FROM PERIPHRAL METROPOOLIS TO INVERTED EDEN: DEVELOPMENT,
GENDER, AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY, FEMALE-AUTHORED,
WEST AFRICAN BILDUNGSROMAN

by
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A dissertation submitted to the English Department,
College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in English

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University of Houston
August 2021

DEDICATION

For Bunmi.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am incredibly grateful to all the people who made this dissertation possible. When I began the PhD program six years ago, I was not the person who could have created this work and I owe my own development to so many people.

I must begin by thanking my chair, Dr. Hosam M. Aboul-Ela. He has unceremoniously destroyed the stereotype that "no one reads your dissertation" by reading every word of mine and providing truly helpful feedback. But more than that, I am grateful for the continued encouragement through article writing, fellowship applications, and job applications. More than that, my participation in the HME Dissertation Group has been a singular privilege. It provided me with a community and with real training for the next phase of my career. I have exceeded my own expectations over the past three years, and it is in large part, thanks to Dr. Aboul-Ela.

I also extend my thanks to my dissertation committee, Dr. W. Lawrence Hogue, Dr. Auritro Majumder, and Dr. Rachel Afi Quinn. Each one has pushed my project forward in unique ways. Dr. Sreya Chatterjee who served on my Prospectus Committee and graciously served as my advisor also supported my development in key ways. I benefited greatly from her suggestions. Similarly, I thank Dr. Kairn Klieman for her candor and intelligence which supported me through times of personal and professional stress.

I also thank the University of Houston English Department. When I was accepted into this program, I had no idea how I would grow at UH. I have been encouraged by Dr. Dave Mazella, Dr. Kavita Singh, Dr. Ann Christensen, and Dr. James Kastely. I have also appreciated the support of the English Department's

ABSTRACT

The bildungsroman continues to be popular amongst writers, readers, and critics. Perhaps, this is because the representation of individual development is as compelling today as it ever has been. We continue to ask how the novel depicts a person as s/he responds to challenges, cultivates a subjectivity, and matures into an adult identity. However, there is no study that focuses on the contemporary African bildungsroman. This grave oversight means that our understanding of how individual development is represented in post-colonial and post-independence countries of the Global South is severely limited. My study of the female-authored, West African bildungsroman remedies this dearth in the scholarship.

In my dissertation, *From Peripheral Metropolis to Inverted Eden: Development, Gender and Subjectivity in the Contemporary, Female-Authored, West African Bildungsroman*, I explicate the innovations and articulations of the genre through the work of Chimamanda Adichie, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, Amma Darko, Leonora Miano, and Aminatta Forna. The project takes development as both a synonym of the German term, "bildung," and as a concept which refers to the maturation process of an economy, nation, or idea. My research examines how contemporary female authors imagine bildung in contexts which are often hostile to women, the youth, and the poor, and examines how this genre imagines bildung in an international context characterized by antiblackness. I argue that the genre presents development in materialist terms because of its close attention to personal, social, and national economics and that the genre presents male and female genders as an important component of individuation and subjectivity. In addition, I demonstrate that

the genre links the protagonist's bildung to the nation's educational, social service, and healthcare institutions. Finally, I explicate the narrative resolutions for orientations towards conjugality or consanguinity. In my framework, conjugality and consanguinity exist on a spectrum. In it, conjugality is an orientation to one's own happiness and advancement, while consanguinity is an orientation toward advancement which incorporates a strong affiliation and link toward the wider community.

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INTRODUCTION: TOWARD A GENDER(ED) THEORY OF THE AFRICAN BILDUNGSROMAN

This dissertation seeks to demonstrate that a more incisive understanding of the cultural production of the novel can be gained from reading contemporary female-authored West African bildungsromane as novels of development. Specifically, they narrativize materialist aspects of individual development by linking the formation of adult identity and subjectivity to institutions of development and the individual's access to and experience within them. Through this link, the characters' subjectivity and individuation recalls us to the novel's world and the societal referent outside of the novel. My overarching argument has two parts. First, I argue that a keen analysis of contemporary bildungsromane requires the use of gender as an analytical category. As the application chapters will demonstrate, this corpus of texts depicts the way that gender facilitates or precludes access to developmental institutions and foregrounds gender as an integral component of adult identity. In this way, the genre positions gender as part of bildung. Thus, an analysis of the works must also be attentive to gender as it will reveal aspects of the novel and the social referent. Second, I argue that the bildungsroman's narrative resolution emphasizes an orientation toward conjugality or consanguinity. On one hand, conjugality refers to investment in individual advancement which cannot be shared with the wider polity. On the other hand, consanguinity refers to investment in the community. Because of the depth of literary fiction, conjugality and consanguinity exist on a spectrum. Bildungsromane are never only conjugal, though they may have a predominate consanguineal orientation. Ultimately, West African bildungsromane are cultural products which

reveal the conditions of reality. They mediate reality but do not distort it. As cultural

producers, they participate in discursive meaning making by engaging ideas about

individual, social, and national development. Before I expand on my claim and

rationale further, it is necessary to review scholarship on European, U.S. American,

and Caribbean bildungsromane in order to understand my claim about the African

bildungsroman.

The Bildungsroman

Few genres have been as well-considered by scholars as the bildungsroman. Within

Anglophone scholarship, there is abundant treatment of the genre's history, political

and ideological import, and aesthetics through criticism about authors from the Global

North.[1] The bildungsroman can be broadly described as a novel which centers the

formation of a novice, through a stage of instability, and to(ward) some stage of

maturity. This broad definition is, of course, overly general. Regardless of the specific

construction of the definition, literary scholars do not agree on significant components

of the genre or its very presence. On one hand, some U.S. American and European

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[1] An abbreviated list of important scholarly interventions on bildungsroman written by authors from (what is now termed) the Global North include: Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*, Stella Bolaki's *Unsettling the Bildungsroman: Reading Contemporary Ethnic American Women's Fiction*, Jed Esty's *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism and Fictions of Development*, Pin-chia Feng's *The Female Bildungsroman by Toni Morrison and Maxine Hong Kingston*, Susan Fraiman's *Unbecoming Women: British Women Writers and the Novel of Development*, Geta J. LeSeur's *Ten Is the Age of Darkness: The Black Bildungsroman*, Franco Moretti's *The Way of The World*, Marc Redfield's *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the "Bildungsroman,"* Jeffrey Sammons' "The Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists: An Attempt at a Clarification," Joseph Slaughter's *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form and International Law*, and Mark Stein's *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation*. As the list reveals, scholarship on literatures from the Global North still consider factors such as coloniality, race, gender, citizenship and so on.

literary scholars continue to lament what they consider to be the overuse of the generic label. Some have argued that it is a "phantom" genre which never existed in the form (or in the quantity) that literary criticism suggests (Sammons 28). Working from this idea, Marc Redfield has elaborated the paradoxes of the bildungsroman as a "phantom genre," while, conversely, constructing a literary historiography of it which links aesthetics, ideology, and humanism (1-62). Other influential schematics of the genre include the works of Jerome H. Buckley and Franco Moretti. Buckley's *Seasons of Youth* uses the Edwardian bildungsroman to construct a generic claim that privileges the historical agency of the bourgeoisie and the male as historical subject. Whereas in *The Way of the World*, Moretti argues that the 18th century "classical," German bildungsroman represented a shift in the psyche of Western Europe because the hero was a youth, rather than a mature man. Read through 18th century German to 19th century English texts, Moretti posits that the "symbolic youth" represents the societies as they encounter modernity and the contestation of new forms of labor, sociality, and governance. Meanwhile, Tobias Boes situates the bildungsroman as a genre which "performs" "national-historical time" (31). According to Boes, despite giving form to a normative ideal of the nation, the bildungsroman cannot be fully subsumed by the nation and what remains are "cosmopolitan elements" (Boes 2-3; 7).

Scholars of North American and European bildungsromane have also incorporated race, coloniality, gender, and sexuality into their theory of the bildungsroman. For instance, focusing on British writers in the metropole and colonial zones, Jed Esty argues that the 1930s marked a generic shift wherein the soul-nation allegory of bildung (15) was subverted. The subversion is not necessarily

"degeneration," but Esty considers the novels' elements of "antidevelopment" as representative of "uneven development in … both personal and political life" (2). Esty's attention to allegory—which links the historical subject (citizen) to the nation's trajectory—owes something to Frederic Jameson's national allegory and I will attend to his theory in a later section. Another discipline defining intervention was Joseph Slaughter's *Human Rights, Inc*. which focalized the study of the bildungsroman around the simultaneous emergence of human rights discourse. According to Slaughter, the bildungsroman is "the novelistic genre that most fully corresponds to…the norms and narrative assumptions that underwrite the vision of free and full human personality development projected in international human rights law" (40). To explain his theory, Slaughter traces the genre from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and to postcolonial "novels of disillusionment" (215). Simultaneously, he elucidates the historical link between the white, male, European right's bearing citizen (42-43) and the "young" human rights of people from the Global South (215).

Moreover, scholars of black, "minority," and "ethnic" literature from the U.S., U.K., and Caribbean have contributed to my understanding the bildungsroman. For example, Geta LeSeur's *Ten is the Age of Darkness: The Black Bildungsroman* is a comparative study of black/Black novels from the Caribbean and the United States. LeSeur argues that the African American bildungsroman is not related to the "White European" form (18) and cannot be analyzed with them (21). Pin-chia Feng argues that bildungsromane by North American ethnic women "re-present…negotiations" with repression and memory (19). Using a Freudian psychoanalytic approach, she further argues that they are "complicated networks of intertextual sign systems" which

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represent the plurality of experience, consciousness, and dialogue (23). Additionally, in his study of the bildungsroman, Mark Stein argues that the black British genre is a "novel of transformation" which effectively alters the representation of Britain through its power as a cultural product.

Scholars of African literature have also devised theories of the bildungsroman. Like the European and North American forms, the African bildungsroman, which emerged during the colonial era, initially focused on male protagonists as allegorical representations of the citizen and the historical subject. Writing about male-authored Francophone colonial and postcolonial bildungsromane, Wangarĩ Nyatetṹ-Waigwa argues that "the rite of passage … remains suspended in the middle stage" (3). According to Nyatetṹ-Waigwa, the bildungsheld's narrative concludes with his existence in a liminal space, without entry into the adult social realm, the age group or the ethnic/cultural group, or reconciliation with the emergent institutions and norms of modernity.

There is, of course, an established tradition of analyzing African woman's bildungsroman which is also connected to coloniality, race, gender, the nation, politics, and narrative structures. Notable scholars working in this tradition are Susan Andrade, Elleke Boehmer, and Florence Stratton. Stratton's seminal work, *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender,* constructs the dominant thematic concerns of the colonial and postcolonial African female bildungsroman through an analysis Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966) and Buchi Emecheta's bildung narratives, namely *Second Class Citizen* (1974), *The Bride Price* (1976), *The Slave Girl* (1977), *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), *Destination Biafra* (1982), and *Double*

Yoke (1982). The genre's interventions include the "inversion of the sexual allegory" which places male characters in negative, collaborationist positions (117; 88), the theme of western education for female persons (88), the motif of the missing mother and its connection to the female child's education and exploitation (93; 101; 104), the discourse of matriarchy and the inclusion of female deities (93; 90), the duality (or coupling) of two female characters/protagonists (97), the interrogation of prostitution as a trope and the "prostitute" character (103), empowerment through urban migration (103-104), the valorization of "indigenous over foreign or imported gender ideologies" (104), and narrative intertextuality (111). In addition, Boehmer claims that colonial and postcolonial women writers inscribe "the peripheral figure of the postcolonial national daughter" as protagonist in order to "write back" to authoritative cultural texts by African men, including the bildungsroman (106-107). She also explains that "vocality" structures the narrative plot of women's fiction (98), which is a point noted by Stratton as well (82). Altogether, Andrade, Boehmer, and Stratton situate the genre within the historical context from which the literature emerges. Many of the elements they identified are worth noting here since I will incorporate them into my own argument.

Furthermore, my attention to the bildungsheld's development in relation to local, national, and globalized space is informed by Fredric Jameson's "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" (TWL). Jameson's sweeping argument has relevance to my ideas. He writes:

> Third-world texts, even those 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*. (69; emphasis in original)

Of course, there is no way to read this claim about "third world literature" without referring back to Aijaz Ahmad's redress in "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the "'National Allegory.'" Ahmad is instructive in critiquing a totalizing theory which too hastily grasps at (a) cognitive aesthetics and elides the discontinuities of different colonial and postcolonial temporalities. Moreover, Ahmad provides clear explanations of how the binary opposition constructed by "first" and "third" world undercuts a materialist critique of literature. Despite this, I incorporate Jameson because his motivations in TWL have been sufficiently recuperated through the apologia by Imre Szeman and more recently by Auritro Majumder who has situated Jameson's argument within aesthetic criticism from peripheralized zones in the mid-twentieth century. Therefore, I return to Jameson's TWL. I am invested in Jameson's claim that "seemingly private" narratives, including those that incorporate the libidinal economy of the family, have a (public) "political dimension." Moreover, I am persuaded by the claim that this private-cum-public aspect of life in the Global South is presented through "story" or narrative and that such a narrative may be read allegorically, and such a protagonist may be read dialogically, with and against the cultural and national construct. As Jameson explains, "appeals to ["cultural…national" and] collective identity nee[d] to be evaluated from a historical perspective" (78). In other words, this is not a simplistic one-to-one relationship between the protagonist and the nation.

Rather, the allegorical connection is nuanced. Susan Andrade explains this in *The Nation Writ Small: African Fictions and Feminisms, 1958–1988*. Andrade's analyses center the work of African women authors and narratives of individual development. More than any other monograph, *The Nation Writ Small* presents an analytical method for excavating the public and political components integrated into "domestic" and "private" narratives. This attention to individual development is the unifying aspect of bildungsroman criticism. I take it up too. However, in contrast with Andrade who analyzed literature for its dialogical relationship to African men's literature and nationalist discourse, I will focus on development itself. My goal is to explicate the narratives of development in relation to the institutions of development.

Development

My study thinks about "development" and "underdevelopment" as capacious and interconnected concepts. A premise of my argument is that national development is connected to "individual" development, such that "individual" development is at once a creation of the "personal," the public, and the political. It is never simply "private." Thus, the connection between the "individual," "personal," public, and political is engendered by the economic situation in individual nations and the region of West Africa. It is also engendered by the economic situation which links the respective nations and region to the capitalist world system.

