking away from one’s mother, as well as from all socially determined and constructed feminine attributes and characteristics. Before the above-mentioned rite commences, Sunday says to Elvis that “[i]t is time to cut your apron strings [...] this is about being a man. No women allowed” (*GraceLand* 18). The rejection of the mother is thus a crucial marker of the journey to manhood. This is borne out by recent research into masculinity in Nigeria and elsewhere. When asking male students with whom he worked how they thought one became a man, they responded that “[m]ales must pass physical tests, endure pain, confront danger, and must separate from their mothers and women. When these tasks are successfully completed, then the adolescent male has become a man” (Uchendu 289). Seidler similarly finds that male identity is defined “through a rejection of vulnerability and emotions still regarded as ‘feminine’” (10), concluding that “[i]t is through a rejection of ‘softness’ that young men still affirm their heterosexual male identities” (11). Boys, like Elvis, are thus intentionally estranged from their mothers, and, accordingly, socialised into a gendered identity that is devoid of the emotions that might keep them from perpetrating the violence that they have suffered under the rule of their fathers.

Sunday severs the relationship between young Elvis and his mother and grandmother for the sake of Elvis’s manhood. Such severance of the relationship, however, has severe consequences for both the family, and for Elvis’s *Bildung*. Elvis’s mother, Beatrice, is reminiscent of Achebe’s Beatrice in *Anthills of the Savannah*, who, in turn, evokes associations with Dante’s Beatrice. Dante was fervently in love with Beatrice, though they never came to know each other. Just before his death, Dante wrote *La Commedia* (1321), an epic poem commemorating Beatrice.⁴⁵ In *La Commedia*, Dante writes about his ascent from *Inferno* (hell) via *Purgatorio* (purgatory) to *Paradiso* (heaven). During his ascent, he is guided by the Latin poet, Virgil; however, Virgil can take him only as far as Mount Purgatory, from where the celestial Beatrice alone can usher him into the heavenly realm. Once in heaven, Dante and Beatrice come, finally, to be united after their respective deaths.

As Beatrice guides Dante into and through heaven, so does Elvis seek the guidance of his mother once he is in Lagos, after her death in Afikpo. He wishes that she could guide him out of the hell and purgatory that is Lagos into an understanding of the world in which he

⁴⁵ *La Commedia* was later translated into English as *The Divine Comedy*.

is trapped.⁴⁶ Beatrice Oke's diary structurally frames the entire text. The *Bildungsroman* charts personal development in terms of a certain narrative structure. Since entries from Beatrice's diary frame the narrative structure by introducing every chapter in the form of an epigraph (in line with the 'anthropological' epigraphs, which often pertain to Igbo notations of masculinity), it follows that her introductory entries "lead" or "signpost" the different stages of his personal development. The entries alternate between recipes for dishes devised by Beatrice, and those for witches' brews, which she wrote down for Oye. Elvis frequently reads his mother's diary, which he always carries with him, showing that he is seeking the advice and counsel of a mother figure. His obsession with reading his mother's journal can also be seen as an effort to learn whatever he can about her, as they were separated early by her untimely death.

The epigraphs that precede the modern narrative of the novel voice two pre-modern narratives also present in the text: the narrative of a hegemonic masculinity and that of a subterranean female knowledge. When he was a young boy, Elvis observed his mother writing in her journal: "her spidery handwriting spread across the page as though laying claim to an ancient kingdom" (*GraceLand* 44). Beatrice's words, despite their being written down, have the authority to lay claim to, possess, authorise, or rule a kingdom (which are qualities usually associated with a male sovereign). Her words could also allude to ancient Igbo customs, which were regarded as sustaining or healing the self. The customs were intended to be kept alive through oral tradition, being handed down by the mother in her traditional role as primary caretaker and nurturer. However, only the masculine line of heritage has been pulled through into contemporary, modern Nigeria, effectively silencing the authoritative and healing female voice. Without a mother, who might otherwise speak the necessary healing words, Elvis struggles to find healing, especially since his father separated him and his mother from each other. However, Elvis fails to find the illumination that a female instructor might have brought to him, no matter how fervently he seeks out such enlightenment in his mother's diary.

⁴⁶ Feminist criticism often takes issue with such an attempt to idealise women, yet the text does not so much idealise Beatrice as stress the importance of seeing both the father *and* the mother figure as facilitators of *Bildung*. Since Elvis's mother is absent for most of his life, her metaphorical presence becomes all the more important to an understanding of the text.

