

Navigating Identity: The Postcolonial Bildungsroman in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*

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Abstract:

The present paper focuses on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good will Come* as Bildungsromane of women written from a postcolonial outlook. Through critical readings of the studied texts, the study reveals how issues concerning postcolonial writers- decolonization, sovereignty, trauma, war and identity-become integral parts of the genre's "rewriting." An examination of the critical history about the genre reveals that the cultural and ideological foundations of the genre have been altered and questioned as a result of the genre's appropriation by authors who write outside of its traditional boundaries. The traditional Bildungsroman is rooted in ideologies that may not resonate with postcolonial contexts. African women writers must navigate the genre's Eurocentric and patriarchal frameworks while attempting to reflect their own cultural realities and social issues.

Keywords: Bildungsroman, Postcolonialism, identity, gender, third generation African women writers, Nigeria



I- Introduction

The bildungsroman or coming-of-age novel, is a genre that traces the process of the protagonist's development from youth to adulthood (innocence to maturity), delineating their intellectual, moral and psychological growth. In his work entitled *A History of the Bildungsroman: From Ancient Beginnings to Romanticism* (2017), Petru Golban defines the Bildungsroman as :

We would define the Bildungsroman in short as the novel of identity formation. With certain caveats, of course; namely, that the formation of identity is textualised as a process, diachronic and large-scale, from birth or

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early childhood through adolescence and youth to entering upon adulthood; this process is rendered in a biographical or autobiographical manner as development – spiritual, psychological and moral, rather than physical – leading to the formation of personality. (p. 18)

In this quotation, Golban offers a thoughtful and accurate definition of the bildungsroman genre. By emphasizing that it is "fundamentally about becoming," he highlights the genre's focus on the internal development of the protagonist rather than external events. It prioritizes internal growth ; how a character comes to understand him/herself and his/her place in the world.

Originating in Germany during the 18th century, the Bildungsroman has spread itself far beyond its European roots to become a very powerful narrative tool for exploring diverse cultural environments. When combined with postcolonial theory, the bildungsroman offers a unique lens through which to examine how individuals from formerly colonized societies navigate culture, identity and power dynamics on the way to maturity.

Postcolonial theory explores the cultural, political and social legacies of colonialism, focusing on the ongoing impacts of colonization on formerly colonized societies. It tackles themes like identity, power relations, resistance, and cultural hybridization, to name a few. When applied to the Bildungsroman, postcolonial theory changes the nature of the genre so that it becomes a space for reflecting upon how characters in postcolonial settings begin to understand themselves and their own positioning within the world. In postcolonial Bildungsromane, protagonists struggle with the duality and contradictions of their colonial past and the post-colonial reality in which they live; it is this tension that makes their journey complex and politically charged.

The purpose of the present article is to examine how a Western-based genre, the Bildungsroman, has been appropriated and reconstructed by postcolonial writers, creating a new genre known as the "postcolonial bildungsroman." Grounded in discourse and comparative literary analysis, this study proceeds from the understanding that the classic Bildungsroman is a deeply ideological form, historically complicit in narrating the individual's assimilation into a patriarchal and imperial social order. Through critical readings of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*, this article explores how these two contemporary Nigerian women writers /novelists construct the modern postcolonial "Bildungsroman." By simply considering and recognizing the additional components of race, class, and gender in the lives of African women, readers and critics can assume their identity formation will be profoundly different than those experiences we have read in white male/female-authored Bildungsroman.

African women writers felt the urge to rethink the traditional bildungsroman novel in order for new voices to be heard and their experiences authenticated.

The revival of the genre of Bildungsroman among a community of African women writers speaks to the importance of giving voice to a historically and socially ignored protagonist's psychological development. While each of the authors I will consider contribute their own unique voices to the process of giving life to narrative, they also collectively highlight what has been textually and politically suppressed the voice of a young, African girl coming of age in Nigeria (Africa at large). The first step in understanding how authors, such as Adichie and Atta, use the bildungsroman is to examine how the genre has been used in the past, and in what ways it has influenced contemporary African women writers.

II- Origin and evolution of the Bildungsroman :

Etymologically, the term Bildungsroman has its origin from German 'Bildung' and 'roman'. Bildung means formation and roman means novel. So it is about novel of formation. Some critics argue that the Bildungsroman is one of the greatest contributions of Germans to world literature. Mikhail Bakhtin defines the Bildungsroman as a type of novel that presents a "dynamic unity" in the hero's image, contrasting it with static forms of character representation. In the Bildungsroman, the protagonist undergoes significant changes that are integral to the plot, emphasizing the process of becoming and personal development.

The first use of the term Bildungsroman was by Karl Von Morgenstern in 1817 to describe didactic novels that served as a "moral handbook" on how to grow into manhood (Gohlman, 1990, p. 12), but it wasn't widely used until the end of the nineteenth century. It was quite popular in both England and the United States throughout the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The Bildungsroman was not seen just as a novel of development (Entwicklungsroman) but was a novel in which "the hero actively shapes himself both from within and without, thus achieving personal harmony or balance between himself and the world" (Gohlman, 1990, p. 13).