It is useful to note three prominent theories about development here so that their reemergence in the application chapters will be clear. They are combined-and-uneven development, dependency theory, and the world-systems theory. In *History of*

the Russian Revolution, Leon Trotsky outlines the theory of combined-and-uneven development through an analysis of Russian economic, social, and political history from the 16th century to the early 20th century. Using Western Europe as the standard, Trotsky argues that Russia was comparatively "backward," with less stratified social structures, less advanced cultural forms (23), and less advanced industries (27). Unlike in England and France, Trotsky explains, the relatively weak Russian bourgeoisie did not function as a group which could effectively challenge the monarchy and advance the aforementioned elements of societal relations (28). The "working classes" were also not analogous to those of England and France, and eventually it was capitalism that created the situation where the Russian proletariat was effectively politicized.[2] This history provided Trotsky with the source for his hypothesis. Observing Russia, he argued that in its contact with capitalism, Russia, the "backward country assimilates the material and intellectual conquests of the advanced countries" but does not reproduce the "developmental" stages in the order that the advanced country enacted them (23). Rather, Trotsky posits that it is "the privilege of historic backwardness…[that] permits, or rather compels, the adoption of whatever is ready in advance of any specified date, skipping a whole series of intermediate stages" (24). This process ("a combining of separate steps") and the current societal configuration that it continually recreates ("an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms") is what "combined and uneven" refers to (25). Like Trotsky, Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, links economic, social, and political development. He is focusing on the African continent and not using Europe as an exemplar. According

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[2] See Trotsky, Chapter 3, "The Proletariat and the Peasantry."

to Rodney, "it is necessary to follow not only the development of Europe and the underdevelopment of Africa, but also to understand how those two combined in a single system — that of capitalist imperialism" (160). In other words, African development can best be understood as the process of underdevelopment and European imperialism and colonialism can be understood as the mechanism of the *development* of underdevelopment. Finally, Immanuel Wallerstein's world system's theory also influences how I write about development. Wallerstein began to write about what would become world system theory of economic development while in African in the 1970s. In his opus, *Modern World-System I*, focused on Europe. Within it, he identified the capitalism as a continuous, transnational system, which developed areas differently. The difference in development depended on whether the capitalist in the area were able to outcompete others and whether the current political system made competition possible. In Wallerstein's formulation, capitalism created core, semiperipheral, and peripheral areas. Each of these describe the relationship to capitalism itself and the resulting integration with the rest of the system. For instance, the core areas would be central to the operations of the capitalist system but could be displaced by other core or non-core sites. He, too, linked the economic system to political development.

Of course, these theories are not equivalents. Each is different and each is contradictory to one or both in some way. For instance, Rodney and Wallerstein do not agree about Africa's incorporation into the capitalist world system. Rodney argues that the "dialectical relationship" which produced the development of Western Europe and the underdevelopment of Africa was formed in the 16th century, from which point

Africa was part of the capitalist world system (85-105). Whereas Wallerstein maintains that from 1600-1800, Africa was "outside the world economy" ("Africa" 13). Though this is a significant difference for the theories, it is outside the range our present study. I use combined and uneven development to refer to the presence of economic, political, and social forms from different stages of labor production. My usage of underdevelopment refers to the "development of underdevelopment," not the absence of all forms of development. Lastly, I use "periphery" to refer to the zones that are currently peripheralized irrespective of when they were incorporated into the capitalist system. Similarly, I use core or metropolitan to refer to zones that are currently core sites of capitalism in their region.

It is not my goal to link specific novels to specific development theories or initiatives. Such an undertaking would be impossible. This is not *only* because some novels inscribe the constriction of economic markets and the silencing of public dissent covertly or only because there have been dozens of "development" programs in West Africa over the past twenty years. It is also because many novels show the entanglement of several development initiatives or logics such that a neat disambiguation would be impossible.[3] Rather than wholesale linking of novels to theories or initiatives, the chapters will identify development institutions as they emerge as central to bildung, narrative resolution(s), and the conjugality-consanguinity

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[3] As I illustrate in chapter 3, Amma Darko's *The Housemaid* is an example of a novel which widely engages institutions and theories of development. The wide range of scholarly writing on the novel demonstrates this as well. Representative examples can be found in articles by Veronica Barnsley, Monica Bungaro, and MaryEllen (Ellie) Higgins. While Barnsley writes about reproductive health as an individual and societal issue, Bungaro considers the development of female patriarchal oppression within families, and Higgins emphasizes the link between poverty, commodification, exploitation, the family (as institution), and the lack of government programs ("Ngambika" 58).

framework. As I analyze individual development as an aspect of economic and national development, I follow the literature, since, I suggest, the literature is also interested in revealing the relationship between institutions and individuals.

Gender Theory

Another component of the conjugality-consanguinity framework is gender. Specifically, I am asserting that the only adequate way to analyze adult identity in the literature is to think carefully about gender constructions. My work thinks of gender in the following ways. First, gender is not coincident with biological sex. It is socially constructed through socially legible attributes created by material and historical conditions. Second, gender does not refer to "woman," but to one of many gender formations which may also be "woman" or "man." Third, gender is an important aspect of political economy. These ideas are worth elaborating.

     To begin at the beginning: gender is not equivalent to biological sex and "woman" or "man" are not adequate representational categories.[4] While this statement has gained increased purchase within the Global North over the last 30 years, the application in the Global South has been inconsistent. The discrepancy lies in the

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[4] Two influential texts from the U.S. academy are worth noting. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* made a significant contribution to gender theory by arguing that sex is also a biological construction and gender is "performative." Butler claims: "There is no gender identity behind expressions of gender; […] identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expression' that are said to be its results" (25). Compare this with Hortense Spillers "Mama's Baby Papa's Maybe" which begins with "I am a marked woman, but not everybody knows my name. 'Peaches' and 'Brown Sugar,' 'Sapphire' and 'Earth Mother,' 'Aunty,' 'Granny,'
God's 'Holy Fool,' a 'Miss Ebony First,' or 'Black Woman at the Podium': I describe a locus of confounded identities, a meeting ground of investments and privations in the national treasury of rhetorical wealth. My country needs me, and if I were not here, I would have to be invented" (65). Spillers' construction of a gendered identity which in formed by nation—its laws and histories—race, social relations, and economics is closer to what I mean when I write of "gendered development."

continued construction of the representational category "woman" and "Third World woman" by scholars of the Global North. This has created a paradoxical situation where scholars understand that gender is socially constructed *here* but write about gender as a sex-determined entity *over there*. Writing about "the production of the 'Third World woman,'" Chandra Mohanty wrote:

> The assumption of women as an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic, or racial location, or contradictions, implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy that can be applied universally and cross-culturally. (21)

As Chandra Mohanty explains, when women are made into an "already constituted coherent group":

> The focus is not on uncovering the material and ideological specificities that constitute a particular group of women as powerless in a particular context. It is... on finding a variety of cases of powerless groups of women to prove the general point that women as a group are powerless. (23)

This lack of focus is not simply because the intent of the scholarly endeavor has shifted.[5] According to Mohanty, it is because the ahistorical construction of the group for the purpose of analysis will function to obscure actual components of women's lives.

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[5] Mohanty argues that "when this assumption of 'women as an oppressed group' is situated in the context of Western feminist writing about Third World women […] we see how Western feminists alone become the true 'subjects' of this counterhistory" (39). She adds, "It is here that I locate the colonialist move" (39). For an example of writing a materialist and historically sensitive account of "Third World Women" see Mohanty's Chapter Two.

Similarly, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie critiqued the construction of "the African woman." In *Re-Creating Ourselves: African Women & Critical Transformations*, she laments the representation of African women in African men's literature and within literature, academic scholarship, and policy publications emanating from the Global North. Their error is the re-positioning of "the African woman" in place of a heterogenous cohort of African women. Like Mohanty, she notes that the representational category "woman" excludes women, rather than created a group. Ogundipe-Leslie also notes a difference: in the U.S. and Western Europe, the representational category, "woman," took middle-and-upper class women as representative of the group and excluded poor, raced, marginalized women. Conversely, in Africa, the representational category, "African woman," took poor, rural, marginalized women as representative of the group and excluded women who could not be understood in this way. And, Ogundipe-Leslie tells us, the writers, scholars, and theorists, studied, wrote about, and otherwise represented a diversity of African women through the category of the marginalized "African woman." (9-11)

Ogundipe-Leslie argued that the African woman's perceived status as a wife was central to the construction of the "African woman" as a representative of all women. She wrote:

Privileging conjugality over consanguinity, contrary to African realities, is responsible for misreadings of the statuses of African women and their conditions of life. We have reiterated, seemingly to no avail, that African women are more than wives. To understand their multi-faceted identities beyond wifehood, we must look for their roles and statuses in sites other than

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that of marriage. The literature on African women, however, continues to focus

solely on marriage as evidence of the inferior status of African women. (13)

In other words, "the African woman" was constructed as a low status person by those

that assigned her a social status due to her *relation* to her husband. The thought

process proceeded: the African woman is a wife to one husband, but the man has

many wives, therefore, the man enjoys a higher status than the African woman. Armed

with this "evidence," the aforementioned group constructed the African woman inside

of the U.S. and Western European woman's feminist struggle and against

male/patriarchal control of home, finances, labor markets, and so on.

Neither this critique nor its potential correction is a facile one. This is because

the representation of African women through the category of "the African woman"

had constructed a gender and the decentering of that gender required the identification

of the construction *process* and the privileged analytical factors. Ogundipe-Leslie

identified this challenge as being the challenge of Eurocentrism and ideology. For, she

explains, the representative gender group was created through analytical categories

derived from the U.S. and Western Europe and Eurocentric discourses which linked

the sign (Africa/n) with the signifier (primitive/backward/uncultivated) and signified

("the African woman") through the long history of contact, characterized most

recently by the economic, political, and cultural domination of Africa. Ogundipe-

Leslie points out that a different conclusion would have been reached if the woman's

status was read through her *relation* to her natal family. As Ogundipe-Leslie argues, in

the Nigerian and West African context, the natal family is a site and structure within

which women (and men) enjoy privileges, rights, status, and/or power. The *relation* to

the natal family is also retained after one has married which is evidenced by the wife's participation in local groups, family events, and so on. Ogundipe-Leslie argues that this potential to enjoy, retain, and acquire a preferred social identity is the reason why African women do not think of their position as "a wife" or their *relation* to a husband as the primary factor in their social status. In other words, her argument is: it is the consanguineal links which provide many women with a social status, not the conjugal one. It might be useful to debate if this observation is still true, and to identify for whom it is true. Undoubtedly, it is true for many and false for many. However, this is not the point. The point is that the "descriptive and informative value" of the information about women—for instance, they live within polygynous households— has limited analytical value (Mohanty 20). Analyses of gender cannot proceed without sociocultural and historical knowledge. To represent a category or gender—in art or criticism—one must first understand the broad societal mechanisms, the gender identities, and the gender components which are preferred and legible by the person or people one seeks to represent.

Of course, I must note I recognize that Mohanty's interventions on "the Third World woman" and Ogundipe-Leslie's interventions on "the African woman" are historical. "Third world" is a now-outdated phrase which emerged in the 1950s to refer to the regions/countries outside of the Soviet Bloc, Western Europe, and North America. Ogundipe-Leslie's interventions are similarly historical as she was writing in the 1970s and 80s. Yet, I incorporate them to demonstrate that the critique of the homogenization of persons under the gender category of "woman" extends from the mid-to-late 20th century to the present. Moreover, I quote them to demonstrate that

scholarly attention to gender must respect the critical insights of the aforementioned scholars. This "respect" is not for them as person—as great as they may be—but because their interventions are representative of the critical rigor that is required and so often missing from the analysis of contemporary African literature. Moving forward, we can use their ideas and extrapolate beyond their critique of the construction of the "Third World woman"/"African woman" as a biologically-determined gender position to apply their interventions to the construction of any sex-determined gender. This leads to my second point. In the African context, gender does not refer to "man" or "woman" but to many different identity positions which may also be modified with "man" or "woman." The social sciences have brought us a wealth of information on this subject.

Furthermore, the history of West Africa reveals that genders were not always sex-determinate and that different sexes could attain different genders. Ifi Amadiume's *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in African Society* is one of the most well-known examples. Through an archival research and ethnographic study on Nnobi, an Igbo town in present-day Anambra State, Nigeria, Amadiume historicizes a pre-colonial gender system. Within the system, women were able to become male-gendered persons through predetermined, socially recognized means, including through the designation by one's father and through accumulating wealth and prestige in the community. The ascendance from female-to-male gender was nothing less than a shift in social position and gendered identity. It was accompanied by the privileges and rights afforded to men, including inheritance, marriage, paternity, and political participation.

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Another influential intervention into theories of gendering in pre-colonial Yoruba culture can be found in Oyèrónké Oyewùmí's *Invention Of Women: Making An African Sense Of Western Gender Discourses*. Writing about pre-nineteenth century Oyo culture, Oyewùmí argues that the body was not the primary component for gender constructions (13). According to Oyewùmí, "[t]he principle that determined social organization was seniority, based on chronological age" (13) and women could (and did) assume preferred identity positions like "*ọba* (ruler), *omo* (offspring), *ọkọ aya ìyá* (mother) and "*aláwo* (diviner-priest)" (14; italics in original). Working separately, both scholars explain that ideas which fixed sex to gender (Amadiume) and the located gender on the body (Oyewùmí) became hegemonic only after European economic incursions had led to the adoption of different social and religious beliefs. Though both Amadiume and Oyewùmí have been critiqued,[6] there is certainly enough archival evidence to reveal that gender was constructed through factors such as labor, wealth, family of origin, political situation of person (and community), and so on. Moreover, Amadiume's incorporation of colonialist's letters reveal that women thought about what genders they might *develop into* if their plans for business and social mobility were attained.[7] Likewise, Oyewùmí's work reveals that women employed multiple preferred identity positions, either at once, or sequentially.

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[6] See Bibi Bakare-Yusuf's "Yorubas Don't Do Gender" for a review Oyewùmí's monograph and see G. Ugo Nwokeji's *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra* (158) which critiques Amadiume's conclusions.

[7] See Amadiume, *Invention*, 14-16. The letters written by Mrs. Leith-Ross include her recollections of Igbo women talking about becoming men. I mention the letters of a white, English, colonialist not because I think she should be the authority on the subject, but because she writes as a confused observer who does not understand the cultural construction of gender or the women's clear ambition. This is somewhat like the position of Western/Eurocentric scholars today.

Whatever the case, they were attained through women's positive action not through biological determinacy.