Leaving for the United States, Elvis

pulled out the journal [from his bag] and flipped through it. It had never revealed his mother to him. Never helped him understand her, or his life, or why anything had happened the way it had. What was the point? Nothing is ever resolved, he thought. It just changes. (320)

The incomplete *Bildung* articulated in this claim that “[n]othing is ever resolved” is a sentiment close to the literary heart of the third generation. Failing to find female guidance, and forced by men to become what he dislikes, Elvis comes to believe that nothing can be resolved. It only “changes”, transmuting into another form, keeping him from finding closure or illumination.

The text thus illustrates the resultant stoicism of pedagogical approaches that exclude mothers from the upbringing of boys through the character of Sunday. On more than one occasion, Sunday speaks to the ghost of his departed wife. Such conversations are symptomatic of his inability to mourn her death. Sunday’s saying to Elvis that “[e]verything for us fell apart when your mother died” (*GraceLand* 131) illustrates his inability to mourn Beatrice’s death and to continue with his life thereafter. According to patriarchal norms, men do not mourn. Any display of outward emotions is rendered “completely oblivious to Elvis’s gaze” (*GraceLand* 218). Denying oneself and others the right to mourn produces melancholic subjects. Sunday’s drinking problem could partly be understood as a manifestation of his melancholic state, as it serves as a crutch, enabling him to cope with life after everything “fell apart when [Elvis’s] mother died” (*GraceLand* 131). The reference to *Things Fall Apart* here recalls Okwonkwo’s refusal to engage in the “feminine” of mourning when he executes Ikemefuna, who was like a son to him. His refusal to mourn the boy’s death, in order not to upset the social balance, ultimately contributes to the collapse of the society. As a consequence, he becomes mired in a deep depression, which illustrates how destructive hegemonic masculine traditions acquire psychological authority, due to the cultural heritage instilled in male youths at their initiation.

Writing about the stoic nature of hegemonic masculinity, Seidler argues that males transfer “feelings of vulnerability or fear more or less automatically into an anger or violence that affirms their male identity” (105). The volatile and unpredictable nature of hegemonic masculinity, in turn, instils a sense of anxiety and fear in those subordinate to the father figure. Sunday’s failure to mourn the loss of his wife, and his ensuing melancholia, erupts in rage and violence against his household.

Whereas Morrell claims that hegemonic masculinity is “anxiety-provoking” (608), I wish to argue that it is simultaneously anxious about its own authoritative address, resulting in a rigid policing of gender expressions and hierarchical positions, as seen in the following scene, which plays out just after the mourning period for Elvis’s mother (which is only observed by women) concludes. Watching his aunt and her friends beautifying themselves for a night out:

Elvis longed to try on their makeup and have his hair plaited. Aunt Felicia finally gave into his badgering and wove his hair into lovely cornrows. One of the other girls put lipstick on him [...] He stepped into a pair of Aunt Felicia’s too-big platforms and pranced about, happy, proud, chest stuck out [...] He thought that somehow his father would like him better with the new hairdo [...] Elvis ran straight into [his father’s] first blow, which nearly took his head clean off. (*GraceLand* 61)

His father’s reaction when seeing his son in female clothing is overly severe and rigidly formative in its impact on Elvis’s negotiation of his masculinity. As Amanda Aycock mentions in her article, “Becoming Black and Elvis”, Elvis learns that “gender is a violently regulated performance” (11). However, Elvis has worn a skirt and makeup prior to this incident. Ironically, the initial occasion in which he appeared in such guise occurred as part of the Igbo male initiation rite. In such a context, a grass skirt and makeup (painting patterns on the neophyte’s body) is perceived as forming part of the ritualised formation of manhood, and is, therefore, encouraged by male society. Accordingly, it is the cultural loading on such garments and makeup in different contexts that determines how it is perceived and responded to. When Elvis appears in such a guise after donning Aunt Felicia’s skirt and platform heels, he is seen as breaching the code of normative masculinity. That his wearing of a non-ritualised skirt makes Elvis “happy” and “proud”, with his “chest stuck out” (a marker of masculinity) causes his father anxiety. Sunday sees such behaviour as challenging the kind of masculinity he has attempted to imbue in his son. When Sunday is faced with such an apparent display of feminine tendencies by his son, this fear is transferred into anger, resulting in violence.