The term "bildungsroman" refers to works that focus on the growth or education of a main character. In his analysis of classical bildungsromane, Martin Swales describes the genre in the following manner:

There are a large number of German novels which concern themselves with the growth and change of a young man through adolescence and which take this period as precisely the one in which decisive intellectual and philosophical issues are embedded in the psychological process of human self-discovery. (1978, p. 6)

This quote emphasizes that adolescence is not only a biological or social stage but a critical phase for forming identity, meaning and worldview. The psychological

process here is intertwined with the philosophical exploration of selfhood. The classic bildungsroman usually offers a satisfying conclusion with a character who has accepted his (and occasionally her) identity process and is finally assimilated into the order of a particular society following a dramatic plot of ups and downs, difficult times, and crises. It typically depicts a protagonist who wrestles with internal and societal conflicts to find meaning, purpose, and identity. Swales further defines the "bildungsroman as a highly self reflective novel, one in which the problem of the *bildung*, of personal growth, is enacted in the narrator's discursive self-understanding rather than in the events which the hero experiences" (1978, p. 4).

Swales's definition challenges traditional notions of the bildungsroman as a simple coming-of-age tale. Instead, he elevates it to a meta-narrative genre, where the true journey is not what happens to the character, but how they come to tell their own story, and how they interpret the self through the act of narration. This deepens our understanding of the genre and expands its relevance to contemporary literature and theory. In addition, the reader must actively participate in interpreting the narrator's evolving understanding, rather than passively following a plot of events.

Before 1860, the bildungsroman enjoyed particular popularity. As the protagonist grows from youth to psychological or emotional maturity, most Bildungsroman seeks to enhance the reader personally. The development and maturation follow a certain pattern: the sensitive, smart protagonist typically moves away from home and goes through phases of conflict and development, he or she gets tested by crises and love affairs, and ultimately discovers the ideal setting for utilizing his/her unique abilities (Buckley, 1974, pp. 17,18). While English authors complicate the protagonist's quest to build an individual identity with diverse challenges from outside the self, German novelists primarily focus on the hero's internal or psychological struggle. Thus, the protagonist seeks to understand the purpose of life or serves as a vehicle for the author's moral and social views as expressed through the main character.

The emergence of the Bildungsroman on the literary scene did not happen suddenly, rather it possesses as Bakhtin would argue in his "The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism: Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel" (1986), its own development history as a distinct category, form, type, or subgenre of the novelistic genre, which is in itself a long, complex, and interesting process of rise and consolidation of a literary pattern, tradition, and literary system. Bakhtin argues here that the Bildungsroman is not a static category but a dynamic tradition, shaped by earlier narrative forms (e.g., epic, picaresque, spiritual autobiography) before crystallizing in works like Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister Lehrjahre* "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship," (1795-1796) often claimed as the first canonical Bildungsroman (p. 3).

In discussing the various ways the Bildungsroman has been categorized, Golban highlights the multiple terms used to describe this literary genre. He explains that :

In general, despite particular periods of its production, the Bildungsroman is often labelled the novel of youth, the novel of education, the novel of apprenticeship, the novel of adolescence, the novel of initiation, the coming-of-age novel and the life novel. The anglicised form the "apprenticeship novel" is highly used, yet the "novel of development" and the "novel of formation" are the most frequently used terms, often taken as synonyms. (p. 8)

The quote underscores the wide range of terms used to describe the *Bildungsroman*, reflecting its thematic breadth. Each label—whether "novel of youth," "novel of apprenticeship," or "coming-of-age novel"—emphasizes a different aspect of the genre, such as growth, education, or existential maturation. This diversity suggests that the *Bildungsroman* is not a rigid category but rather a flexible literary form that accommodates various narratives of personal development. Bakhtin acknowledges that the Bildungsroman has evolved over time, adapting to different cultural and literary contexts.

In addition, Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope, which he describes as the means of measuring how, in a particular genre or age, 'real historical time and space' and 'actual historical persons' (1981, p. 84) are articulated, and also how fictional time, space, and character are constructed in relation to one another, may be pertinent to the study of the postcolonial bildungsroman. Indeed, Bakhtin's concept of the way time and space interconnect in shaping personal and historical emergence can be fruitfully applied to the postcolonial bildungsroman by underlining how specific historical and cultural circumstances shape a protagonist's identity. In postcolonial narratives, the chronotope underscores how space (colonized land, metropolitan centers, and diaspora communities) and time (colonial, postcolonial, or globalized eras) form one's personal growth and awareness. This application reveals how characters navigate and emerge within these layered spatial-temporal realities, illustrating their struggles with cultural hybridity, displacement, and resistance. The chronotope thus helps to illuminate the dynamic process of self-formation amid historical upheavals and intercultural encounters characteristic of postcolonial contexts, emphasizing that individual becoming is inseparable from larger historical and spatial processes.