Another part of my intervention is that gender is an aspect of political economy. Africanist historians and social scientists continue to recognize that gender constructions shift as economic, political, and social relations shift. Thus, "man" and "woman" can be useful, descriptive terms, but they do not name an analytical or representational category. Instead, scholars continue to use labor, sexuality, race, age, educational attainment, polity type (etc.) to create constituent groups which may be studied. Drawing from the work of Kimberle Crenshaw, I recognize that identities are always already intersectional in that they are comprised of different factors, such as race, sex, sexuality, gender, class, citizenship, and so on. Through the framework of intersectionality, I understand identities to be multidimensional and analysis of an identity to require attention to more than one identity dimension or factor. Each intersectional identity may experience the same circumstance differently due to how one (or more) identity factor effects the circumstance. For instance, a poor, heterosexual, male from a marginalized ethnic group in Cameroon may experience the college admission process and entry-level bank job different than a poor, heterosexual female from the same marginalized ethnic group. Another person from a stigmatized religious group may experience still more differences. These differences may be perceived subjectively, or they may be acknowledged as structural restrictions political, academic, and social communities of thinkers. Many social, economic, and political systems function to create, enforce, and perpetuate these structural restrictions. Patriarchal systems are an example. Patriarchy is "a system of male power

and privilege which victimizes women and men" (Ouzgane and Morrell 13). However, patriarchy is not a single system. Instead, there are precolonial "indigenous" patriarchal systems as well as colonialist and Euro-derived patriarchal as well as contemporary, globalized patriarchal systems. These various patriarchies cannot be reduced to a single effect, and many are incongruous with each other. Their similarities lie in the control of female and male bodies and minds. Within the chapters, I identify and explain how name the patriarchy (as indigenous, contemporary etc.) and explain how it effects particular persons based on their sex, gendered identity, class, and/or citizenship.

Gender is, of course, one aspect of the identity. However, I write of "gendered identity" rather than "gender identity." On one hand, "gender identity" is commonly used to refer to concept of oneself as "male," "female," or "non-binary. However, I find the emphasis on male and female categories to distract from the process of gendering and the specificities of gendered identity categories in West Africa. Chapters 1-4 list and describe the categories but suffice it to see that they are gendered identities because gender constructions and identity constructions imbricate on each other. Neither gender nor identity is one-in-the-same and yet, they cannot be wholly separated. Thus, I write about "gender__ed__" identity to draw attention to the gendering *process* and the importance of gender within the overall identity construction. This nuanced approach will undoubtably invite critiques that I have essentialized gender or the importance of gender in the African context. I can answer both critiques here. First, I have avoided essentializing gender by expanding the categories beyond "male" and "female" genders to gendered identities. In other words, my analysis of a gendered

identity does not essentialize male or female sexual designations or one form of masculinity. Instead, in each instance, I write about a "gendered identity" which is specified by name (i.e., Cult(ure) Hero) and described through its various components which include sex and gender performance.

Rather than essentialize male or female gender constructions, I write about femininity and masculinity as general and representative categories, I write about femininities and masculinities and clarify the terms through the societal and situational contexts. My analyses draw upon the work of African gender theories, such *Africa After Gender?* edited by Catherine M. Cole, Takyiwaa Manuh, and Stephan F. Miescher as well as *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present* edited by Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell. In *After Gender?* Cole et al. identify this present moment as being "after gender," meaning after gender theory has been integrated into several fields and disciplines and into the study of Africa more broadly (3). The volume's focus is "on how gender works on the ground in African contexts and how this relates to or contrasts with theory" (4). Moreover, *Africa After Gender?*

> "Explor[es] the usefulness and limitations of gender for Africa [through the following questions]: How has gender as a research focus and teaching subject evolved in Africa? How has gender as a political agenda acquired new importance as NGOs and policymakers, among others, began using it as a badge and compass for their work? Have gender identities formerly seen as 'imported' become indigenized through the processes of colonization and Christianization? How does masculinity studies fit into this emerging field? (4)

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This dissertation explores many of the same questions through its attention to gendered identity or demonstrates the usefulness of thinking about gender as an analytic. Specifically, each chapter illustrates the insights derived from centering gender and illuminating the intersectional factors which create the gendered identity. In other words, my work considers gender as an aspect of political economy. In doing this, I follow the work of Africanist and postcolonial gender and feminist scholars, such as Ifi Amadiume, Filomina Steady, Gwendolyn Mikell, Adomako Ampofo, and Signe Arnfred.[8] The work they author and editor moves from identifying a biological sex, to identifying components which potentially create, complicate, or foreclose access to some aspect of human sociality, human material reproduction, or human engagement with national or international structures. Ultimately, they produce scholarship which carefully situates masculinities and/or femininities in a historical context.

Similarly, in Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell note, African masculinities' studies draws upon two fields, Masculinity Studies and African Gender/Feminist Theory. Ouzgane and Morrell describe the last 40 years of Masculinity Studies in this way:

A landmark in this development was ["Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity"] a1985 article by T. Carrigan, R. W. Connell, and J. Lee that

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[8] A representative list of scholarship on the political economy of gender in Africa includes Amadiume's *Daughters of the Goddess, Daughters of Imperialism* on Nigerian women and Filomina Steady's *Women and Collective Action in Africa: Development, Democratization, and Empowerment, with Special Focus on Sierra Leone*. See also *African Feminisms: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa* edited by Gwendolyn Mikell and *African Feminist Politics of Knowledge: Tensions, Challenges, Possibilities* edited by Akosua Adomako Ampofo and Signe Arnfred.

introduced the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" as a form of masculinity

that was dominant in society, established the cultural ideal for what it was to be

a man, silenced other masculinities, and combated alternative visions of

masculinity. Since then, the field has expanded dramatically, culminating in

1995 in Bob Connell's celebrated Masculinities. A starting point of much of

this work is the rejection of the idea that all men are the same. This has

occasioned the shift from the concept of masculinity to the concept of

masculinities. The shift allows one to distinguish meaningfully among

different collective constructions of masculinity and to identify power

inequalities among these constructions. Put differently, the concept provides a

way to understand the evident fact that not all men have the same amount or

type of power, the same opportunities, and, consequently, the same life

trajectories. (4)

Ouzgane and Morrell also situate African Masculinities Studies as a descendant of

African, African American, and Third World feminist, womanist, and gender theory.

Their list of influential theorist include many that I have noted in this chapter,

including Ifi Amadiume, Obioma Nnaemeka, Oyèrónké Oyewùmí, and Chandra

Mohanty. The editors recognize the work in feminist and gender theory, especially its

articulation of the

…the importance of adulthood, agency within a collectivity, and a recognized

place for all who compose the collectivity are important contributions. They

shift the focus away from the individualist thrust of some Western feminist

work and make the case for the importance of ethnic groupings, kinship, and

family groups. (6)

While they recognize and lament the lack of attention to men and masculinity, they are

clear in their declaration and incorporation of the insights of these gender theorists into

their work on men and masculinities.

Ultimately, I argue that the bildungsheld develops into an identity which is

gender specific rather than "gender neutral." The gender components of the un-

matured identity and the preferred identity position may be latent or even invisible to

readers from outside the culture from which the literature emerges. But they are not

arcane. They are ever present and tell us as much about character as the situation

within the nation.

Conjugality and Consanguinity

Conjugality and consanguinity. I posit these as two ends of a spectrum upon which

West African bildungsromane exist. In common parlance, conjugality is affiliation

based on marriage, and consanguinity is affiliation through birth, natal ties and/or

common descent. In borrowing from Ogundipe-Leslie, I expand conjugality to refer

not only to the heteronormative romantic relationships but to "privatized happiness."

By privatized happiness, I mean some benefit or advancement that cannot or will not

be shared in kind with anyone other than an extension of oneself. This extension is

like the conjugal partner, because the relation influences the status of the person,

though it may not be the most important factor. I also use the concept of conjugality

and privatized happiness to refer to an orientation toward individuation, which is an

individual identity constructed without a conciliatory posture toward a voluntary community group. This concept responds to the conditions of neoliberal governance. I arrive that this part of the concept in this way. In West Africa, the contemporary condition of neoliberal governance is experienced within systems that are an amalgamation of the contemporary (or "modern"), colonialist, and "traditional." In this situation of ongoing contradiction, the subject reacts by constructing a coherent orientation which combines the individualist characteristics from all the system types. The subject's is working toward self-preservation, acquisition, and upward mobility.

Similarly, I expand consanguinity to mean an orientation toward a local or national community affiliation, wherein knowledge production, psychic, emotional, affective, creative and physical labor are contributed as continual payment or remittance for the privilege of belonging. In short, it is a subject position which emphasizes the subject's relationships to groups formed through commonality, shared values and goals, cooperation, and conciliation, even where competition may exist. But this framework is not a simple binary opposition since most African bildungsroman do the labor of knowledge production which is, itself, a consanguineal ethos and praxis. This is why I claim that conjugality and consanguinity is a spectrum. In cases where the narrative resolution emphasizes privatized happiness, the novel may still be consanguineal if it directs the readers' bildung toward knowledge production and critique. I have tried to avoid simplistic constructions of good and bad novels of development. Similarly, I have tried to avoid simplifications of good and bad orientations. To do this, I have situated the negative aspects of conjugality in the social world that it emerges from so that it is clear that it, too, is just as "likely" an

orientation, even if it appears less progressive. Similarly, I have situated the positive

aspects of consanguinity in the social world, too, so that it is clear that the

transformative potential of the orientation does not create a solution "in the real

world." Instead it creates an idea. While this may be "good," it is still limited.

My conjugality-consanguinity framework and the overarching argument about

West African bildungsromane is further clarified by considering affiliation, gender,

adult identity, and my claim about the narrative resolutions. The first among them is

affiliation and it is an aspect of the outside and inside of the novel. On the outside of

the novel, the affiliation of the author. My premise is that bildungsromane function as

affiliative texts in inscribing the nation as space. A key aspect of this scholarly project

is to excavate genders as they are discursively constituted within the world of the

narratives, because my argument is that bildung is imbricated by gender. As a result, I

center gender as a primary category of analysis and take gender to be created by

intersectional factors and legitimized by customs within human sociality and societal

institutions. This link between bildung, narrative, and gender is well established in

African literary criticism. Drawing from African social scientists, I use "gender" to

refer to a social constructed identity and subjectivity which exist apart from biological

sex. It does not necessarily contravene biological sex. Aside from sex, other

components are discursively constituted through the local, national, and transnational

context that the novel is set in. In each case, there are factors, qualities, behaviors,

(etc.) which construct genders as legible and determinative. I recognize my theory as a

descendant of other scholars who have been mentioned in this chapter. They include

Andrade, Boehmer, and Stratton. While this group wrote about two genders—male

and female—and insightfully articulated the "female" as symbolic figure of the nation and an actual figure of the novel, I shift the frame slightly. I write about a range of male and female genders. I identify the genders by identifying the factors which make the character legible as a literary and "real" character. I, then, name the gender by drawing upon African and postcolonial literary theory. For instance, the following chapters refer to the Big Man, the Cult(ure) Hero, and the Been-to as gendered identities. This is not because they are *a priori* gendered but because the bildung (process) by which they were attained was gendered. In doing so, I demonstrate that "male" and "female" are too broad to function as analytical categories for my study.

This treatment of gender is linked to adult identity. My emphasis is on adulty identity because that is what the bildung leads to within the literal world of the novel. The developmental trajectory that "resolves" into the adult gender may be initiated by trauma. Trauma does emerge as a near-constant within female-authored bildungsromane. This may be because female gendered people are keenly aware of how bodies become the site of violence and the rationale for exclusion. However, trauma is not the only developmental catalysts and some novels frame identity disorientation as a catalyst for bildung.

In any case, the following chapters will illuminate is how gendering occurs in specific polity types and local/national contexts. Rather than look at various types of gendering in each bildungsroman, my interest in the private-public allegory of the bildungsroman directs me to pay attention to two ways bildungshelds are gendered: they are gendered through labor and through development itself. It is clear to me that contemporary bildungsromane link adult identity and subjectivity to labor by which I

mean the labor of work as well as the labor of biological and social reproduction. The complementary gendering component, development, is also narrativized by the genre, rather than implemented by me. The West African bildungsromane constructs the bildung's formation and challenges in relation to institutions of the nation (e.g., education, health care, market economy sectors) and the family (as an institution). Because development is a capacious term and has been frequently used to refer to the African context, I pay close attention to bildung as self-cultivation, formal education, subjectivity construction and wed that to an attention to the economic and social realm. Drawing from history and scholarship on Africa, I pay close attention to underdevelopment, combined and uneven development, women in development, individual development, and social development.

Moreover, by explicating the link between gender, adult identity, labor, and development, I unmask the innovative ways that authors have manipulated the conventions of the bildungsroman in order to depict the bildung of marginalized, peripheralized, or disenfranchised persons. These novels have responded to the challenge by attempting to write a bildung of the disempowered. Additionally, in so doing, the novelists have written a gendered and classed bildung of the nation because it is the presence and absence of the nation's institutions that these novels lay to bare.

The last central aspect of my framework which I will explain here is my attention the narrative resolution(s). The end of the narrative is where the bildungsheld's investment in conjugality or consanguinity will be cast into relief. Further, the end will function to extend the "story" beyond the close, to emphasize a

liminal condition, or as a definitive gesture about the bildungsheld's "completion" of his/her maturation journey. For all these reasons, the end is important.

Methodology

My method begins with close reading the text and identifying its narrative elements and structures. Secondly, I consider the context for the work. I consider literature to be a cultural product; meaning, an art form which communicates the customs, mores, values, judgements, and reigning and contested ideas within a society. Because society reveals the context of the work, I utilize a postcolonial feminist methodology. In other words, I use the technique of postcolonial criticism which brings together scholarship from literature, philosophy, cultural studies, historical materialism, and the social sciences (especially, gender studies, history, and anthropology) for the analysis of literature's socio-cultural context. The postcolonial methodology also allows me to hypothesize about global circulation of ideas and people which the narratives make legible. In addition, I center gender as a primary category of analysis and privilege the intersectional factors which are legible in the African context. This is an important part of my methodology, because many monographs on African literature substitute gender categories of the Global North for those which are operable on the African continent. I then explicate the material effects of gender (i.e., access to/exclusion from institutions of government, legal protections, health care, education) and link them to the socio-cultural context, adult identity formation, and an affiliation with the local or national community. The method of theorizing the link between narrative and contemporary nation-state mirrors the feminist labor of the novel itself. I identify the

genre's construction of gendered identity-development institution link as feminist because it does the work of demystifying conditions through a mediated art.