An extreme example of gender policing in the novel is the murder (or ‘honour killing’) of Godfrey, Uncle Joseph’s son. Apart from stealing and fighting, Godfrey’s “shameful” acts are not overtly disclosed. They are, however, portrayed by Abani as resulting from the trauma that he suffered as a child soldier in the Biafran War. How and when Godfrey was murdered is also not made known. Elvis sees him for the last time when he is tied up in the parlour of Sunday’s house, in the company of arguing men (151). Elvis asks Sunday about his cousin, and after some argumentation, Sunday finally admits that Godfrey “was killed

because he was a threat to all we had. De only inheritance I had to give you was a name of honour. His actions were muddying de only thing of value we had to give you” (*GraceLand* 187). In self-defence, Sunday continues: “Do you know what people ask you when dey meet you as a young man? Who is your father? First, dey want to know your father’s name, de stock you come from, before dey decide whether to bother talking to you” (*GraceLand* 187). Family and male honour, specifically, is strictly guarded by the father, as such honour exemplifies his family’s code of conduct and his ability to assert patriarchal control over the other family members. Challenging the perception that a name of honour holds more value than a life, Elvis asks “What kind of honour does that? Kills its own?” (*GraceLand* 187). In a similar way to that in which Elvis had to kill the chicken in order to become a man, Sunday and Uncle Joseph kill their son and nephew in order to retain their family honour and identity.

The brutal act, however, was not perpetrated by the father, but by Innocent, Godfrey’s cousin. The way in which such fratricide is forced upon Innocent demonstrates the extent to which the reign of the father is imposed on others, compelling them to do his bidding. Normative masculinity, consequently, maintains its authority and control by preying on adolescents. The Biafran War, in which both Godfrey and Innocent fought, serves as an illustrative example of the way in which adolescents are preyed upon by men. Boys are forcibly kidnapped or drafted into the army by military officers, who then compel them to fight, act and live “like men”, perpetuating their brutal brand of patriarchy by making the boys become like them. Innocent found himself neither able to kill nor eat monkeys during the period that he was a child soldier in the Biafran army, as they looked “too much like human”. The rest of his platoon (which consisted of a number of other boys) therefore “[c]alled him a coward. A woman. Not a warrior” (*GraceLand* 213). In terms of normative masculinity, killing is supposed to make a warrior of a man, yet this entails the brutal (and ironic) loss of Innocent’s innocence, as he is the one made to enact his elders’ will. First, he has to fight in a war as a child soldier, and then he is forced to murder his own cousin. Such traumatic enactments of the reign of the father eventually lead to Innocent’s psychological breakdown and consequent madness.

Similarly to the way in which Innocent is made the subject and victim of normative masculinity, both Efua’s and Elvis’s innocence is taken when they are raped by Joseph. Seeing how Uncle Joseph violently rapes Efua causes “[h]atred and revulsion [to fill Elvis’s] nostrils and head, leaving a harsh taste on his tongue” (*GraceLand* 64). During his own rape, “[t]he pain was so intense, Elvis passed out” (*GraceLand* 198). Efua’s and Elvis’s rapes remind one of Sheri’s rape in *Everything Good Will Come*. Atta’s text illustrates how women are victimised by men, whereas *GraceLand* includes young boys in the category of the

victimised. Sheri's rape causes Enitan to rebel against the type of patriarchy that abuses the vulnerable; Elvis rebels against the type of patriarchy that wants to socialise him into the role of abuser of the vulnerable by abusing him. Such experiences and encounters with normative masculinity force Elvis to search for an alternative form of masculinity that reproduces itself peaceably, progressively, sustainably and with tolerance of deviations. He thus attempts to break with the rigid structure of normative masculinity by means of creative expression, namely his Elvis Presley impersonation.

Elvis's commitment to break with violent patriarchy becomes most evident in the way in which he defies his father by continually applying make-up, even though he was severely manhandled for doing so as a child. His commitment to such a practice might also be read as a commitment to himself, and to his determination to develop as he chooses, so that he can channel his own *Bildungsprozess*. When the black Nigerian Elvis launches a performance as the white American Elvis in Lagos, the morphing power of make-up becomes essential to the authenticity of his performance. Elvis's fascination with make-up lies in its ability to change an individual's outward appearance into something completely different. Observing how Aunt Felicia applies her own make-up, he becomes aware of its transformational power and potential. The narrating voice mentions that Elvis

was amazed not just at how much makeup made her aware of herself, but by how much he wanted to wear that mask. It would be the perfect remedy for his painful shyness. [...] He envied her this ability to prepare a face for the world. To change it any time she liked. Be different people just by a gentle hint of shadow here, a dash of colour there. She could even change her hair to suit her mood. (*GraceLand* 173)