Ultimately, the chronotope reframes the very goal of the bildungsroman. In the traditional genre, success is often measured by the protagonist's successful integration into society. In the postcolonial chronotope, where society is itself a site of historical injustice and cultural schism, such integration is often impossible or

undesirable. Instead, the protagonist's development is measured by their awareness of these systems and their capacity for resistance and reclamation. The chronotope becomes a tool for mapping a different kind of emergence: one of critical consciousness. The protagonist learns to read the world chronotopically—to see how the space of a reservation is shaped by the time of genocide, or how the time of "development" is imposed upon the space of a traditional village. And this awareness—the ability to read the world in this way—is the true education, a *Bildung* that understands the individual self as a palimpsest written upon by history and geography.

The traditional concept of *Bildungsroman* was expanded in the 1980s and 1990s with the advent of feminist, post-colonial, and minority studies; coming-of-age stories that only vaguely resemble nineteenth-century European models were now included in the genre. Following this extension, modernism scholars started to view their time as a shift from conventional metropolitan novels of social affirmation and formation to increasingly fragmentary and global narratives of rebellion and transformation. The recent interventions of postcolonial writers helped reshape the field of modernist literary studies. Tobias Boes, a modernist critic, agrees that the form has expanded from its traditional roots when he says that:

The rise of feminist, post-colonial and minority studies during the 1980s and 90s led to an expansion of the traditional *Bildungsroman* definition; the genre was broadened to include coming-of-age narratives that bear cursory resemblance to nineteenth-century European models. In the wake of this expansion, scholars of modernism began to see their period as an era of transition from metropolitan novels of formation and social affirmation to increasingly global and fragmentary narrative of transformation and rebellion. (2006, p. 231)

Feminist, post-colonial and minority studies challenged the limitations of the traditional, European *Bildungsroman* and expanded its scope to include characters who often experienced displacement, disillusionment or rebellion rather than harmonious maturation. They introduced a multiplicity of voices who didn't follow the traditional arc of reconciliation and social harmony but instead focused on alienation, resistance and hybrid identities. The settings moved from the European metropole to peripheral or global contexts, breaking with Eurocentric norms. Post-colonial writers have rewritten or appropriated the *Bildungsroman* to reflect the complexities of cultural hybridity, colonial violence, and fragmented identity. This

underscores the fact that the Bildungsroman is no longer a fixed genre tied to a specific cultural and historical setting—it has become a contested and adaptive form.

As M. Bakhtin notes, the *bildungsroman* functions as an arbitrary and promiscuous category ‘requiring only the presence of the hero’s development and emergence in the novel’ (1986, p. 20). Bakhtin here reveals a critical perspective on the genre’s definitional flexibility and broad applicability. He highlights that the Bildungsroman rather than being a narrowly fixed or rigidly codified form, functions as a general literary type centered on the protagonist’s process of development or emergence.

The Bildungsroman's African articulation is both an active literary tradition in and of itself and a crucial contribution to the genre's reconfiguration. It serves as a reminder that genre can be malleable (changed) without losing meaning and that it frequently reemerges due to socio-historical necessity. African writers have re-envisioned the Bildungsroman in order to show the African continent's unique socio-political situation, cultural identity and post-colonial experience. In doing so, they challenge the genre’s traditional emphasis on individualism and linear self-formation, often replacing this with stories (narratives) that foreground communal identity, historical rupture, and collective transformation. The traditional bildung focuses on individual progress, but postcolonial narratives often tie personal growth to communal resistance or historical forces. According to Susan Fraiman (1993), the growth of the protagonist in the feminine coming-of-age novel is “negotiated not as a single path to a clear destination but as an endless negotiation of a crossroads” (p. x). This reinvention underscores the genre’s inherent adaptability—its ability to evolve without losing its primary function of outlining human growth in different political, racial, and cultural contexts.

Thus, the African post-colonial Bildungsroman stands not only as a testament to literary innovation but also as a crucial reminder that genre boundaries are not fixed, and their transformation often springs from necessity rather than mere stylistic choice.

III- The Postcolonial Bildungsroman : A Journey of Self-Discovery in a Disrupted World

Postcolonial Bildungsromane represent a significant literary evolution that reinterprets traditional coming-of-age narratives within the context of colonial and postcolonial experiences. These narratives often explore the complexities of identity formation in individuals who have been shaped by the residuals of colonial legacies. As such, the postcolonial Bildungsroman deviates from the classical model articulated by authors like Goethe and Austen, where protagonists usually engage in a straightforward journey towards self-discovery and community reintegration.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Sefi Atta are two well-known Nigerian authors who have creatively modified the classical Bildungsroman form in order to suit their contemporary postcolonial contexts. Adichie, with her debut novel *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), reimagines the coming-of-age story to reflect the intertwining of personal development with the socio-political turmoil of a postcolonial Nigeria. Her protagonist Kambili navigates the formation of her identity amidst the remains of colonialism, war, and patriarchy, demonstrating how personal growth mirrors national and cultural struggles. Postcolonial issues are also present in Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* (2005), as it features young female characters, Enitan and Sheri, grappling with the intricacies of Nigerian social life, including gender roles, tradition, and modernity, which redefined the Bildungsroman for the intent of postcolonial narrative. With these additions, the authors expand the scope of the genre by integrating individual narratives set within the complex geopolitics of postcolonial Africa.