In addition, I have consciously selected novels written by authors from different countries in West Africa. Also, I have taken "African" to be a transnational term which may refer to different races of people. I did not base inclusion or exclusion on any author's continent of domicile. A residence requirement would seem odd in an era marked by transnational migration. In the preceding century, no such requirements were called for. Take, for instance, Buchi Emecheta who emigrated to the U.K. in 1962 at 18 and lived there for the remainder of her life (Stratton 108), save a year or two spent in Nigeria. She was (and still is) referred to as an African and Nigerian author. Yet, she was (and still is) also incorporated into the Black British literary tradition. Here, too, I have chosen not to exclude authors who are incorporated into national or international literary traditions which exist outside of the continent.

Contributions and Limitations

My project contributes to literary and Africana studies by demonstrating that literary and cultural scholarship must go beyond simply writing about Africa with theories from the Global North and by demonstrating the efficacy of theories from the Global South, especially Africa and its diasporas. In addition, the analysis of gender privileges the intersectional factors which are legible in the African context. This is an important contribution because many monographs on African literature substitute gender categories of the Global North for those which are operable on the African continent. My work also situates gender in relation to the nation and political

participation in the political and public sphere. Moreover, the chapters demonstrate the specificity of culture, ethnicity, and race. My project includes a close analysis of the ethno-cultural identity, and its relation to national affiliation. This is a key contribution of the chapters. This analysis also complicates homogenous racial categorization and furthers the (inter-national) comparative analyses of cultural difference between and among people who are racialized as Black. The last contribution is the use of historical materialism to historicize and analyze the nation's relationship to globalized circulation of ideas, people, and currency. Finally, this project ameliorates the paucity of criticism about African women writers. Currently, most literary scholarship which uses African, postcolonial, and transnational theories to analyze African women's literary production are published within anthologies.[9] These are excellent works and respond to the conditions of both the Global South and the Global North.[10] However, the anthology format does not allow for a complex schematic of genre, ideology, structure, and so on, beyond one chapter. Additionally, most monographs about African literature center male authors, exclude female authors, and/or refer to one-or-two of the same female authors. My work brings together a diverse selection of women writers, including those who have garnered a significant amount of criticism,

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[9] Representative examples include anthologies edited by Oyèrónké Oyewùmí and Stephanie Newell. In Oyewùmí's *African Women and Feminism: Reflecting On the Politics of Sisterhood*, each chapter has a thorough theoretical underpinning and a literary analysis. On the other hand, Newell's *Writing African Women: Gender, Popular Culture and Literature in West Africa*, is organized such that the reader moves from theory, to literary analysis informed by theory, to more sociological and historical engagements with cultural production. Both are contributive texts.

[10] The publishing situation in the Global South and the Global North can present challenges to Africanists working in the Global South. For instance, in West Africa, academic publishers have decreased in number and quality due to economic pressures, lack of government financial support, and the challenge in accessing materials. Conversely, an Africanist (located anywhere in the world) publishing in the Global North may encounter the challenge of paying a subvention fee while working at an institution which does not have subvention (award/grant) funds.

like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and others who have not, such as Amma Darko. My work also includes writers of different national origins, classes, and ideologies. These are all significant contributions to African Studies.

In tandem with the contributions are the limitations of this project. I recognize my position as a U.S.-educated scholar within the Anglo-American academy to be one limitation. Though I have tried to eschew with binaries, they may possibly emerge from my lived knowledge of U.S. American cultures and my more limited knowledge of West Africa as a region. Moreover, any study which limits itself geographically or excludes a biological sex risks reducing its insight. While I recognize the focus on West Africa and female-authored works may provide less breadth than a study on works from multiple sex/genders throughout continental Africa, my objective is to provide depth. My hope is that my argument may be the basis for further inquiry elsewhere. Another potential limitation is my inclusion of Léonora Miano who is both Cameroonian and a Francophone. My decision to include her was based almost entirely on the singularity of her novel. However, it is worth noting that Cameroon borders Nigeria and part of Cameroon was once part of the Nigerian colonial apparatus. In other words, the construction of Cameroon as "central Africa" is somewhat arbitrary. Unfortunately, I have no strong defense against those who think I should not add a francophone novel in a study of primarily Anglophone novels. I can only hope that the insights gained will be worth it.

Chapter Overview

There are two sections in the dissertation project. The first section consists of Chapters 1 and 2 and it explores conjugal orientations of middle-class adjacent characters. The second section consists of Chapter 3 and 4 and it focuses on consanguineal orientations. Another difference within the chapters is the polity type within each novel. The polities are all different and shift from mega-city to regional town to village. Each will contain different institutions of development and different preferred gendered identities.

Chapter 1: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*

In Chapter 1, I analyze a novel by Nigerian author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Adichie's first two novels, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* were well-received by critics as was her short story collection, *The Thing Around Your Neck*. *Americanah* won the 2013 National Book Critics Circle Award. Chapter 1 focuses on Adichie's third novel, *Americanah*. Specifically, it situates *Americanah*'s bildungsheld, Ifemelu, in terms of Lagos' combined and uneven development and her gender. Then, I analyze Ifemelu's transition to the U.S. and the way that sexual trauma serves as her developmental catalyst. As I explain in the chapter, rather than a dynamic developmental trajectory, Ifemelu's time in the U.S. is preoccupied by upward socioeconomic mobility not a change in her ways of thinking or living. Instead, it is Ifemelu's return migration to Lagos and reunion with Obinze that represents her bildung formation. The narrative resolution reveals that she is invested

in conjugal orientation and the feminine subjectivity which values a companionate union.

Chapter 2: Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come To You By Chance*

In Chapter 2, I analyze the work of Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's first novel, *I Do Not Come To You By Chance*. Nwaubani is Nigerian author who has published three novels and a number of journalistic and creative non-fiction essays. *I Do Not Come To You By Chance* won the 2010 Commonwealth Writers Prize Best First Book (Africa) 2010 and the 2010 Betty Trask Award for Best First Book.

In Chapter 2, I argue that *I Do Not Come To You By Chance* presents the gendered development of the bildungsheld, Kingsley, from an opara (first born son) into a Big Man. Becoming a Big Man was not part of Kingsley's developmental trajectory, but when his preferred adult identity as opara is threatened, he allows his uncle, Cash Daddy, to mentor him through his 419 scam enterprise. Through a careful delineation of the Big Man gender and the narrative's resolution, I demonstrate that Kingsley has a conjugal orientation toward privatized happiness. Finally, I conclude the chapter by considering how authors like Nwaubani use satire to represent development in contexts where economic pressures have constricted the means for adult development.

Chapter 3: Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*, *The Housemaid*, and *Faceless*

In Chapter 3, I analyze the work of Amma Darko. Darko is a Ghanaian author who has published several novels and a memoir since the 1990s. Her path to publication began

during the five years she lived in Germany in the late 1980s. Unlike the rest of the novelists in this study, Darko was initially published in German, because this is the publication network that she is integrated into. (Zak, "Amma" 17-18)[11] The publication of her work in English originals continues to lag.

Chapter 3 focuses on Darko's first three English-language publications: *Beyond the Horizon*, *The Housemaid*, and *Faceless*. They form an extended, non-linear bildung narrative which contain consanguineal orientations. Through the three novels, I explicate the three key elements of West African bildungsromane. In *Beyond the Horizon*, I demonstrate that centrality of preferred adult gendered identities for the bildungsheld. In *The Housemaid*, I explain the nuances of consanguineal orientations in relation to blood relations and non-relatives. In *Faceless*, I trace the novel's incorporation of institutions which should support individual development and *Faceless*' critique of them. In addition, I pay attention to gender, poverty, and disenfranchisement as well as prostitution, transactional sex, and sexual slavery which is present (in some form) throughout the group. I excavate the narrative import of these elements and explain their allegorical components.

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[11] Amma Darko's interviews provide scholars with meaningful insight. Louise Allen Zak's dissertation, *Writing Her Way: A Study of Ghanaian Novelist Amma Darko*, which draws upon a series of interviews with Darko and other African women writers, remains the most comprehensive English-language source of information about Darko's family/upbringing, education, writing process (as a young adult woman), publication paths/experiences, five-year domicile in Germany, and knowledge of African and African women's literature (as a young woman). Zak's "Amma Darko: Writing Her Way" provides an abridged version of this information and is also valuable. Other notable interviews are MaryEllen (Ellie) Higgins' "Creating an Alternative Library: Amma Darko Interviewed by Ellie Higgins" where Darko speaks about how she arrives at and develops novel ideas and James Arnett's "'Everything Captured; Capture Everything': Amma Darko's Alternative Library, Information Circulation, and Urban Re-Memory An Interview with Amma Darko" where Darko discusses *Faceless*' themes, the market (as a commercial site), and what an "alternative library" might be.

Chapter 4: Léonora Miano's *Dark Heart of the Night* and Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*

In Chapter 4, I analyze the work of Léonora Miano. Miano was born in Cameroon and emigrated to France when she was about nineteen. The chapter will analyze Miano's *Dark Heart of the Night*. When it was originally published as *L'interieur de la nuit* (2005), it won the Montalembert Prize for a first novel by a female writer. Meanwhile, Aminatta Forna was born in Scotland, to a Scottish mother and a Sierra Leonean father. She spent her early childhood years in Sierra Leone before returning to Scotland (Forna, "Selected Empathy" 34). Her other publications include *The Devil Who Danced on Water*, a memoir about her father who was killed by the Sierra Leonean regime, and *Ancestor Bones*, a novel set in Sierra Leone. The chapter will analyze Forna's *The Memory of Love* which won the 2011 Commonwealth Writers' Prize and the 2011 Warwick Prize.

In Chapter 4, I examine gendered identity and bildung through Léonora Miano's *Dark Heart of the Night* and Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love* two bildungsromane set during and after armed conflicts. I consider how each novel presents trauma as a developmental catalyst and argue that the bildungshelds' develop consanguineal links to the nation and its people. In addition, I situate the gendered identities of female and male gendered characters and link the genders to preferred adult identities. Finally, I conclude the chapter by considering how the bildungsroman is an appropriate genre for the narration of the common people's struggle to develop as individuals and within the nation.

CHAPTER 1: PRIVATIZED HAPPINESS AND FEMALE SUBJECTIVITY IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

Of the contemporary African women writing within the bildungsroman tradition, no author has been afforded more critical or commercial praise than Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. *Americanah*, Adichie's third novel, has enjoyed ample attention.[12] In this chapter, I use *Americanah* to develop my argument about the West African bildungsroman. Specifically, this chapter will demonstrate that Ifemelu has a gendered identity which is, firstly, constructed within the context of combined and uneven development in Lagos before her transnational migration. Then, I situate Ifemelu's bildung trajectory in the United States (U.S.) in relation to trauma and creative labor. Lastly, I will focus on the narrative resolution and explicate the way that the novel

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[12] *Americanah* has been incorporated into a wide range of scholarly interventions. For countering negative narratives of Africa/Nigeria see Robin Brooks' "A Dangerous Single Story: Dispelling Stereotypes through African Literature" and Shane McCoy's "Reading the 'Outsider Within': Counter-Narratives of Human Rights in Black Women's Fiction." For diasporic black identity and/or immigration see Louis Chude-Sokei's "The Newly Black Americans: African immigrants and black America," Yogita Goyal's "We Need New Diasporas," and Ava Landry's "Black Is Black Is Black?: African Immigrant Acculturation in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* and Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*." For the representation of black hair, see Julie Iromuanya's "Are We All Feminists?: The Global Black Hair Industry and Marketplace in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*" and Dina Yerima's "Regimentation or Hybridity? Western Beauty Practices by Black Women in Adichie's *Americanah*." For transnational migration, see Sheri-Marie Harrison's "The Neoliberal Novel of Migrancy" and Gĩchingiri Ndĩgĩrĩgĩ's "'Reverse Appropriations' & Transplantation in *Americanah*." For identity formation, see Chinenye Amonyeze's "Writing a New Reputation: Liminality and Bicultural Identity in Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*," Stefanie Reuter's "Becoming a Subject: Developing a Critical Consciousness and Coming to Voice in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2015)" and Caroline Lyle's "Afropolitanism for Black Women: Sexual Identity and Coming to Voice in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*." For Afropolitanism, see John Masterson's "Bye-Bye Barack: dislocating Afropolitanism, spectral Marxism and dialectical disillusionment in two Obama-era novels" *and* Rónke Òké's "Traveling Elsewheres: Afropolitanism, *Americanah*, and the Illocution of Travel." For infrastructures of race and resources, see Caroline Levine's "'The Strange Familiar': Structure, Infrastructure, and Adichie's *Americanah*." For blogging, see Serena Guarracino's "Writing 'so Raw and True': Blogging in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah*." For national allegory, see Katherine Hallemeier's "'To Be from the Country of People Who Gave.': National Allegory and the United States of Adichie's *Americanah*." For bildungsroman, see Mary Jane Androne's "Adichie's *Americanah*: A Migrant Bildungsroman."

privileges conjugality or privatized happiness. Ultimately, my analysis of Ifemelu and *Americanah* will illustrate how authors construct the bildung in materialist and aesthetic ways.

Gendered Development in the "Peripheral Metropole"

Ifemelu's gender construction sets her developmental trajectory as it does for other bildungshelds. When the novel opens, Ifemelu's gender is that of a resource-stable, female adolescent. She is not an elite because her family lacks political power and access to economic capital in the form of currency or commodity. However, she is not part of the majority population which can be described as working poor, subsistence poor and/or destitute. Her life approximates an American "middle-class" facsimile with private school and leisure. She does not have to contribute to the financial support of the family through wage labor or through affective labor, such as cooking, cleaning, and childrearing.