Make-up has the creative power to fashion and style the self. Applying it to oneself allows one to play with one's own identity and personality, providing the individual with the possibility of creating multiple selves that can be performed, as well as with the possibility of layering identity. Impersonating Elvis Presley enables Elvis Oke not only to wear make-up, sequined clothing and glitter, but also to use feminine gyrations in his dance routine. Once in his full Elvis Presley costume, Elvis strikes a figure that stands in stark contrast to the prevailing notion of manhood in his society, and though in a different context, Elvis Presley's act also upsets normative masculinity. Marjorie Garber writes in *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety*, that "Elvis's hair created [...] a furor. It was like a black man's (Little Richard's; James Brown's); it was like a hood's; it was like a woman's. Race, class, and gender: Elvis's appearance violated or disrupted them all" (367). Elvis Oke's performance also mixes "[r]ace, class and gender", disrupting every notion of manhood propagated by the hegemonic masculinity which his father represents and aims to instil in

him. Such disruption questions hegemonic gender constructs, and plays a seminal part in Elvis's *Bildungsprozess*. Elvis's engagement with cross-dressing and make-up lays bare the constructed nature of gender, as well as its inherent instability. Such instability becomes most evident in the imitative re-enactment of gendered performances.

Elvis Presley, whom Elvis Oke attempts to imitate, performed a masculine identity, yet one comprised of impersonating feminine dance moves, donning female clothing, and copying the music and hairstyle of African Americans. Due consideration must be given to the question of how to account for the layering of copied identities, and what it reveals about gender. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* attempts to answer this question when it assumes that "[t]here is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler 25). She further suggests that "[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler 33). According to Butler, the substance of gender is produced by the copying of a gendered act that, over time, comes to appear natural. Focusing the argument on Elvis Presley, Garber asks: "[w]hat, then, is the relationship between transvestism and repetition? For one thing, both put in question the idea of an 'original,' a stable starting point, a ground. For transvestism, like the copy or simulacrum, disrupts 'identity' and exposes it as figure" (*Vested* 369). That any identity or culture presenting itself as "pure" or original is also a "figure" is made clear in Lagos's nickname, "One Copy". In the same way in which the hybrid cultures of Lagos are "copied" from other cultures (which, in turn, copied them from somewhere else), so too is hegemonic masculinity copied ad infinitum from the patriarchal culture of previous generations: no original exists either in Lagos or in the United States.

Resisting such an insight, normative hegemonic masculinity does not, and will not, allow any other form of gender identity to be inscribed or performed that would threaten its claim to "originality", resulting in the rigid policing of gender expression. Even though Elvis does not deliberately try to subvert patriarchal masculinity (as opposed to the position adopted by Enitan Taiwo in *Everything Good Will Come*), his gendered performance reproduces a masculine identity contrary to the norm, which thus, unwittingly for Elvis, becomes subversive. Similarly to Butler, Derek Stanovsky, in his article 'Fela and his Wives: The Import of a Postcolonial Masculinity', notes that "[r]epetition is required only where instability exists and where the subject comes into conflict with the very discourse through

which it is constituted as a subject” (8).⁴⁷ Elvis’s (effeminate) impersonation points to the inherent instability of the gender discourse of his society, which causes anxiety in those who see gendered differences as natural and normal. Exacerbating the annoyance caused by exposing such instability, Elvis’s makeup and “feminine” clothes serve only to accentuate the masculine body that he seeks to hide. His appearance becomes a mockery that lays bare the superficiality (and artificiality) of gender stereotyping, by flaunting masculine facial and bodily features, masked by effeminate make-up and dress, before a normative masculine audience.

Though the expression of alternative gender identities is possible, as seen through Elvis’s Elvis Presley act, as well as the transvestite prostitutes on the Lagosian beaches (*GraceLand* 77), Elvis realises that such alternatives are neither viable as a source of income in his own community nor among the tourists; the various identities that Elvis and the transvestites perform are either not lucrative enough, or else result in physical harassment by both the locals and the police. He, therefore, turns to various characters for help in his quest for self-actualisation. Elvis’s resolve to resort to others for help is significant on a number of levels. Primarily, this return to society complies with the conventions of the classic *Bildungsroman*: the protagonist, after attempting to live on his own, finds that the only meaningful existence that is viable is that within the broader society. Yet, as in *Everything Good Will Come*, *GraceLand* argues that *Bildung* is a continuous process of becoming. Heralding the closing chapters of the novel is the following epigraph: “This is a journey to manhood, to life; it cannot be easy”, which is followed by “*The old Igbo adage is: Manhood is not achieved in a day*” (*GraceLand* 284; emphasis original). The protagonist’s *Bildungsprozess*, regarding his masculine identity, is, thus, not to be expected to come to fulfilment when Elvis comes of age, but will rather be a journey of a lifetime. Finally, as Hewett argues (as noted in the introduction to this thesis), the third generation not only focuses on the individual, but on how a community supports the change brought about in an individual. Elvis, accordingly, turns to those characters who are constructed by the author, who will function as instructors in his life led in search of self-actualisation.