By choosing the Bildungsroman, these authors embark on a literary endeavor that goes beyond a simple narrative choice; it is a conscious act of postcolonial reclamation. They actively mold and reshape the genre to fit the complexities of their domestic experiences. It is a deliberate attempt to address the crucial issue of identity formation—a topic deeply woven into Nigeria's sociocultural fabric—which underlines this transformative process. Moreover, using this literary technique not only helped to establish a new trend but also made the novel more realistic and vivid. According to Charles Nnolim, "the Nigerian novel is dynamic rather than static and blends the new with the old..." (1989, p. 53). By adopting the Bildungsroman structure, Adichie and Atta have infused their narratives with a sense of personal and societal development that reflects both individual maturation and national identity formation. Nnolim rightly asserts that the postcolonial Nigerian novel thrives on a productive tension between tradition and innovation. His idea of blending "the new with the old" captures how Nigerian writers balance respect for traditional values and customs with the realities of modernity and globalization. This synthesis enriches the Bildungsroman by expanding its thematic scope beyond individual psychological growth to include cultural preservation, social critique, and political consciousness.

Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* are two significant novels that not only offer poignant narratives about the lives of Nigerians but also critically engage with and challenge Eurocentric perspectives while celebrating the richness and resilience of Nigerian traditions. Both novels challenge the lingering effects of colonialism and the Eurocentric ideologies that have shaped the postcolonial landscape. Colonialism, with its suppression of indigenous cultures and imposition of Western norms, left enduring scars on Nigerian society. The

novels critique this legacy by highlighting the tension between indigenous values and Western influences.

As a Nigerian-born, US-educated writer who has garnered international recognition, including the prestigious O. Henry Prize, Adichie occupies a unique position bridging Nigerian and global literary spheres. This dual perspective enables her to engage critically and creatively with Nigeria's literary heritage, particularly the foundational works of earlier generations. Heather Hewett claims that "Adichie shares with her contemporaries an ambition to rewrite Nigeria's rich literary tradition" (2004, p. 9). This suggests a conscious dialogue with canonical African literary works, especially those by Chinua Achebe, widely regarded as the father of African literature. She begins her novel *Purple Hibiscus* with a line that references Achebe's 1958 novel *Things Fall Apart*, "Things started to fall apart at home when my brother, Jaja, did not go to communion and papa flung his heavy missal across the room and broke the figurines on the etagere" (2013, p. 1). This reference is not solely an homage; it situates Adichie's story in the Nigerian postcolonial literary tradition and also indicates a reworking of the pervasive themes of family conflict, the legacy of colonialism, and societal disintegration. Adichie's rewriting shifts from Achebe's emphasis on the traditional Igbo society ravaged by colonialism towards a more personal contemplation of contemporary Nigerian life—specifically the intertwining of faith, domestic oppression, and self. While Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* captures the overwhelming destruction of indigenous systems due to colonial oppression, the focus of Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is on postcolonial Nigeria's internal fractures, particularly religious extremism and patriarchal dictatorship and its effects on the family unit along with personal autonomy. Hewett (2004) asserts:

like her literary predecessor, Adichie chronicles the breakdown of the family unit under the pressures of politics and religion, weaving her story around the figure of a domineering father. Achebe's novel begins at the moment when the forces of Christianity and colonialism were first unleashed onto traditional Igbo culture, while *Purple Hibiscus* takes up the story years later, when Christianity has spread its roots, independence has come and gone, and Nigerians watch powerlessly as their hopes for democracy are cruelly dashed. (p.9)

As discussed by Hewett, in *Purple Hibiscus*, the story is set in a later moment in history. Christianity has shifted from being an only outside force to an internally rooted part of society, and Nigeria has politically liberated itself, but there are no credible attempts at democracy. The narrative depicts a Nigeria after colonial rule where there is constant fighting in the name of democracy, systemic corruption, and authoritarian governments frustrating what little hope the people had. Within this context, the figure of Eugene, the "domineering father," embodies not only

patriarchal and religious fundamentalism but also the broader failures of postcolonial leadership and governance.

Eugene is an epitome of a failed postcolonial state. His character symbolizes the entrenched issues that plague Nigeria after independence, where a new form of tyranny replaced the old colonial one. A nation freed from British imperialism but not from institutionalized corruption and authoritarianism. Eugene's home is a small, authoritarian state. His iron-fisted rule is unchallenged, his dictums are absolute, and anyone who dares to disagree is punished instantly and brutally. This is reflective of the political environment in post-independent Nigeria, where military coup d'états and rotting leaders supplanted colonial officials but continued to suppress their people. Eugene's public philanthropy and respected position in society are facades to the brutality and domestic violence that he inflicts on his family members. Similarly, Nigeria's ruling class preferred to present themselves as champions of democracy while secretly consolidating power and pillaging state resources. The "ceaseless fighting in the name of democracy" is reflected within Eugene's household, where his tyrannical rules and "discipline" represent a corruption of order, just as the political struggle in Nigeria represents a corruption of genuine democratic struggle.