Her gender is also a necessary result of her location within Lagos, Nigeria, a metropolitan hub within the periphery, exemplifies the promise and peril of capitalist modernity. An example of what the city can do for a young person with potential is offered through Ifemelu's paternal relative, Uju. Early in *Americanah*, we learn that Uju was brought to Lagos, not out of "obligation" but because Ifemelu's father considered Uju to be "too clever to waste away in that backwater [of the village]" (*Americanah* 64). From Lagos, Uju attended the University of Ibadan, a respected university which still enjoys international recognition and graduated from its medical program (64, 55). But while other paternal relatives, who were "brought to Lagos to

learn a trade or go to school or look for a job," legitimize the idea that Lagos is modernity's opportunity nexus (64), Uju's trajectory in Lagos depicts the opportunity and limitations within the peripheral metropolis of a neo-liberal nation-state. For, despite her qualifications as a medical doctor, she must contend with the "parched wasteland of joblessness" if she wants to accomplish her "drea[m] of owning a private clinic" (55). This "wasteland of joblessness" is a creation of the neo-liberal nation-state which operates under a fiscal plan which does not support a healthcare infrastructure which would serve the people who are desperately in want and need of qualified doctors and the doctors and nurses who are desperately in want and need of employment. Thus, despite the fact that the city offers greater potential for economic success and achievement than other population configurations in Nigeria and West Africa, in the neo-liberal state, the city is unable to satisfy the promises of modernity. In the case of Uju, she requires (access to) capital (i.e., commodity or currency to use as a bribe) or powerful patrons if she is to work as a doctor. In the words of the novel, she requires a miracle. Her "miracle" comes in the form of The General who makes a hospital create a job for her (55). The General is one of the opportunities of the city. As his mistress, Uju is able to access employment, housing in a new and exclusive development, and currency which she shares with relatives (55). If he is described as Uju's "mentor," then this is true if we understand him as teaching Uju (and those around her) about the mechanism for advancement in the metropolitan periphery (54-55).

In addition, Lagos is also a city that exemplifies combined and uneven development. [13] Drawing upon Leon Trotsky's writing on combined and uneven development, the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) describes combined and uneven development as "complex and differential temporalit[ies]" where in "episodes or eras [are] discontinuous from each other and heterogeneous within themselves" (10). Said differently, combined and uneven development describes a continually recreated social, civic, and labor-specific situation which are marked by the coterminous existence of capitalist forms of social relations alongside "archaic forms of economic life" and "pre-existing social and class relations" (11). In each local and national context, combined and uneven development takes on a unique form as it combines various ethnocultural cultures (i.e., Igbo and Yoruba), national cultures (i.e., Nigerian), transnational cultures (i.e., U.S. or British inflected Nigerian cultures), and historical cultures (i.e., traditional, religious, colonialist). Experiences of this combined and uneven development enters Ifemelu's life through her family. Though they do not happen to her directly, they are important to her because of their impact on her living situation. Her father's dismissal from his job at a federal agency provides one example. He is "fired for refusing to call his new boss Mummy":

> He came home earlier than usual, wracked with bitter disbelief, his termination letter in his hand, complaining about the absurdity of a grown man calling a grown woman Mummy because she had decided it was the best way to show

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[13] See the introduction for an extended explanation of the way I am using combined and uneven development.

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her respect: 'Twelve years of dedicated labor. It is unconscionable,' he said.

(*Americanah*, 46-47)

The clash of cultures—their untenable combination—is clear. Ifemelu's father is a "middle-brow civil servant" who understands his contribution to the workplace and its environment in terms of the interpersonal relationships of a post-industrial, capitalist system. His part of the system is to contribute "labor," and to follow the social guidelines which are generally impersonal. His new boss, however, demands respect through the address, "Mummy." Here, "Mummy" is not an personal and impersonal term. While it seems to refer to the natal mother, its import is beyond a biological link. Within Yoruba culture and language, which is dominant in Lagos, even amongst non-Yoruba people, the identity of "mother" has historically been esteemed and preferred to other identity types, including "wife."[14] This historical (or traditional) exaltation of the mother identity has been retained, despite the changes in social structures and relationship forms.[15] Both the historical and contemporary usage of "mother" includes the "public mother"[16] who is addressed as "mother" in various languages. Lorelle Semley observes that "[i]n the case of 'public mothers' in Yoruba societies, the local term for 'mother' often serves as part of the official title of women priests and royal ministers, and in the names of both 'witches' and divine or sacred women….

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[14] For an analysis of "mother" as a preferred identity among Yoruba and African women, see Oyèrónké Oyĕwùmí's "Family Bonds" which explains that "the most important ties within the family flow from the mother [….] It is not surprising, then, that the most important and enduring identity and name that African women claim for themselves is 'mother'" (1096).

[15] See Jane Guyer who finds that Yoruba women "set the primacy of parenthood over marriage" (231) in contemporary relationship forms that she calls "polyandrous motherhood."

[16] See also Ogunyemi's highly discursive "vernacular theory" which considers the various ways that "mother" functions as an identity and episteme in philosophy, cosmology, art/literature and social/political configurations (*African Wo/Man*, 1-74).

motherhood carries several extended and more public meanings" (601). As such, the address of mother/mummy does not simply replace "sir" or "ma'am" which are impersonal markers or cordiality. Instead, it extends from the impersonal to the personal. You needn't share a worldview or a patron/client relationship with "sir" or "ma'am" but with "Mummy" – "Mummy of life" and its other attendant phrases which "Mummy" implies, especially when given to your non-natal mother – the opposite is true. "Mummy" is invested with the cultural connotations of consanguineal association, deference, respect, and exaltation, all of which exceed the impersonal and "professional" relationship of work colleagues. Thus, when the new boss insists on being addressed as "Mummy," the term is not (only) infantilizing to Ifemelu's father but rather intimate. This is what Ifemelu's father rejects.

After being fired for his refusal to confer this honorific, Ifemelu's father changes. The novel tells us that he's dealt with his previous disappointments without bitterness. For instance, when he was unable to pursue university education because he had to financially support his siblings—a hegemonic behavior that Igbo culture requires of elder sons—he found other avenues of advancement. In Lagos, he continued to support various family members through contributions of currency, housing, food, and affective labor without complaint. Even after the economic downturn effects aspects of day-to-day life, he remained engaged in politics which reveals his investment in the concept of nation and citizenship. He retained his love of music as an artform and refused to turn to religion as a palliative. But after he is fired, this all changes. He becomes dejected, forlorn, and depressed. In Nigeria's contracted economic markets, he is unable to find another job and soon the family is in financial

difficulty as they are unable to pay their rent. The dignity that Ifemelu's father has attempted to preserve through his previous disappointments by his family situation and the national situation is finally mangled. The logic of interpersonal relationships in a government workplace does not grant him any respite from the material conditions effecting the country. He may be "correct," in his refusal to use a term which implies a deep respect and deference, a shared gnosis, willingness to seek group conciliation, and a cross-generational, communal intimacy when only a professional rapport and respect is needed, but that is little help to this family's situation. In short, as Ifemelu observes, "if given another chance, he would call his boss Mummy" (*Americanah* 48).

The novel provides other apt examples of combined and uneven development. Uju, for instance, is not paid a salary. There are at least two ways of reading this. In one way, we understand Uju to be caught in a Catch-22. She cannot be paid for a position "that does not officially exist even though [she] see[s] patients every day" (76). While this is unfortunate for Uju, we understand that Uju received the position because of The General, acting as her patron,[17] used his connections to have a position created for her, his mistress/client. The job fulfills the logic of the patron/client exchange. However, The General's power does not extend to the hospital's fiscal department. So while Uju has a position, she is not given a paycheck since the position does not officially exist. This illustrates the imperfect combination of contemporary labor policies with patron/client social relations which predate capitalism in some ways and emerge within the colonialist and postcolonial capitalist system in other ways. An additional way of reading Uju's situation is with the awareness that her

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[17] See chapter two where I explain patron/client relations in greater detail.

material condition is entirely separate from her work as a doctor. It is The General who provides for her completely, including her housing, car, driver, food, leisure money, and so on. Uju's work as a doctor is real but exists alongside mistress/client labor relations with The General. She does develop a sincere love for him, but her material circumstances occur because he sees her as a beautiful young woman and announces, "*I like you, I want to take care of you*" (56; italics in original). Thus, we cannot even read the General's material care in wholly affective terms since it predates any emotional relationship between them. Uju's material circumstances are unrelated to her professional or personal qualities and must be situated within a complex system of combined and uneven development in Nigeria's economic and social arenas.

Yet another example depicted in the novel is the general lack of salary/wage payment of employees within Nigeria. Like medical professionals and civil servants, university professors experience financial instability. The regular payment of salaries becomes infrequent and then habitually late.[18] With this awareness of the economy, we understand that money in Nigeria does not circulate through the education, healthcare, and civil service institutions which corporately extend the government from a centralized and removed position to a dynamic and effective position for citizens in the society.[19] Instead, the money circulates through Big Men, who serve as

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[18] The effect of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and military rule on the Nigerian university system has received considerable attention. For a succinct overview of the issue, see Attahiru Jega's "Nigerian Universities and Academic Staff under Military Rule" which historicizes the Nigerian university system and then links the deterioration to underfunding and the military government.
[19] The fact that Uju is a doctor is not incidental to the Nigerian situation. I have written about how the poor funding of the healthcare infrastructure has contributed to the "brain drain" of doctors from Nigeria and to the U.S. and Canada. See "A Nigerian Story: How Healthcare is the Offspring of Imperialism and Corruption" at: https://www.theelephant.info/features/2017/11/16/a-nigerian-story-how-healthcare-is-the-offspring-of-imperialism-and-corruption/. For a statistical analysis of this issue,

patrons to their families, in-laws, young women, friends, and vassals. The development of Nigeria's national resources—namely oil—is unable to create a new type of social development because the development does not change the material situation of the people. Instead, social development is contingent on the individual's relationship with the family and with patrons (who are usually extensions of family relationships or form family relationships as Uju does with The General). This is because social development requires currency in all respects. Currency is needed to enroll in educational institutions, to pursue visas and travel, to socialize with agemates and so on. In the peripheral metropole, there is no part of social development which is divorced from currency.

Taken altogether, Lagos a site of combined and uneven development. These examples of combined and uneven development all impact Ifemelu's life. Her father's job loss stresses the family and is at the forefront of their minds. The General's allowance to Uju provides the means for the family to pay their landlord. The nonpayment of university officials leads to the emigration of Ifemelu's friend to the U.S. Moreover, these examples are all recollected by Ifemelu in the first 100 pages in the book as she sits in Newark, New Jersey and thinks about the Lagos, Nigeria of her childhood. Their primary position within the novel implies their primacy for her bildung trajectory. It is this Lagos—Nigeria's economic center; an international trading post of commodity; the access point for powerful men; a site of combined and uneven development—which is part of Ifemelu's gendered identity construction. Thus,

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please see *Nigerian Medical School Graduates and the U.S. Physician Workforce* by Danette McKinley et al.

we can understand the pre-mature Ifemelu as a female adolescent *of the city*. Though

she lacks resources that would make *all* of its opportunities available to her, she is

resourced-moderate and has a legal and uncontested home with her natal family, an

education which is recognized by state and nation, and an economic foundation which

does not require her wage or affective labor.[20] Furthermore, Ifemelu has age-

appropriate and socially recognized and sanctioned relationships with family, friends,

and community. She is not the most beautiful, most intelligent, most resourced, or

most popular girl at school, but one of many appropriately positioned adolescent girls.

Her relationship with her parents is not the best or the worst but supportive and

tenuous as is typical for adolescence. Her gender construction does not fit into a pithy

label. It can most accurately be rendered through a description, such as: female,

heterosexual, resource-stable, middle class adjacent, Igbo-Lagosian-Nigerian. It is

from the "starting point" of adolescence then that Ifemelu develops.

Sexual Trauma in the Metropole

Ifemelu's next stage of development occurs during her early 20s. She initially

attends university in Nigeria with Obinze, her high school boyfriend. In Nigeria, the

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[20] Nigeria does not regulate housing, education, and child labor in the same way that countries in the Global North do. At times, the regulations are encoded in law but unenforced. At other times, the regulations are inadequate for the citizenry, due to population growth, demographic shifts, and, mostly to the lack of funding by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Like other neo-liberal nation-states, the central government is weak and in the power vacuum and inattention, entrepreneurial people organize to create housing and educational institutions. Though serving the basic needs of the people, these (infra)structures, buildings and businesses bear the risk of being unrecognized by the state and/or federal government. Specifically, the state or federal government could refuse to recognize a housing block and seize the land or destroy the building; similarly, the lack of recognition of a school could prevent matriculated students from enrolling in a Nigerian university. Because of these realities, Ifemelu's status as a person with legally recognized housing, enrolled at a state-recognized school cannot be taken for granted.

shift in the nation's economic circumstances becomes manifest in the university system. Due to the government's divestment from higher education, the salaries of university lecturers go unpaid and the investment in the university institution is reduced. The lecturers react by striking and the ever-increasing strikes halt Ifemelu's undergraduate education. She eventually takes the opportunity to become an international student in the U.S. The decision is motivated by the desire to complete her university education which will provide the opportunity to be economically competitive in Nigeria's workforce and to participate in upward mobility and ascend beyond her parent's socioeconomic class. In addition, by studying in the U.S., which is coded as "developed," Ifemelu can access the social upward mobility. This reality takes Ifemelu to America.

In the U.S., she must work in order to afford the university tuition, housing, food, and rent. However, her legal status as an international student excludes her from the workforce. The easiest solution to the problem of economic exclusion is to work with someone else's identification papers (155-158). This is an illegal but not uncommon practice among immigrants and international students. However, Ifemelu is not able to get a job, despite going on interviews, revising her resume, and reading books about getting a job. She is unable to identify the reason why she isn't hired. However, this situation first reveals the strong social network that Ifemelu has constructed. Obinze and her parents, share advice and moral support via letters and calls from Nigeria. And in the U.S., she is given advice by other African international students, her childhood friend, Ginika, and her aunt Uju (178). However, she is still unable to get a job. Writing about *Americanah* as a "neoliberal novel of migrancy,"

Sheri-Marie Harrison claims that Ifemelu is able to get interviews but unable to secure employment because she is "ignoran[t] of a variety of cultural codes that require her to perform or sublimate her foreignness situationally" (215). Ifemelu is not yet a keen observer or reader of "American tribalisms" and, according to Harrison, this lack of knowledge about the way that U.S. Americans "imagine her as a young black woman from an African country" prevents Ifemelu from playing a self-constructed role that might lead to a job (215). Harrison's insights are persuasive and also suggest the reason why Ifemelu's social network cannot help her construct a persona for the interviews. They consist of Nigerians in Nigeria or African immigrants in the U.S. With the exception of Ginika who immigrated as an adolescent and has cultivated a dual U.S. American persona in Ifemelu's eyes (*Americanah* 152), their situational or structural position within the U.S. make them unable to provide the insight about cultural codes and performance that Ifemelu needs.