Redemption, the first instructor he turns to, is portrayed as being unable to provide an alternative to the cruel and gender-biased life in which Elvis is trapped. On the contrary, his actions and occupations are either unethical or blatantly illegal. When Elvis questions the legality of Redemption’s corrupt practices, Redemption retorts that he should have known better than to involve “a boy in a man’s work” (*GraceLand* 107). As Elvis does not want to

⁴⁷ The repetitiveness of the initial ritual that Elvis has to undergo is intended to make a man of him. The gender identity which the ritual represents is so unstable that it only acquires legitimisation and affirmation by means of its constant repetition.

conform to a type of masculinity that condones illegal practices or that perpetrates violence, he is continuously excluded from the world of men who see him, by default, as a boy. Such exclusion also inhibits his development into adulthood and seems to be a decisive determinant in the stasis into which he is locked at the closing of the work.

The King tells Elvis that he needs “an alternative to de world dat Redemption is showing you” (*GraceLand* 131); he wants to show Elvis that there is another way of living out manhood. However, rather than forcing this alternative onto Elvis, he opens Elvis’s eyes to other possibilities by taking him along to perform as part of their theatre troupe. In such company, Elvis reaches a momentary epiphany, which has the potential of bringing him a step closer to manhood. He is finally able to articulate some of the reasons for the corrupt situation in their country. He says that he “just realised that it is only a small group of people who are spoiling our 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.” The King agrees, explaining that the “majority of our people are honest, hardworking people. But dey are at de mercy of dese army bastards and dose tiefs in the IMF, de World Bank and de U.S.” (*GraceLand* 280). The King explains that the way in which the army “bastards” and others maintain their corrupt positions is through the expression of a violent masculinity, made possible by their various positions of power. The King realises that Elvis is now coming to terms with the discrepancies in his life, as well as those in the lives of other Lagosians, and notes that “[d]e boy is becoming a man” (*GraceLand* 280).

Though the King’s notion of manhood is probably the most humanitarian found in the text, he still fails to comply with his own views on manhood, resulting in yet more death and violence. During the Biafran War, the Colonel slaughtered the King’s family. During the protest outside the government buildings the King takes revenge and kills the Colonel by stabbing him in his heart. Redemption warns Elvis against the King’s philosophies on life, and especially against seeing him as a potential father figure, who can impart wisdom and viable notions of masculinity: “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” (*GraceLand* 140). According to Redemption, Elvis’s inability to accept the realities of masculinity and life in Lagos keeps him from entering manhood and becoming an adult. Just as Kambili looks to Auntie Ifeoma to usher her into womanhood, so Elvis seeks a father figure to aid him in his own *Bildung*. Yet, the King, driven and motivated by revenge, perpetrates the same type of crime as do the Colonel, Sunday and Joseph: he kills. The act not only undermines the message of his theatre troupe, but might be indicative of the metaphorical death of all adult males, and specifically fathers, in Elvis’s community.

Sunday also dies, though his death appears to be a redemptive moment in the text, and, hence, a sign of hope. When Maroko is bulldozed, Sunday refuses to leave his house, even though he is warned that he will be bulldozed together with his house. He then sees the ghost of Beatrice beckoning him, together with the appearance of his totem spirit, the leopard. Sunday is shot by one of the policemen supervising the demolition, just after the leopard says: "Well, at least die like a man" (*GraceLand* 287). His spirit, in the form of a leopard, jumps up from his body and kills the policeman in a final act of defiance. Sunday dies "like a man", as he fights for justice during the last moments of his life, which possibly redeems him of Godfrey's murder, but which also serves as a sign of hope at the end of the novel. Such a hope indicates the possibility of patriarchy becoming more just, despite the surrounding unjust society. However, Elvis's *Bildungsprozess* still is fatherless and, in conjunction with his inability to kill, prevents him from becoming a man.⁴⁸

The reluctance to kill might be said to be the decisive factor restraining Elvis from entering manhood. When Elvis is six years old, Sunday tells him that his having to kill the chicken is only the beginning of the process of becoming a man. The next stage in the rite of passage entails killing a goat, with his father's assistance. Talking about such rites, one of Elvis's boyhood friends, Hezekiah, comments that the bleat of a goat is "so childlike"; "[i]t's not easy [to kill a goat]. But den being a man is not" (*GraceLand* 181). The rite cannot, however, be performed, as Sunday dies before its completion. On a more metaphorical level, Elvis's inability to engage with death, whether it be on a social or physical level, excludes him from the normative and hegemonic masculine society in which he lives. He is, accordingly, bereft of all cultural agencies that manhood might have brought him.