Fifteen-year-old Kambili Achike and her older brother, Jaja, live a life confined to their school, the Catholic church, and their father, a highly successful businessman whose factories and newspaper have earned him the title *Omelora*, "The One who Does for the Community," and he rules over his family with an almost divine authority. Eugene Achike follows a strict Catholic faith that aligns with the binary principles of an unforgiving belief system. "Papa liked order," Kambili observes; however, the simplicity of her statement overlooks his intense obsession with controlling every aspect of his children's lives. His unwavering commitment to order is evident in the daily routines he designs for them, structured schedules that include:

Meticulously drawn lines, in black ink, cut across each day, separating study from siesta, siesta from family time, family time from eating, eating from prayer, prayer from sleep. He revised them often. When we were in school, we had less siesta time and more study time, even on weekends. When we were on vacation, we had a little more family time, a little more time to read the newspapers, play chess or monopoly, and listen to the radio. (Adichie, 2013, p. 23-24)

Kambili's description of the disparity between their roomy flat and its lack of air is telling. "Although our spacious dining room gave way to an even wider living room, I felt suffocated" (p. 7). She describes her father's house as a jail "the compound walls trooped by coiled electric wires, were so high I could not see the cars driving by on our street" (p. 9). Kambili's prison stunts her growth. She is not allowed to

form her own opinions, make friends, or experience normal childhood curiosities. In fact, she cannot befriend her classmates who call her a "backyard snob" (pp. 49, 52). In this context, Kambili narrates "...I remained a backyard snob to most my class girls until the end of the term. But I did not worry too much about that because I carried a bigger load- the worry of making sure I came first this term..." (p. 52). Kambili's classmates believe she stays away from them because she is arrogant—due to her immense wealth, her perfect uniform, or her famous father. But, in reality, she is more worried about pleasing her father by being the first one of the term than about making friends.

Eugene is a resentful man whose identity is built on his rejection of his father's values and beliefs. His disapproval of his father's traditional Igbo beliefs stems from his time at a missionary school, which, as his sister Ifeoma notes, made him "too much of a colonial product" (p. 13). His father's beliefs threaten Eugene's entire identity and authority. His need for control within his family, we can assume, is amplified by his lack of power in a post-colonial country where military strength outweighs even the most successful civilians. "His order becomes a challenging sword to fight the disorder enveloping his world, but in doing so he crushes the very spirit and identity of his family" (Hanif, 2012, p. 26).

Kambili recounts the challenges she faces in her family as a result of her father's patriarchal violence, which she can only get past by reaching out to the people around her: her mother, brother, aunt, and grandfather. The patriarchal brutality that Papa Eugene inflicts on her reflects broader social problems in the Nigerian society. To Musa W. Dube, Papa Eugene's patriarchal violence depends on his striving to be like the colonizer and is connected to mimicry (2019, p. 227). Papa Eugene's desire to be "more Catholic than the Pope" and his adoption of the colonizer's values (in this case, a rigid, dogmatic form of Christianity) are directly linked to his violence. He sees the traditional Igbo ways, represented by Papa-Nnukwu, as "pagan" and inferior. According to Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*: "The black man wants to be white, the white man slaves to reach a human level" (1986, p. 3). This demonstrates Eugene's persistent desire to mimic the colonizer and to be assimilated into the whites' world. His violence is an attempt to enforce this mimicry, to purge his family of any "native" traditions and impose what he sees as a superior, Western way of life. This act of mimicry, of striving to be a "good" Christian in the mold of the colonizers, becomes the very source of his brutality. It's a powerful point that connects the personal suffering of Kambili's family to the larger history of colonialism in Nigeria.

Ironically, Eugene continuously refers to his own father as a "heathen, pagan," showing contempt for him and his indigenous Igbo beliefs. He does not want his children to spend time with their grandfather because, according to him "he is

full of sins." He tells his children, "I don't like to send you to the house of a heathen, but God will protect you" (p. 62). In addition to this, he sets conditions for the children's visit to their grandfather. A typical speech before the visit would be "papa closed the Bible. Kambili and Jaja, you will go this afternoon to your grandfather's house and greet him. Kevin will take you. Remember, don't touch any food, don't drink anything. And, as usual, you will stay no longer than fifteen minutes. Fifteen minutes" (p. 61). Surprisingly, Eugene does not even attend his father's burial because he believes it does not adhere to Catholic doctrine and therefore does not deserve his attendance.