Despite the interview preparation, guidance, and moral support, the financial pressure creates anxiety which influences Ifemelu's decision making and leads to traumatic events. Before her migration to the U.S., the previous socioeconomic and political crises have not destabilized Ifemelu's bildung trajectory as a female adolescent of the city. It had led to the immigration of friends and relatives (e.g., Ginika and Uju), to her father's unemployment, her mother's regression into religiosity, and to the obstruction of higher education for hundreds of thousands of her Nigerian peers, including Obinze. Though Ifemelu was effected as well, she was largely unscarred. Ifemelu's dependence on her support network, her worldview, and her developmental trajectory remained stable. But, ironically, in the economic core of

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the U.S., Ifemelu's financial situation creates the context for sexual trauma. As I stated in the introduction, trauma is not the bildungsheld's only entry point to adulthood. Rather, any crisis or obstacle can mark the point when the bildungsheld's process of development and formation is initiated or altered from its initial trajectory. Crisis is an event which marks the end of childhood, or the period when security of the natal home, the authority of parents and the pretense in the parents' ability to protect the child/adolescent ends. Before the trauma, Ifemelu's transition to the United States with a legal visa seemed to accelerate her mobility through socioeconomic levels and through geographic space and zones; from a resource-secure, adolescent of the city in the peripheral metropole to a resource-secure, adult in the metropole of the Global North. It is trauma which disrupts this developmental trajectory, and thus, it is from the point of trauma that Ifemelu enters adulthood and develops.

Rather than a single traumatic event, Ifemelu's bildung disruption begins as she experiences the reality of being an international student from Nigeria. This reality can be counted—in money. Her buying power has decreased (as she moves from Nigerian naira to U.S. dollar) and her potential to earn money has decreased since she is legally excluded from working with her student visa. In America, her access to resources, including housing, food, and money is vulnerable. During this time, Ifemelu narrates her growing awareness and concern. She notes:

Each day, there seemed to be a letter for her on the kitchen table, and inside the envelope was a tuition bill, and words printed in capital letters: YOUR RECORD WILL BE FROZEN UNLESS PAYMENT IS RECEIVED BY THE

DATE AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS NOTICE. (*Americanah* 161; emphasis in

original)

Both the language and form of the novel make Ifemelu's anxiety clear. The words

"[e]ach day" tell us how frequently she was confronted by the threat of losing access

to the educational opportunity, and the presence in the kitchen table tell us that this

worry has entered her domestic space, and the bolded sentence, which communicates

urgency, further emphasizes the time constraint and seriousness of the threat. In fact,

"[i]t was the boldness of the capital letters more than the words that frightened her"

(161) and she physically reacts with "a tight, suffocating pressure rising inside her

chest" (175). The novel connects her resource instability to her anxiety and mental

state.

In addition, the worry alters her perception of American college students. Her

previous comparisons have been to their detriment: the classes are easy, the scores are

inflated, the "participation" is useless talking, the content includes films and is not

critical enough. But now Ifemelu perceives the American college students in terms of

the opportunities that their citizenship provides:

Sometimes after classes, she would sit on a bench in the quad and watch the

students walking past the large gray sculpture in the middle; they all seemed to

have their lives in the shape that they wanted, they could have jobs if they

wanted to have jobs, and above them, small flags fluttered serenely from

lampposts. (165-166)

In this scene, Ifemelu is the static entity watching the dynamic entities ("walking

past") and imagining their futures as determined. That determined vocational outcome

is subtly melded with the image of the "small flags," which are flags of the United States of America. From this brief scene, we can understand that Ifemelu has connected the *formation* of the American students' lives "in the shape that they wan[t]" with access to a vocation. At this point in the novel, we understand that a "job" is not an abstract concept but connected to the material sustenance of the American students. We know this because Ifemelu is experiencing material lack in the form of money to pay for her education, food, housing, and clothing. The formation of the American students' lives is also synchronized with the flags as an image of citizenship. For Ifemelu, the formation, or bildung, that the American students have the opportunity to experience then is different from her own. She is a bildungsheld reflecting on the bildung of others.

As the job search becomes invested with more anxiety, due to financial need, Ifemelu notices ads that are different than the ones she noted before. She responds to an ad for "*Female personal assistant for busy sports coach in Ardmore, communications and interpersonal skills required*" (176; emphasis in original). When she arrives for the interview at the man's house, she finds a man who has "something venal about his thin-lipped-face," a man for whom "the air … of corruption was familiar" (176). He explains that the "office work" position was filled by another female student who goes to Bryn Mawr but that another position is open. This position is to "help [him] to relax" and it pays $100 a day. When Ifemelu asks for details about the position he says,

Look, you're not a kid…I work so hard I can't sleep. I can't relax. I don't do drugs so I figured I need help to relax. You can give me a massage, help me

relax, you know. I had somebody doing it before, but she's just moved to

Pittsburgh. It's a great gig, at least she thought so. Helped her with a lot of her

college debt. (177)

Ifemelu is not willing to allow herself to fully understand the position the man is explaining at this point. Instead, she uses her affective response to his pacing, his features, his manner of speaking and general composure to decide that she will not take the position. She leaves. However, her financial issues continue, and she is not offered a job despite continuing to interview. At this point, the narrative is a myopic presentation of Ifemelu's job search and anxiety. When Ifemelu finally must face a month without the rent money, she notices jobs which require sex labor. It is amid the newspapers that are "strewn" across her floor, with work advertisements "circled in ink" that the word "ESCORTS caught her eye" (186). Ginika tells her to dismiss the job and explains it in moral and economic terms: escorting is prostitution—a statement which implies moral judgement—and most of the money is paid to the agency not the (sex) laborer (186).

However, Ifemelu's circumstances have led her beyond the types of moral and economic considerations that Ginika raises. Her financial crisis worsens and culminates with her roommates demanding rent money, her food supply declining, her financial dependency on Ginika for groceries increasing, and a generalized anxiety about all aspects of her life (187). Finally, she decides to return to the man who wants to pay to "relax." According to Harrison, Ifemelu's decision to agree to this job is a direct result of Ifemelu's citizenship, capital, and race (216). The man seems to imply "a racialized and perhaps classed division of labor between the Nigerian immigrant

and the women's liberal arts college attendee" when he explains that the "office work" job has been filled by a student at Bryn Mawr (216). But the wider frame is the U.S. economic and governmental system which positions international students as consumers and excludes them from employment opportunities and protections. Though he does not reference the international context specifically, the man speaks directly to the economic pressures of university study when he mentions that the previous person who held the position was "[h]elped… with a lot of her college debt" (*Americanah* 177).

For her part, Ifemelu tries to be proactive and to construct the most preferable type of labor situation possible. She is aware that something sexual will occur. She imagines the man as a "white man" who enjoys various fetishes for sexual pleasure and plans to declare her boundaries: "If you expect sex, then I can't help you" (*Americanah* 188). In other words, Ifemelu is aware that she will do something for the man's sexual pleasure but does not want to engage in sexual pleasure, sexual intercourse or mutual sexual exchange. Her decision is nuanced but not uncommon. She does not want to participate in sex labor with her genitals. However, the sexual labor is much different than she imagined. Though she does declare her boundaries, the man is undeterred and unsurprised. Ifemelu recognizes that "[t]he power balance was tilted in his favor, had been tilted in his favor since she walked into his house" (189). She thinks about leaving and her discomfort leads her to think about the possibility that she is being locked in the house and the possibility that the man is armed. But this is unproven. What the man has is "complete assuredness" and Ifemelu feels "defeated" and "already tainted" even before the sex act (189). After she

participates in the sex act which seems to involve the mutual stimulation of genitals, Ifemelu immediately exhibits the signs of trauma. She "felt like a small ball, adrift and alone…so insignificant, rattling around emptily" (190). Back in her apartment, she scalds herself with water in an effort to feel clean, she rejects the clothes she wore as tainted and is filled with self-loathing (190). In addition, her behavior with others shifts dramatically as well. She immediately isolates by refusing to speak, write, or e-mail her close friends and family, including Uju, Obinze, Ginika, and her parents.

Thus, the sexualized labor is the cumulation of Ifemelu's traumatic period. The sexual trauma functions in four ways. First, it prompts Ifemelu's immediate descent into depression, which includes suicidal thoughts. Depression, suicide and mental illness is then treated as a latent theme throughout the novel. (It is not deeply explored but the differences in Nigerian and American/British conception of and reaction to mental illness is repeatedly noted.) Second, it prompts Ifemelu to abruptly stop communicating with Obinze. Though Ifemelu initially rejects all communication, she eventually reestablishes communication with her family and friends' network, though she laments her inability to "form the sentences to tell her story" of sexual trauma (195). The exception is Obinze who she refuses to communicate with despite his repeated calls, letters, e-mails, and messages sent through family and friends. This abrupt end to their relationship forms a significant plotline through the novel. The occasion of the story is actually Ifemelu's decision to reestablish communication with Obinze, which she does in anticipation of seeing him upon her return to Lagos. The return is then forestalled for 500 pages as the retrospective, fifteen-year, bildung is

narrated and the import of their separation is provided in order to make meaty substance of their reunion.

Third, trauma functions to localize the economic crisis on Ifemelu's body. Her body becomes a site of sexual exploitation. She has gone to his house without coercion, but she then realizes that she "[does] not want to be here, [does] not want his active finger between her legs, [does] not want his sigh-moans in her ear, and yet she fe[els] her body rousing to a sickening wetness" (*Americanah* 189). Because she recognizes that the man did not use physical or psychological coercion, it becomes clear that Ifemelu's *economic situation was the coercion* that led her back to the man's house and prompted her participation. This is a complex formulation. The careful narration does not eliminate indeterminacy, instead it implicitly begs the question of what constitutes compulsion. Is it material lack, the threat of material lack, food scarcity, the threat of eviction, and/or the loss of self-regard? Ifemelu experiences all of these things. In her thorough and materialist analysis of Ifemelu's sexual labor and trauma, Harrison explores the question of Ifemelu's labor and "choice" by returning to Marx. She writes:

> It is tempting here… to point to the famous passage in Marx's first volume of *Capital* in which he exposes the idea that the worker and the capitalist approach each other as equal traders 'constrained only by their own free will' who 'exchange equivalent for equivalent' as in fact the primal scene of inequality under capital: 'He, who before was the money-owner, now strides in front as capitalist; the possessor of labor power follows as his labourer. The one with an air of importance, smirking, intent on business; the other, timid

and holding back, like one who is bringing his own hide to market and has

nothing to expect but—a hiding.' (Harrison 216-217; Marx qtd. in Harrison)

Harrison's apt citation of Marx provides a clear explanation of how Ifemelu is

positioned as an international student in relation to labor. Once the link is established

between material conditions and decision making, it is easy to understand Ifemelu as

representative of many others who experience such compulsion. Through this, Ifemelu

becomes representative of raced, gendered, resource-vulnerable, non-citizens in the

metropole and that widens the allegorical possibilities of the novel. It is after this point

of recognizing the context of Ifemelu's trauma and the allegorical potential of her

character that we can consider her bildung and the formation of her subjectivity at the

conclusion of the novel, and this will be the focus on the last section of the chapter.

Sexual Trauma in the Periphery

The fourth function of trauma in the novel is to mimetically represent the conditions in

Nigeria. Ifemelu's experience of sexual labor and sexual trauma in the United States

functions mimetically to represent Nigerian and West African females whose

sexuality, sexual labor and/or sexual trauma are treated as a symbol of moral

degradation and personal choice. These three – sexuality or sexual practice, sexual

labor, sexual trauma – are in no way equivalent, but the mimetic representation

comments on all three and on their conflation in popular literature and discourse in

West Africa.[21] To explicate the argument here, we must begin with definitions.

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[21] My analysis excludes prostitution which is a professional relationship between the client and the
service renderer. A consideration of prostitution must account for the professionalization of the
behavior, the working conditions, and laws. For a consideration of the literary deployment of female

Mimesis operates in more than one way. In her consideration of mimesis as a technique in African women's fiction, Susan Andrade distinguishes mimesis in this way:

> At a second level…mimesis consists of an act of representation rather than reflection, a position that acknowledges the mediation that always inserts itself between art and object and thereby allows for mediation. […] At the third level, mimesis moves still further away from the question of accuracy…. [and] we perceive mimesis as the art of giving form, to the very process of representation itself. […] Once something has been represented in words…, the world has been altered or transformed, for now the object represented exists alongside the representation, the object, and some form of itself that is also not itself. (*The Nation Writ Small*, 17)

Working with Andrade's formulation, Ifemelu's sexual labor and trauma "represent[s]" the situation of a raced, marginalized, (im)migrant in the United States.

In addition, Ifemelu also "represent[s]" the contemporary situation of a resource-vulnerable female in the West African polity. The prevalence of transactional sex at Nigerian universities has long been a topic of controversy and national discussion.[22] In news literature, various forms of sexual intercourse and exchange,

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prostitution as trope in African literature authored by men, see Stratton (44-54) who argues that "[in men's fiction] prostitution is not related to the female social condition in patriarchal societies. Rather it is a metaphor for men's degradation under some non-preferred socio-political system – a metaphor which encodes women as agents of moral corruption, as sources of moral contamination in society…" (53). For a consideration of the literary deployment of female prostitution as trope in African literature authored by women, see Stratton (102-103).

[22] Scholarly attention to the sexual practice of Nigerian university students is not lacking. One such article is Daniel Jordan Smith's "'These Girls Today Na War-O': Premarital Sexuality and Modern Identity in Southeastern Nigeria" which includes a qualitative study of sexual behaviors of students at

including transactional sex motivated by subsistence, transactional sex motivated by consumption, and prostitution are subsumed under the category of "prostitution." The female participants are then written about in terms of their greed, materialism, moral decadence and contemptibility. In *Vanguard* [Nigeria], an investigative article, "Sex in the city: The shame of campus prostitution," claims to "explor[e] the lives [of] students in our tertiary institutions who now appear more remarkable in their runs for men and money than their primary purpose of acquiring quality education." The article is largely narrative and includes the first-person interviews of several female undergraduates. While it does contain common themes – inability to afford university tuition, widowed mothers, influence and coercion of associates, lack of alternative employment opportunities and poverty – it continually disregards and deemphasizes poverty as a factor in the behavior of the undergraduates. In so doing, the article continually links the undergraduates to material consumption through its reiteration of "posh girls" and "aristos."[23]

Similarly, in "Prostitution in Nigerian University Campuses (Part I)," columnist Alfred O. Uzokwe writes that "[o]ur female undergraduates are not only exposing themselves to danger, they are also mortgaging their future on the altar of quick money and instant sensual gratification." Uzokwe extends the emphasis on the female undergraduates' moral degradation and chastises them for "[t]aking advantage

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Abia State University. However, my point in this section is about the non-scholarly representation of female university students.