Though *GraceLand* does not attempt to provide an answer (in the form of an alternative masculinity) for Elvis's predicament, it does present one of the first and primary means of formulating a possible solution. The solution is presented in the shape of yet another kind of performance. While watching the actors in the King's theatre troupe, Elvis is fascinated by one of the other boy's acting ability:

Esau, the oldest, had a certain air to him that marked him apart. He was stunningly handsome. But what really set him apart was the grace with which he carried himself. When he was dressed in full drag, he made more than a few heads turn longingly, including some of the musicians who knew he was a man. Elvis was fascinated by the conviction Esau brought to his roles. The other boys and men played women badly. There was caricature about it: a certain derision in their acting,

⁴⁸ The scene in which Sunday dies is one of the few scenes from which Elvis is absent, which is an interesting departure from the narrative structure of the classic form of the genre.

an exaggerated femininity that was no more than a reassurance of their masculinity. Esau, on the other hand, brought a simple understanding, something of a shared commonality. (*GraceLand* 277)

Esau is not a transvestite or cross-dressing prostitute, but his female act is honed to perfection by experience and practice, illustrating how he can embody both a male identity off-stage and a sensual and convincing female persona on-stage. Gender identity is once again brought back to the stage as a performance. What distinguishes Esau as an exceptionally good actor is the conviction with which he acts his parts, a conviction born of the “commonality” that he sees between men and women. Hegemonic masculinity in Elvis’s society defines itself on the grounds of its difference to women and femininity, whereas the text presents a “commonality” that does, indeed, exist between men and women in the form of Esau’s cross-dressing act. Another commonality that exists between the two genders is the vulnerability of the weak, meaning the women and children. Whereas *Everything Good Will Come* portrays the way in which women suffer at the hands of a violent patriarchy in its exploration of Sheri’s rape, *GraceLand* asserts that boys and young men are also the victims of patriarchal dominance in its portrayal of Godfrey’s murder and Elvis’s and Efua’s rape by Uncle Joseph. *GraceLand*, thus, argues that the only solution for the constant contestation between hegemonic masculinity and femininity is the common ground shared by the two genders, expressed by Esau’s performance, as well as by Elvis’s and Efua’s rape.

The irony of illustrating masculinity (and femininity) by means of performance onstage takes on a double meaning. Firstly, it confirms Butler’s and Garber’s views on the constructed and performative nature of gender; secondly, it subtly captures the overriding problem of gender differences in contemporary Nigeria. By illustrating the possible solution to the problem of rigidly set gender identities in the form of a rehearsed and fictional play, harmony between the genders is presented as though it is an unattainable and fictional dream. This may also be a further reason for Elvis’s state of stasis. If Elvis can only survive when performing an alternative identity that shares common elements with culturally ascribed female identity, he will never enter into manhood, as the “commonality” that exists between the two genders is unattainable in his society.

At the end of the novel, Elvis is still in stasis, as his becoming is neither stimulated nor facilitated by society. He, accordingly, realises, contrary to the classic *Bildungsroman* protagonist, that society will not facilitate his personal expansion, and he therefore, apprehensively, leaves for the United States with false documentation. The United States, however, is not presented as a utopia where he will be able to achieve complete *Bildung*. In his conversation with the King, he became cognisant of the United States’ role in the illegal

organ trade, as well as of the country's manipulation of other nations by means of making the latter indebted to them in terms of loans. However, the fact that he leaves under Redemption's name might indicate that there is redemption for him in his move to the United States, and that he might yet be able to start a new life in another country. His going to America might, moreover, be indicative of his acceptance of the responsibility for his own life. Thus, though he is still in stasis, Elvis might yet, in a sense, become a man, as he claims responsibility for himself by migrating to the United States.

Conclusion

GraceLand explores two of the most pressing quandaries in contemporary Lagos: African modernity and gender. It tackles African modernity by exposing its fraudulent nature while celebrating its transculturality, which fuses traditional customs and beliefs with western trappings and ideologies, creating culturally hybrid individuals. Elvis finds himself lured by the promises of modern Africa – the promises of self-conscious *Bildung* and self-authorship, as they are offered by his transcultural society. Yet, such promises seem to remain empty as Elvis's socio-economic position keeps him entrapped. Elvis, furthermore, finds that hegemonic masculinity is anxious about any change in the way in which culturally ascribed gender roles are performed, and, therefore, does not easily acquiesce to processes of change and renewal. Elvis's negotiation of his masculine identity is, thus, limited, stifling his dream of becoming a professional dancer. His *Bildung* is marked, accordingly, as a perpetual state of stasis, stuck on the threshold of the age of becoming. While the United States is sketched in highly ambiguous terms in the text, Elvis's departure might present a form of hope for future *Bildung*, holding out the possibility that he might yet become a man.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The Nigerian *Bildungsromane* written by the third generation are rooted in the modern realities of Nigeria, and preoccupied with the becoming of modern Nigerian individuals. They explore and propagate new progressive and sustainable identities that transcend their pages to serve as signposts for the Nigerian people in their own journeys of becoming.