Eugene's brutal treatment of his family members in *Purple Hibiscus* is a clear example of patriarchal tyranny. Kambili is unable to escape her father's harsh punishment after she stayed at her aunt's house with her ostensibly "heathen" grandfather. He burns her legs by spilling hot water. Kambili recounts:

[Eugene]poured the hot water on my feet, slowly, as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen ... I watched the water leave the kettle, flowing almost in slow motion in an arc to my feet. The pain of contact was so pure, so scalding, I felt nothing for a second. And then I screamed. (p. 194)

Eugene acts as a colonizer in the domestic sphere, reenacting the relations of colonial domination. He has internalized the binary perspective of the European missionaries, making his Catholicism the only representative of enlightenment and morality. The punishment he inflicts on Kambili is therefore a perverse form of purification, a violent cleansing of the pagan influence represented by Papa-Nnukwu, his own father.

Kambili's escape to Nsukka is pivotal to her development. Indeed, it is in aunty Ifeoma's home she learns a different way of living, one with freedom, laughter, and intellectual curiosity. Since her first day in Nsukka, Kambili's new state of consciousness begins to manifest. This is demonstrated in the text during her meal with her aunt Ifeoma and her cousins Amaka, Obiora, and Chima. The scene is described by Kambili herself as follows: "I had felt as if I were not there, that I was just observing a table where you could say anything at any time to anyone, where the air was free for you to breathe as you wished" (p. 68). The aforementioned passage demonstrates how the Achikes in Enugu lack this freedom and closeness both during and outside of mealtime. Her relocation in Nsukka enables her to gain the capacity to speak out and access a certain freedom formerly denied to her.

Kambili states that "Nsukka could free something deep inside your belly that would rise up to your throat and come out as a freedom song as laughter" in order to illustrate the importance of this move and the significance of Nsukka (p. 161). The passage demonstrates the heroine's development as a person. She has developed a

mental maturity as a result of the move, which enables her to comprehend the living circumstances of her family in Enugu.

Her relationships with aunty Ifeoma, Jaja, and her grandfather, Papa-Nnukwu, are crucial to her growth and her ability to finally find her voice. Her connection with her brother, Jaja, further consolidates as they share new experiences, while her connection with her grandfather, Papa-Nnukwu, provides a sharp contrast to the religious rigor of her father and teaches her about the existence of another kind of faith and love. Aunty Ifeoma's home is a sanctuary and an idealized vision of improved family life through which Kambili is able to escape the stifling silence of her own home and find the emotional resilience needed to deal with her reality. She claims :

I let my mind rake through the past, through the years when Jaja and Mama and I spoke more with our spirits than our lips. Until Nsukka. Nsukka started it all; Aunty Ifeoma's little garden next to the veranda of her flat in Nsukka began to lift the silence. Jaja defiance seemed to me now like Aunty Ifeoma's experimental purple hibiscus; fragrant with the undertones of freedom, a different kind of freedom...A freedom to be, to do (p. 16).

Eugene's version of "freedom" is tied to rigid Catholicism, while Nsukka's freedom is more organic, rooted in Igbo traditions and intellectual curiosity (Aunty Ifeoma's university setting). This passage marks a turning point where Kambili begins to recognize the possibility of a different life—one where freedom is not just the absence of punishment but the presence of self-expression, love, and growth. The purple hibiscus becomes a powerful metaphor for the kind of delicate but resilient defiance that will eventually lead Kambili and Jaja to break free from Eugene's tyranny.

Purple Hibiscus examines the growth of Kambili as she tries to articulate her feelings amidst the oppressive environment of her father's home. As her journey begins, she struggles with deep internal conflicts due to religious and familial constraints. Initially, she appears to be nothing more than a bystander and a victim, but as the narrative progresses towards its conclusion, she discovers her voice and her position within the family following her awakening. This analysis also explores the symbolic aspects of the text, as the protagonist's growth parallels the evolution of Nigeria. Ultimately, Kambili begins as the narrator of her own story, and by the conclusion, she embodies the tale, which ultimately intersects with that of her nation. Heather Hewett has argued that *Purple Hibiscus* is a narrative of Kambili's journey out of "voicelessness and silence toward voice and healing" and that "in bearing witness to her own life, she tells a greater story about the nature of tyranny in postcolonial Nigeria"(Hewett, 2005, pp. 84, 90).

Kambili demonstrates a sense of "awakening," which involves acknowledging and accepting her limits, much like the real protagonist of a female Bildungsroman. If the psychological, cultural, and religio-graphic limitations of Kambili are summed, what emerges is a blaring silence. The search for her voice is always the most significant part of her transition or rite of passage. She must overcome her regional limits in order to achieve voice.

Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* also represents a notable contribution to African literature, skillfully merging the bildungsroman genre with postcolonial critique. Atta's work received critical acclaim, most notably winning The Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature, recognizing its contribution to African literary discourse. The narrative centers on the psychological growth of its protagonist, Enitan Taiwo, against the backdrop of a nation struggling with its own identity following colonial rule. Raised in a split household, Enitan struggles to define herself amid her father's manipulative political ways and her mother's fervent religious convictions. Being an only child after her brother's death, her parents' severe demands prevent her from having a normal childhood.