[23] The nomenclature, "aristos" is used in Nigeria to refer to several identity types including the very wealthy, those who display consumptive wealth, and the women who socialize with these "aristo" men, either for social status, professional prostitution or other forms of transactions sex. The nomenclature is another way that wealth and materialism is coded into the representation of transactional sex behavior.

of the freedom bestowed on them as 'adults'." He recommends the supervision and surveillance of the "girls" by university administrators, their parents, family members, and members of the public. He also links technology and national infrastructure to the "prostitution" behavior of the "girls." He writes:

> I do not understand why a young girl would be carrying more than one cell phone unless she is involved in something illicit or sinister. […] At this juncture, let me state, as forcefully as possible, that it is the responsibility of parents to pay closer attention to what their children are doing. They should seek to know how many cell phones their children carry and why. As for the reader, my admonition is simple: when next you visit Nigeria and see a young female relative carrying multiple cell phones, you just might be doing a great service to the parents of the girl by alerting them to that and emphasizing the need to delve deep into the matter.

I quote Uzokwe at length because of what his sentiment underscores which is a disregard for material conditions (i.e. national communication infrastructure) and an emphasis on essence (i.e. morality). Specifically, Uzokwe emphasizes the ability of cellular technology and communication infrastructure to facilitate prostitution and/or transactional sex. However, he does this to such an extent that he ignores why Nigerians carry more than one cell phone. While the reader of the article, who Uzokwe imagines to be based outside of Nigeria may not recall, many Nigerians living in Nigeria during the early 2000s will attest to carrying more than one cell phone if they could economically afford to do so. This was common because the cellular grind was inconsistent and, at times, the cellular grind of major carriers, such

as MTN, would be shut down for the region. People then would carry two cell phones, each with a SIM card from a different carrier, in order to guarantee access to communication, not explicitly for participation in extralegal industries. While the "girls" he observes with "three" cellphones may be involved in illicit activities or may have earned the money to buy the cell phones, SIM cards, or "airtime" through sexual labor of some kind, the cell phones are not evidence of this, but evidence of Nigeria's poor communication infrastructure.

In a follow-up column, "Prostitution in Nigerian University Campuses (Part II)," Uzokwe does acknowledge various factors which influence the "prostitution" behavior of undergraduates. They include parental negligence, insufficient material support, influence of peer groups and rich men, the struggling Nigerian economy, poor political leadership, and lastly society's glorification of wealth "by any means." While this article serves as a corrective, it is the Part I that is continually quoted, even by scholars based in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa.[24] This indicates that while the scholarly representation of transactional sex has become more nuanced and sensitive to historical factors and economic realities, the popular (meaning, nonscholarly) representation of transactional sex, particularly in "developing" countries, has

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[24] See Bamgbose and Wusu for examples of scholarly articles which cite Uzokwe. Bamgbose, a law professor, creates an article which is largely narrative and reproduces the conflation of sexual relationships, behaviors and conditions (i.e. professional prostitution, forced slavery, transactional sex), socioeconomic statuses (i.e. abject poverty (homelessness and starvation), poverty, working poor etc.), and subjects (i.e. children, adolescents, women). Wusu's paper includes a qualitative study but its conclusion emphasizes morality (which is not investigated in the study) alongside other recommendations which are substantiated by empirical data. While I do not suggest that they are representative of all scholarship on prostitution and transactional sex in Nigeria/West Africa, it is important to note that scholarship produced in Nigeria reproduces some of the same problems as news literature and scholarship produced in the Global North.

continued to conflate the behaviors, the causes, effects, and more to the point, to represent the female participants as objects of pity or contemptibility.

Thus, the inclusion of transactional sex and sexual trauma in the plot and discourse of the novel serves as a corrective to these popular representations. Ifemelu, rather than being a "child" or "girl" who is abusing and misusing the "freedom bestowed on [her] as an 'adult,'" is intelligent, resilient, humorous, ambitious, and self-respecting young person. She is also in the phase of young adulthood where modern standards require her to pursue her life goals without the emotional companionship of an age group, the guidance of a mentor, and the security of her natal family. She is resource-vulnerable and facing a fraught, dangerous and isolating decision. As a reluctant participant who is traumatized by the sexual exchange, Ifemelu differs from one-dimensional representation of female undergraduates who participate in transactional sex.

The presence of a reading public that can interpret Ifemelu's sexual trauma within the African polity is not taken for granted here. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie also considered how readers in Nigeria receive her novels. In her lauded TED Talk, "The Danger of a Single Story," Adichie recalled this:

> Shortly after [the publication of] my first novel I went to a TV station in Lagos to do an interview. And a woman who worked there as a messenger came up to me and said, 'I really liked your novel. I didn't like the ending. Now you must write a sequel, and this is what will happen ...' And she went on to tell me what to write in the sequel. Now I was not only charmed, I was very moved. Here was a woman, part of the ordinary masses of Nigerians, who were not

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supposed to be readers. She had not only read the book, but she had taken

ownership of it and felt justified in telling me what to write in the sequel.

(14:46-15:19 minute)

This exchange reveals the reading public's investment in her narratives and their

agency is extending and interpreting them. Similarly, in *Ghanaian Popular Fiction*,

Stephanie Newell has considered how fiction – particularly novels which borrow from

or "quote" European-language texts and conventions – function in the social context.

Though Newell's study centers Ghanaian "popular" and "local" novels, analogous to

Onitsha Market Literature, her claims are noteworthy here, because her study

emphasizes a West African reading public which contains disparate "preconstituted

reading communities" (44) which are attuned to the interpretative "meaning-making"

process (29). In both examples, the readers of the Anglophone African literature are

readers within the African nation-state, not readers of "world literature" or scholars in

the Global North. It is within this reading public that the mimetic representation

becomes more textured and the third type (articulate by Andrade earlier in the chapter)

is possible. At this point, it becomes the third type of mimesis, such that my scholarly

interpretation of the Ifemelu's sexual exploitation recognizes that it gives form to the

sexual exploitation in the Nigerian context. Furthermore, the novel "exists alongside

the …object" that was represented but it not the object (Andrade *Nation* 17).

Through the variegated and complementary mimetic interpretations of

Ifemelu's sexual trauma, the novel enacts a consanguineal praxis. It is consanguineal

because it produces knowledge which refers to the historical and economic context.

The novel—like the blog that Ifemelu will later start—does not know its reader but

goes into the world volunteering association with any- and everyone. This is a consanguineal orientation. Though inanimate, the novel participates in the social reality. In giving Ifemelu a national form—by writing her into nation's institutions— and then delineating the struggles created by race, gender, and citizenship, *Americanah* writes a somewhat disruptive upward mobility trajectory.

Privatized Happiness and an Ideal Female Subjectivity

As I have explained, the sexual labor and trauma open up the novel as an allegory for multiple subjectivities within the U.S. and within Nigeria. In addition, they disrupt Ifemelu's bildung trajectory. Yet, despite the acute and immediate impact of the exploitative event, Ifemelu does cope. Her sexual trauma creates the context for her adult development and individuation, but she does not allow the trauma to define all aspects of her life. Instead, she "bounds" the trauma. According to Zoe Norridge, "bound[ing] trauma" is a technique which restricts the continual circulation and referentiality of the traumatic event (*Perceiving* 190-200). Ifemelu's coping strategy can be described this way, since sexual labor and trauma are removed from the narrative focus and only reemerge when she thinks about Obinze.

As she moves through her young adulthood in the U.S., Ifemelu's formation process is not dynamic. It is not the maturation of a personal philosophy or understanding of the world. It is not the formation of an American/American-immigrant identity. It is neither the development of the novice or acolyte into an adult identity invested in a vocation nor is it a kunstlerroman. The blog is a creative practice, but it doesn't chart Ifemelu's development with sustained interiority. It

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doesn't communicate significant change or growth but serves as an ethnography of sorts. As Gĩchingiri Ndĩgĩrĩgĩ explains in "'Reverse Appropriations' & Transplantation in *Americanah*," Ifemelu "reverses the term of ethnographic collecting" and becomes the anthropologist who writes what the "native" speaks and holds it up for analyses (202). The blog prompts questions about Ifemelu's privilege in existing (and writing) as a non-American black person and her ideological commitment (Ndĩgĩrĩgĩ 206; Androne 240). Here, I use "ideological commitment" to refer to beliefs that form a coherent political, social, and personal ethos. Ifemelu's commitment is questioned several times during her ascendancy in the U.S. and it is never fully resolved. Perhaps, the only resolution is Ifemelu's decision to position herself outside of the U.S. racial economy as much as possible. Whatever the case, while "blogging [functions] as a hybrid form that brings together storytelling, reportage, and emotional value" (Guarracino 14), it is not a creative writing practice that reveals Ifemelu's depths. Rather than develop in ways which create a dramatically different subjectivity or subject position, in the U.S. years, she maintains most of her opinions and ways of thinking that she had when she immigrated and serves as the reader's stable guide through various settings in the text.

Ultimately, her development into a mature self takes place in Nigeria and it centers her body and the formation of a female subjectivity. Perhaps we should not be surprised that the body, the site of the traumatic event which destabilized Ifemelu, is also the site of identity reclamation, for it is through an erotic method of corporeal ownership and an active heterosexual sexuality that Ifemelu recovers and forms into an individuated, bourgeois subject.

Ifemelu's milestones occur concurrently with her recovery from sexual trauma, but the milestones are not framed as the cause. The first milestone is Ifemelu's first job in America. Ifemelu gets her first job as a babysitter for a wealthy family, and this alleviates her financial issues (*Americanah* 196). At this point, her avoidance of Obinze is self-conscious and emotionally fraught. Through this job, she forms a relationship with Curt, a handsome, wealthy, white man. Though critics have attempted to elevate the relationship as an experience of acculturation, Ifemelu enjoys a situation of privilege which requires little intellectual, emotional or psychic growth. Curt is an instrument which makes experiences like travel, the observation of resource-abundant white people, the observation of white privilege, and safe sexual practice possible. But her erotic method is functionally masturbatory, since he doesn't exist in any way that is specific or important.

After Ifemelu ends her relationship with Curt, she forms a relationship with Blaine, a Black American professor at Yale. At this point, it is easy to accept that this relationship is also a vehicle for Ifemelu's observation of novel American scenes. Whereas Curt provided an invitation to wealthy white people, Blaine is her entry into the ivory halls of liberal discourse which is so self-regarding that a satirical reading is possible in certain instances. Moreover, just as Curt made it possible for Ifemelu to observe and critique American discourses of white universality, Blaine makes it possible for Ifemelu to observe and critique the Black American middle class and "liberals."

In time, Ifemelu's blog allows her to attain financial success and social stability in the U.S. From this position of success, she decides to return to Lagos.

When Ifemelu returns, she finds that many of the economic issues have not been resolved. She now has several self-assigned initiatives: find an occupation, form a social network, and speak honestly with Obinze. She pursues them all, but the novel resolves itself with only two potential successes: she has started a new Blog and she has reunited with Obinze. I want to consider how the resolution of Ifemelu's desire to reconnect with Obinze creates an ideal (West) African female subjectivity.

Upon her return, Ifemelu and Obinze reestablish communication and eventually see each other. After the initial meeting, their relationship progresses quickly. Soon, Obinze confronts her about her abrupt silence which deeply hurt him. Ifemelu shares her past trauma. This emotional intimacy leads to sexual intimacy and a relationship. After their relationship has transitioned to emotional and physical intimacy, Ifemelu is overwhelmed by her feelings. Her body is the site of her emotions as "she felt fully alive, her heart beat faster" and her body reacts to his presence as she "laugh[s]," "cross[es]her legs," and "sway[s] her hips" (553). Ifemelu is "aware" of herself and enjoys the relationship. The love/feelings are liberating and disorienting (in a positive way). They provoke a keen awareness and appreciation of her corporeality. Her awareness also leads to comparison with the normative. She notes the "cliché" of experience despite her continual acceptance of it as a daily "gift" that Obinze constitutes with the promise of his arrival. Another comparison is with herself "as a teenager" (553). She is unsure of the similarities between the love/feelings experienced by the teenaged-self and the adult-self. Perhaps, this is because jealousy is endemic of her adult love. After Obinze has declared his love, Ifemelu is "still…jealous of those women whom he had loved even if fleetingly, those women

who had carved space in his thoughts" and "of the women who liked him, imagining how much attention he got here in Lagos, good-looking as he was, and now also wealthy" (553).

As the passage suggests, the origin of her jealousy is not Obinze's wife, marital relationship or family, though she is jealous of those aspects too. Ifemelu's jealousy is much more exaggerated since it is the "jealousy of her imagination" which creates Obinze's relationship potential with all other women, and also his ability to gain admiration in Lagos (554). Jealousy becomes the antisocial companion of her love/feelings. Obinze's wife is not the origin of the jealousy, rather it is her desire to possess him that inspires it. Ifemelu does not possess an exclusive relationship claim over her lover and this is what creates relationship problems and manifests itself into emotional outbursts, quarrels and mood swings. There is indignity in this lack of possession. Ifemelu attempts to maintain her feelings of autonomy and self-respect when she says, "I'm never going to ask you for anything. I'm a grown woman and I knew your situation when I got into this" (556). Obinze responds by expressing his hurt and then acknowledging, "I know it's the only way you can feel a little dignity in this" (556). Throughout the novel, Ifemelu and Obinze have had different economic situations. As adolescents, Ifemelu's socioeconomic position was on the lower cusp of the middle class and Obinze's was firmly within the middle class. As adults, Obinze is a one of the newly rich men that inspire the envy of Lagosians. Having monetized and sold a successful blog, Ifemelu is somewhere between the middle-middle and upper-middle class. She can support herself in a Lagos but acknowledges that is "so expensive" (530). This difference in class positions and income is worth noting,

because it is implicitly acknowledged in Ifemelu's declaration, "I'm never going to ask you for anything." Obinze know this and it is why he refers to her maintaining her dignity. Both of them would find a baldly transactional affair to be undignified. Despite this civil exchange, they end their affair at Ifemelu's insistence after this.

Though Ifemelu is constructed as an extra-ordinary character, it is worth considering this affair in the context of other characters and Lagos more generally. This will allow us to understand how the novel constructs her subjectivity as an "ideal." In the other characters, we see frequent evidence that polygynous relationships are not socially taboo. One significant instance is Ifemelu's aunt Uju who is the favorite mistress of a Big Man, The General. She is known to his family and though they never marry, she styles herself as a "second wife" after he dies. Another character, Ranyinudo, a secondary school friend of Ifemelu and Obinze, also dates married men. But as these characters' relationships indicate, polygynous marriages/relationships are not necessarily liberating or progressive in and of themselves. On the contrary, the polygynous relationships in the novel are often formed due to the unequal stratification of incomes and unequal access to employment and resources. In aunt Uju's case, she was wooed by an older man who promised to use his influence to find her a job which she is already qualified for (54-55). The lack of employment opportunities places her in economic and material vulnerability which he was then able to assuage, but only because he works for the federal government which is not developing resources, industry, or manufacturing in accordance with the needs of the people. As this example shows, polygynous marriages/relationships can be the result of the economic stratification between rich and poor, the different

employment opportunities available to different genders and ethnic groups, and any number other of factors. Polygynous marriages/relationships can also facilitate economic, emotional, and mental abuse and neglect of women, as can other marital and relationship formations.