The identity that these protagonists negotiate engages, to some extent, with the national construct. Forging a national identity, however, is a complex undertaking. It implies a constructed sameness that exists between the various peoples who collectively form the “nation”, and depends on a relatively stable state and governing body. Sameness proves to be an illusion in Nigerian society, which is, instead, presented as a vast mix of diverse cultures, linguistic groupings, ethnicities and religions. The Nigerian state is, furthermore, ever changing and unstable.

The third-generation protagonists attempt to construct their national identities by means of their personal engagements with the nation. Such engagements are achieved by challenging government (as seen when Enitan agrees to chair a society that advocates for human rights), or through the authorial stance taken by the authors concerned (as is seen in Adichie’s allegorical commentary on the political situation in Nigeria, as conveyed through the character of Eugene). However, while the individual protagonists are attempting to negotiate for themselves and other Nigerians a sense of national identity, the state concurrently attempts to foreclose such endeavours. Most evident in this regard is the way in which Ade Coker, Eugene Achike’s editor, is blown up by a letter bomb. The state’s corrupt practices and policies (the bulldozing of Maroko; the silencing of protest groups; the staging of coups; the torturing of apparent conspirators, etc.), furthermore, present its citizens with continuous challenges in their negotiation of identity.

Similarly, society (which is occasionally portrayed as a microcosm of the nation-state) also continuously issues the individual with challenges, which he/she has to overcome in his/her respective journeys of becoming. The protagonists’ journeys of becoming are all set in a transcultural and hybrid world, in which various cultural, social and political discourses and ideologies clash and/or conflate. *GraceLand* is structured in such a way that Elvis engages with various socio-economical and cultural geographies as he travels through the Nigerian metropolis of Lagos City, the rural town of Afikpo and the impoverished slum of Maroko. *Purple Hibiscus*, in contrast, explores religious tradition as the boundary marker

between different social groupings. Moving through and inhabiting different spaces, while being presented with diverse, and often contradictory discourses, the three protagonists each struggle, in their own way, to negotiate their respective journeys of becoming, as opposed to enacting the social roles and obligations expected of them. The continuous challenges that they face disrupt the *Bildungsprozess*, and make it impossible for them to come to a point of closure or illumination in their respective journeys of becoming.

Though Kambili's *Bildungsprozess* can be perceived as linear, her story is narrated through a cyclical plot that consists of different time frames. Such manoeuvring bars the reader from reading her life story as a systematically progressive narrative with a specific beginning and a designated end. Though Enitan tells her life-story in a linear narrative, there are considerable gaps in the form of time-lapses between the various sections of the novel, which illustrate the fractured nature of her *Bildung*. The result of such time-lapses is that Enitan is in her thirties at the end of the novel. Clearly, she is well past the conventional age of the protagonist in the classic *Bildungsroman*, which ends when the protagonist enters adult life. *GraceLand's* narrative is also fractured, but in a different way. The narrative jumps back and forth between linear development and the stasis that Elvis seems to enter at the age of sixteen. The plot culminates in yet another open-ended closing chapter. Such inconclusive endings stress the third generation's resistance to the closure which is commonly found in the form of the illumination that the classic *Bildungsheld* experiences towards the end of the traditional *Bildungsroman*.

The resistance to closure, illustrated by Elvis's state of stasis on the threshold of adulthood, can be understood as a crucial amendment to the conventions of the classic genre. Moretti argues that the classic *Bildungsroman* is an attempt to understand modernity through the body of a youth, because it serves as a metaphorical sign of modernity. Youth is characterised by unstable (emotional and spiritual) yet definite (physical) development, which, according to Moretti, comprises two of the defining characteristics of modernity. Such characteristics are also imbued in the societies and in the post/neo-colonial nation-state in which the lives of the protagonists unfold. The protagonist's development is definite, because society continuously (though inconsistently) presents him/her with opportunities that facilitate *Bildung*. The protagonist's becoming is also unstable, because the inconsistent opportunities to negotiate identity do not follow the path of systematic induction, as is experienced by the protagonists of the classic *Bildungsromane*.