The story revolves around the main character, Enitan, and her friend Sheri. Despite having far more freedom than her *Purple Hibiscus* counterpart, Kambili, Enitan nevertheless suffers social and familial obstacles that impede her progress. Enitan is allowed room to develop, but it is insufficient for her to reach her full potential and empowerment. Despite the restricted area and limited flexibility they are granted, Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* and Enitan in *Everything Good Will Come* are both the characters that bring the stories to life. Because it grants the marginalized narrative voices some power to tell both their own and other characters' stories, this narrative method is all the more significant. Through an awareness-raising process, it is a means of breaking the backbones of passivity and educating marginalized women about the path to empowerment and independence.

Similarly, Enitan, the main character of *Everything Good Will Come*, undergoes the same rite. Much like Kambili, Enitan is forced to leave her home because of the oppressive environment that permeates it. However, Enitan's pilgrimage takes place in two dimensions, in contrast to Kambili's movement from one city to another. The first change happens the day she first enters the Bakares', a family next door. When Enitan first arrives at the Bakares, she observes the freedom enjoyed by the kids, particularly her friend Sheri. Enitan learns that Sheri is not burdened with the same movement restrictions that she is. She is allowed to wander around freely, in contrast to Enitan, who is confined to her house.

The act of stepping onto the Bakares' doorstep compels Enitan to reflect critically on her situation. The second journey takes place when Enitan travels to London to study law. While in London, she relishes a great deal of freedom and new

circumstances that enable her to evaluate her previous life in Nigeria. Consequently, she declines to return and spend her holidays with her parents in Nigeria. These new experiences expose Enitan to different forms of freedom, self-determination, mobility, and even autonomy over her sexuality. As a result of these experiences, her character has undergone a significant transformation. As an example, "Enitan, after experiencing all these new ways of existence, begins to question the very norms that confine her, namely, the Native laws" (Atta, p. 121). Consequently, the process of relocation rouses both Kambili and Enitan from the profound slumber into which they had fallen. Furthermore, it allows them to recognize how their previous circumstances serve as an obstacle to their dreams of a more promising future. In addition, they start to exhibit feelings of resentment and dissatisfaction towards their past physical and psychological environments, which they aspire to overcome. Keyinde and Mbipom (2011) claim that Enitan's journey:

Reveals an unbroken growth pattern till Enitan comes of age as a self-conscious and assertive woman. Enitan's process of growth comes with self-realization which prompts greater response and reaction to the activities which go on around her. These processes motivate her sexuality and individuality (p. 67).

This passage charts the protagonist's trajectory from an observant, constrained girl into the fiercely independent woman she becomes. This "self-realization" is not an isolated event but is forged through her experiences in tumultuous post-colonial Nigeria, where she witnesses political corruption, ethnic violence, and pervasive gender inequality.

The majority of the things that would subsequently change Enitan's perspective came from Sheri. "Her meeting with Sheri... is of great significance, as it marks her transition to an entirely new stage of life." (Keyinde & Mbipom, p. 68). Sheri is completely independent of her parents. She goes to sleep and wakes up whenever she pleases. Unlike Enitan, whose logic is influenced by her mother and father, she makes her own decisions. While Enitan's father demands that she study law, Sheri considers pursuing a career in acting. The following exchange between the two girls illustrates how kids view things that will eventually influence their lives and personalities later:

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

"Eh?" "Women are not president"

"Why not?" "Our men won't stand for it. Who will cook for your husband?"

"He will cook for himself"

"What if he refuses?"

"I'll drive him away"

"You can't" she said.

Yes I can. Who wants to marry him anyway?" (p. 33)

This is the first formative step in the "unbroken growth pattern" of Enitan, both through the character Sheri as a foil to Enitan that reveals the power of societal conditioning and by way of introducing the ongoing struggle between the individual's ambition and the constraints imposed by patriarchal society.

Enitan attempts to instill an authoritative mentality in Sheri through her words as well. Enitan tells Sheri, "Drop him... you don't need him," in response to Sheri's complaints about her husband (p. 132). As a result, Sheri also gains confidence and expands beyond her confines. "Raise your hand to hit Sheri Bakare, and your hand will never be the same again. Stupid man" (p. 169) is a sentence that demonstrates her bravery and identity. As a result, she recognizes the significance of women and her own individuality.

Enitan's father instilled in her a sense of revolutionary spirit by saying, "Anyone who bullies you beat them up" (p. 42). However, under some important circumstances, that ideal father also adopts the tone of a patriarchal figure. Despite her father's apparent support for women, his own wife's sincere statement that "if he is no good to me, he is no good to you" (p. 91) demonstrates his haughtiness and dominance.

Another key point in Enitan's development occurs at secondary school in "Royal College." It alters her perspectives and enables her to recognize the diversity of Nigerians. Her interactions with girls from various cultural backgrounds persuade her that this is the main factor impeding Nigerians' ability to develop their country. The author criticizes British colonization for ignoring the diversity and ethnicity of Nigerians. "Uncle Alex had always said our country was not meant to be one. The British had drawn a circle on the map of West Africa and called it a country. Now I understood what he meant. The girls I met at Royal College were so different (pp. 44, 45).