This definite, yet unstable journey of continuous becoming, as can be seen in the focal texts, is always set within the microcosm of a(n extended) family, which functions as the smallest unit of society. The protagonists' becoming is facilitated by some family members,

while it is inhibited by others. The three texts' preoccupation with the breakdown of familial structures and domestic life could, thus, be read as allegories of the nation, and explorations of the ways in which individuals can break loose from the inhibiting forces imposed by familial structures. The breakdown of families in the past was mainly due to the colonial introduction of new religious and educational practices, as specifically evidenced by Eugene, Papa Nnukwu and Sunday Oke. Such practices, specifically those of Christianity, the nuclear family system, Western forms of governance and the capitalist economic system, took the form of master narratives that both paralleled, and yet opposed, indigenous master narratives. The emphasis on self-governance in a modern and post-colonial environment leads to the breakdown of the families portrayed in the respective texts. The break-down entails a crumbling of both the indigenous and the imposed master narratives to make way for various 'small narratives'. It might also lead to the conflation of both the (indigenous and alien) master narratives, producing a hybridised form that is neither the one nor the other. The master narratives that either conflate or crumble, as represented by the focal texts, are Roman Catholicism in *Purple Hibiscus*; patriarchy in *Everything Good Will Come*; and hegemonic ethno-cultural identities and constructions of masculinity in *GraceLand*. The focus, consequently, shifts from the group to the individual. Such a shift has partly occurred through the generic choice of the individual-orientated *Bildungsromane*.

However, the becoming of the individual is still set within a family unit, and the way in which his/her becoming is facilitated or inhibited is just as telling about their personal expansion as the way in which their families break down. The various father figures in the texts are fraught with contradictions and discrepancies. In public spaces, they seem benign, healthy and responsible: Enitan's father, Sunday Taiwo, is imprisoned for his campaign against the corrupt government, while Kambili's father, Eugene Achike, in *Purple Hibiscus* wins an Amnesty International Award for his political involvement. Elvis's father, Sunday Oke, runs in an election for democracy. Yet, in private and domestic spaces such fathers often display the same attitude towards, and perpetrate the same kind of violence against, their family members as those which the corrupt governments perpetrate against their people. Eugene Achike regularly beats his wife and children; Sunday Taiwo secretly sustains a second family; and Sunday Oke orchestrates the murder of his nephew and brutalises his son. When the protagonists veer away from their fathers' authority in various attempts to negotiate their own independent individualities, the master narrative, as made manifest in the father, crumbles, resulting in the breakdown of the family unit.

Mothers also feature strongly in the texts, even though they tend to be portrayed as silent, submissive or deceased. Kambili's and Elvis's mothers fail to protect the protagonists

from their father's abuse and their socialising projects that inhibit their children's becoming. They, furthermore, also fail to guide their charges on their respective paths to personhood. Enitan's mother, in contrast, is complicit with patriarchy, forcefully bent on socialising Enitan. The texts argue that the mother's voice (though not one that is complicit in patriarchy) is of great importance in the healthy upbringing of a child, as is made explicitly clear in *GraceLand*, when Elvis tries to find guidance from his deceased mother's journal. The imbalance of power and agency between the mother and father figures (as portrayed by mothers who are either dead or silent), leads to the silencing of mothers concerning the upbringing of their children, which, in turn, inhibits the child's *Bildungsprozess*.

The families and societies within which the protagonists live are thus riddled with power imbalances that severely hamper the protagonists' journeys of becoming. A journey of becoming that follows a path of systematic induction, in contrast, typically leads to closure and illumination, resulting in the 'smoothing out' of any unstable development. However, a journey of becoming that does not follow any one specific path, and which is not systematically ordered, will continuously open up to new possibilities for becoming. Closure for the third generation is, thus, impossible, since the societies in which their protagonists negotiate their identities are subject to unstable political forces that continuously present new challenges to be negotiated and overcome. To assume that *Bildung* can result in closure is to deny the individual the ability to negotiate any further avenue or aspect of his/her identity, while implying that the individual will not be able to renegotiate their identity in a changing society. The three *Bildungsromane* analysed in this thesis all notably end with protagonists about to journey to 'elsewheres', to which their becoming opens them up. Elvis is about to leave for the United States; Kambili is planning to visit Aunty Ifeoma and her family abroad; and Enitan has left her husband to live on her own. Even though these elsewheres do not seem to present destinations that hold much hope, except perhaps in the case of Enitan, they do encourage continual becoming beyond the scope of the situations in which the various protagonists find themselves at the end of the respective novels.

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