Atta's book effectively distinguishes between the characteristics of the feminine postcolonial Bildungsroman and the classical Bildungsroman. The male protagonist of a traditional Bildungsroman voluntarily leaves his house in order to "slay the dragon" (Okuyade, 2010, p. 23). In a feminine Bildungsroman, on the other hand, the heroine's family initiates her departure from home. According to Felski (1989), "the female on a journey of self-discovery seeks surroundings that aren't a threat to her" (p. 135). Similar to this, Enitan's parents decided to send her to London because they thought her friendship with Sheri would put at risk her future, especially after Sheri was raped and had an abortion.

Enitan's development is inextricably linked to her growing political consciousness, a defining feature of the postcolonial Bildungsroman that distinguishes it from its classic European counterpart. Unlike the traditional genre,

which often focuses on an individual's inward spiritual or moral reconciliation with society, the postcolonial bildungsroman portrays the protagonist's "unbroken growth pattern" as fundamentally shaped by their engagement with the nation's political turmoil. Enitan's awakening is not a private matter; it is a public and political education. Talking about the greed and corruption of political leaders, she asserts, "I think that it will be better when the oil finally dries up. Maybe then we can have leaders who will get on with the business of running this country" (p. 298). She carries on, "There was no greater disaster on our continent than the few who had control over our sources: oil, diamonds, human beings. They would sell anything and anyone to buyers overseas" (p. 298).

Undoubtedly, a prevalent characteristic of the Africanized and feminized bildungsroman is that it not only showcases the heroine's journey towards becoming and maturation but also mirrors the historical and political context of her environment. The heroine's pursuit of a unique identity and a degree of freedom is intertwined with the nation in which she resides. Her battles for self-determination and independence serve as a microcosm of the society to which she belongs.

Consequently, the challenges faced by the protagonists Kambili and Enitan are intricately linked to their nations in turmoil, each seeking its own path. The historical eras portrayed in both novels are marked by an oppressive dictatorship that obliterates and destroys all obstacles in its path. For instance, in *Purple Hibiscus*, the government imposes restrictions on the freedoms of its citizens. Simultaneously, the nation is plagued by coups, corruption, and mismanagement. Like the protagonist, the struggles of the nation in achieving complete maturity are encapsulated in the following words: "A coup always began a vicious cycle. Military men would overthrow one another, because they could, because they were all power drunk" and on top of this instability, the "politicians were corrupt" as well (Adichie, p. 16).

In a similar context, one observes the same situation in *Everything Good Will Come*. The nation's quest for political and economic maturity is vividly depicted through Enitan's pursuit of psychological growth and, to a greater extent, existential fulfillment. Enitan's homeland is afflicted by a series of coups that threaten its stability and development. Like the protagonist, the nation is stripped of the means that guarantee its viability and effective operation. This predicament is emphasized in Enitan's words: "Law school ended the summer of 1985. Within a week of my graduation, there was another military coup, and our constitution was further suspended." (Atta, p. 63). In summary, within the African feminine bildungsroman, the heroine's fight for independence and maturity serves as a microcosm of the society and, more broadly, the nation in which she resides. Her journey towards agency parallels that of the country as a whole.

IV-Conclusion

Through the novels *Purple Hibiscus* and *Everything Good Will Come*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Sefi Atta have made important additions to the African female Bildungsroman and to the literary heritage of women's coming-of-age fiction in postcolonial Nigeria. Both novels contest the Eurocentric assumptions of the classical Bildungsroman by rejecting its linear narrative of progress, its emphasis on individual integration into stable societies, and its implicit colonial ideologies. Rather, Adichie and Atta devise formally innovative narratives that embody the realities of underdevelopment in the context of unrelenting political turmoil, cultural hybridity, and male dominance. Their works exemplify how the feminized postcolonial Bildungsroman serves as "an appropriate weapon, which gives the possibility to the subaltern female voices to speak out for themselves" (Coulibaly, 36).

These novels also make significant contributions to postcolonial feminist theory by articulating models of agency that emerge from within constraints rather than transcending them. As it is noted in the volume entitled *The Postcolonial Bildungsroman*, postcolonial writers have transformed the genre "from an eighteenth-century European genre meant to explore local themes around childhood development into one of the most cosmopolitan literary mediums for communicating overlapping concerns about global modernity." Adichie and Atta expand this transformative project by foregrounding how gender identity intersects with other dimensions of social experience, including race, class, ethnicity, and religion, in shaping developmental trajectories. Through their efforts, the Bildungsroman has been creatively reimagined, becoming a powerful vehicle to critique the very society it once affirmed. This resulted in coming-of-age stories that only vaguely resemble their nineteenth-century predecessors by centering the struggles of marginalized protagonists for whom the central conflict is not integration but liberation and self-definition. Ultimately, both Kambili's and Enitan's transformations are culminations of the female postcolonial bildungsroman, defined not by integrating into a flawed society but by liberating themselves from its constraints to write their own destinies.

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