However, the point is that polygynous relationships are not taboo in the strictest sense. My analysis also calls for a recognition that the love/feelings that validate Obinze and Ifemelu's behavior is logical within many contexts. Despite the diversity of socioeconomic and cultural variety in the Global North, the belief that love/feelings authorize marriage, the belief in "love matches" and the belief in the exclusive, romantic possession of partners is hegemonic, at least in literary fiction. This belief (or rather the group of beliefs which implicate each other) does not enjoy the same hegemonic power or "logic" in the African context. Instead, its engagement is stratified along socioeconomic lines. For instance, amongst the Nigerian middle class, these ideas are also hegemonic. So in one way, it is possible to consider that Ifemelu and Obinze are middle class Nigerians who are recreated in the image of the middle-class constituents of the Global North and inculcated with their values. It is worth considering that Ifemelu is attempting, not only to socialize into Nigerian society but to domesticate American ideals within the peripheral metropolis of Lagos. Considering this, it is clear that Ifemelu's formation and development in America has influenced her self-constructed subjectivity. Yet, the authorizing power of love is a powerful idea amongst many classes of people in Nigeria and West Africa.[25] Even if

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[25] For example, Daniel Jordan Smith's ethnographic work on Igbo people in southeastern Nigeria has explored the adoption of romantic, companionate love as a prerequisite to marriage. See Smith's "'These Girls Na War-O'" which addresses young adult university students specifically and/or *To Be A*

Ifemelu's valuation of love/feelings and sexual/intimate relationships are largely influenced by her class position, they are also coincident with the way young Nigerians associate romantic love and self-selected companions with modernity (Smith, "These Girls," 100). Thus, Ifemelu's class affiliation is not the only thing that creates her investment in love/feelings.

Moreover, Ifemelu's rejection of the Lagosian men – other potential partners who are unmarried and actively pursuing her – is even more interesting because it emphasizes her deep investment in her love/feelings and their ability to authorize Obinze as her legitimate partner. If we consider that many people would agree with the statement that "many of us didn't marry the [wo]man we truly loved. We married the [wo]man that was around when we were ready to marry" (*Americanah* 582; my brackets) then we can fully appreciate how invested Ifemelu is in her love/feelings and her personal choice. It is an investment that is reciprocated by Obinze who eventually declares his intention to form an exclusive relationship with her. This final reunion of the pair is what concludes the novel.

Ultimately, Ifemelu has an orientation towards privatized happiness. However, as I explained in the introduction this does not mean she is indifferent to Nigeria as a symbolic or actual space. In fact, her move from the US to Nigeria shows her

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Man is Not a One Day Job which focuses on masculinity and adult men. The trend that Smith observes contrasts with mid-to-late twentieth century. During that time Molara Ogundipe-Leslie noted that in many places on the African continent "personal sexual love relations were considered secondary to the effective exploitation of the material reality of society and to the spiritual and physical continuity of the life of the group. We may recall that this was also the case in Europe before the rise of capitalism and the glorification of the individual and his emotions. Romantic love and money are still not always coincident in certain social classes in Euro-America" (53-54).

affiliation. Despite this, the narrative resolution emphasizes the romantic ideal over the creative labor. I characterize creative and intellectual labor as consanguineal because it is public facing. It serves an undisclosed community. It entertains, engages, and critiques. The undisclosed community is faceless but not hidden. They respond in online venues and in person at talks. Ifemelu's success through this labor and the acknowledgement of the community is what led to her Princeton fellowship and afforded her a relocation to Nigeria. In other words, it has been a prominent aspect of her bildung. If this is true, what does the narrative's emphasis on the Obinze relationship reveal? In my opinion, it emphasizes Ifemelu's subjectivity, as in the quality of feelings, her construction of herself, and the performance of the self. This subjective orientation toward a monogamous, romantic union contrasts with most of the other female characters. The decisions of her aunt Uju, her friend Ranyinudo, and a plethora of minor female characters reveal that transactional sexual relationships pervade Lagos. The emphasis on the "transaction" is not consistent. Some of the relationships are primarily service exchanges, whereas others start as or become love relationships. Because of the materiality of sex in Nigeria and elsewhere, it is difficult to generalize.

But rather than participate in any sort of mistress-married man relationship, Ifemelu halts the affair with Obinze. In doing so, she takes away the potential for a transaction. And this is the important part. She gives up something she wants—a relationship with Obinze—to be someone she wants to be. That person is not a mistress. That person has participated in a sexual transaction (in very young adulthood) and later enjoyed benefits afforded by a wealthy partner, Curt. But the

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Ifemelu at the end of the novel is not a mistress and no longer transactional. It may seem like a curious point to make about the relationship but their position within Lagos leads to it. Lagos as I have described is the financial capital of Nigeria. It is, therefore, the place where transactions are made. In returning to Lagos anew, as an Americanah, who must rediscover the city and construct a version of herself within it, Ifemelu makes a clear decision about how she wants to be.

While this emphasis is clear to me, it also suggests the challenge inherent in some novels. It is the challenge of creating a private-public link. The aspects that create the private-public link and lead to questions about its specificity bear repeating: Ifemelu's formation is connected to her return to Nigeria and a specific female subjectivity made possible through access to capital and travel. Her recovery from sexual trauma allows her to become an individual who can survive in the neoliberal nation-state of Nigeria and construct an ideal female subjectivity. Certainly, an allegory of the nation is possible here, but it is not overwhelmingly enthusiastic. The ascendancy and survival seems to require transnational migration and does not avoid coerced sexual exchange. In concluding the novel with the Ifemelu-Obinze resolution, the narrative privileges the love/feeling ideal and the optimistic belief that the conditions of modernity allow for a self-determined life. But the two figures must move away from most social institutions of family, community, and networks to create their own idealized space. This too, may, be the allegory of Nigeria, but it is one where privatized happiness is the logic of the neoliberal state.

CHAPTER 2: BIG MAN MASCULINITY AND PRIVATIZED HAPPINESS IN ADAOBI TRICIA NWAUBANI'S *I DO NOT COME TO YOU BY CHANCE*

In the introduction, I argued that the contemporary West African bildungsroman situates the development of its protagonist within the nation's institutions and that the genre positions gender as a central factor of development. This chapter provides an explication of this argument through the analysis of Tricia Adaobi Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come To You By Chance* (2009). Though the critical attention given to *Chance* is disproportionate with the novel's importance, scholars have rightly acknowledged *Chance*'s incorporation of national and transnational economic networks, communication networks, and performances of national affiliation.[26] What has been underacknowledged by scholars is the centrality of genre and gender to the plot and discourse of the novel. I remedy that oversight in this chapter by analyzing *I Do Not Come To You By Chance* (*Chance)* as a bildungsroman which narrates Kingsley's formation into a Big Man and his uncle's role as mentor and fellow Big Man. Because this scholarly project (in its entirety) argues that gender is both integral to the development of an individual (who is) invested in conjugality or consanguinity and

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[26] For economic development and economic justice, see Oluwole Coker's "Development Imperatives and Transnationalism in Third-Generation Nigerian Fiction" and Shalini Nadaswaran's "Motif/Ves of Justice in Writings by Third-Generation Nigerian Women," respectively. For development and cultural geography, see Patricia Noxolo's "Provocations beyond One's Own Presence: Towards Cultural Geographies of Development?" For national affiliation and/or commitment, see Madhu Krishnan's "Affiliation, Disavowal, and National Commitment in Third Generation African Literature" and Hamish Dalley's "The Idea of 'Third Generation Nigerian Literature': Conceptualizing Historical Change and Territorial Affiliation in the Contemporary Nigerian Novel." For nationalism and Nwaubani's literary connection to Chinua Achebe see Unifier Dyer's "Nationalism in Dialogue Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani in Converstaion [sic] with Chinua Achebe's Characters." For an analysis of rhetorics of 419 and cyberspace, see Nicole Cesare's "Strange[r] Encounters: *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* and the Rhetoric of 419." To varying degrees, they all consider the local, national, and transnational context.

that political economy is one aspect of gender's creation, distinction, and stratification, this chapter must necessarily explain the Big Man gender with respect to the Nigerian situation in the southeastern region and with respect to Igbo culture in order to consider the bildung of the protagonists. Moreover, because satire is utilized as a literary mode in *Chance*, the chapter will explain the satirization of the bildungsroman genre and the way that satirical characters, namely Kingsley's maternal uncle and mentor, Cash Daddy, functions to make the culturally endorsed characteristics of masculinity and the Big Man gender explicit and subject to critique. Altogether, the chapter will demonstrate that the Big Man gender is oriented toward a value of conjugality or "privatized happiness."

The Big Man Gender

The requirements of masculinity shift continually for all masculine genders everywhere. This is no more evident than in the Big Man masculine gender form. Since its emergence in the 1930s, the Big Man typological category has been transformed by the objectives of the anthropologists putting it to use for various ends (Lindstrom 902). Writing in 1981, Lamont Lindstrom traces the emergence of the term from anthropologists working in Melanesia in the early 20th century and notes that "[t]he quotation marks, which once adorned the term, holding it at arm's length, are now coming off. Whereas 'big man' may once have been an analytical oddity, big man (or big-man, or bigman) is now fervently embraced as common currency" (903). Despite this legitimation, Lindstrom noted that the term "resulted from a number of haphazard and unplanned choices made by many individual ethnographers" (900). The

result of that and other factors—including its application in other regions of the world—is that the term is one that must be contextualized in each instance of use. It is a syncretic gender form which integrates values from colonialist cultural and political thought, pre-colonial indigenous/ethnic culture, contemporary ethnic/regional/national cultures, and contemporary transnational (or globalized) cultures. The variety of cultural contributions makes the Big Man gender impossible to generalize as a global, continental, or racial model, but it also makes it a particularly salient and visible gender within spaces where cultural and gender constructions are mutually intelligible by different groups. Thus, I take up the Big Man as a gender within the West African context. I am interested in this gender because it has been extolled by social scientists as the very "[s]ymbol[l] [of] masculinity in Nigeria" (Smith, *To Be* 5), because of its prominence within various organizational and political systems,[27] and because of its frequent reappearance in literature and other cultural products. [28]

    One characteristic of the West African Big Man is particularly important to my claim about bildung and an orientation toward conjugality. It is the Big Man's participation in patron-client networks.[29] In patron-client networks, the patron

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[27] In West Africa, people typically operate within more than one network and experience various (and varying) positions so that a person may be the patron in one instance and the client in another. This means that a Big Man/patron within one organization (e.g., a federal government university) may re-appear as client in another organization. By tracking an individual and his position through various networks, a literary or cultural critic would derive a keen understanding of the shifts in power across many organizations. Though this is interesting, it is outside the scope of this dissertation.

[28] See Smith's *To Be a Man Is Not a One-Day Job: Masculinity, Money, and Intimacy in Nigeria* for a contemporary ethnography of Big Men and other masculinities among the Igbo of South-East Nigeria. This chapter will center male sexed Big Men but I recognize that the term has been applied to male and female persons in the African context. See Mbah's *Emergent Masculinities* for instances of female masculinities and female "big men" in the pre-colonial Igbo context.

[29] For a broader understanding of patron-client networks, see Jean-François Bayart's *The State in Africa: The Politics of The Belly* as well as J. P. Olivier de Sardan's "A Moral Economy of Corruption in Africa?" which expands upon "solidarity networks" and "networks of sociability." Though this chapter focuses on the Big Man within patron-client relationships, they exist throughout the economic

provides some benefit to the client. The benefit may be money, commodity, and/or access to some good or service (e.g., housing, education, etc.). The client, then, provides some benefit to the patron. It may also be in the form of a commodity (e.g., crops, land) or service (e.g., sexual or physical labor). In addition, the client repays the patron with support and social recognition. This is an important resource because the social prestige becomes the Big Man's means of acquiring power within a small or large polity type or political system (Smith, *Culture*, 10-11). The support of kinship and non-kinship clients is what scholars refer to as "wealth in people." Social scientists and historians originally used this descriptive term to refer to conditions where "interpersonal dependents of all kinds - wives, children, clients and slaves - were valued, sought and paid for at considerable expense in material terms in pre-colonial Africa" (Guyer and Eno Belinga 92). In the contemporary era, the term still refers to dependents, who may be clients, relatives, or both, and the transfer of "material[s]" is still important to acquiring this wealth. As Smith explains, Big Men "conspicuous[ly] redistribute[e]" wealth by sponsoring/hosting prominent events, such as weddings and funerals, as a way to cultivate and maintain wealth in people (*To Be*, 18-19). The Big Men do not do this out of an *individual* conviction (though they may have internalized it) but because the redistribution "builds on a longstanding moral economy associated with kinship and patron-clientelism, in which unequal wealth and power are tempered through obligations to share" (19). It is this aspect of the Big Man which will come to bear on my argument.

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spectrum. For more on this, see Sardan for examples of small but pervasive forms of exchange (39-46), Bayart for a retelling of the "solidarity" networks among similarly positioned groups within Zaire's Air Force (235-237), and Smith's *A Culture of Corruption* (11-16).

Kingsley: From Opara to Big Man

Chance has a narrative frame. It opens with a man associated with tertiary education in the UK, who is described as distanced from commonplace Igbo beliefs. It also closes with such a man. The man at the beginning is Paulinus and the man at the end is Kingsley, his son and the bildungsheld. In the prologue which serves as the opening frame of the novel, we encounter Paulinus when he visits Umuahia from the United Kingdom (UK), where he was pursuing a university degree. Paulinus is ideologically invested in the belief that Western European education and British social behaviors are better than Igbo behaviors and customs. Because of his eagerness to espouse such views, his friends in Umuahia say he behaves like a white man (Nwaubani 3). His difference is evidenced by the things he is willing to say—he defends a child who is punished for using his left hand, answers a question broached by the young house girl who speaks out of turn, and discusses evolution at length. Additionally, he declares that "[a]ny part of our [Igbo] culture that is backwards should be dumped" (6). In this section, Paulinus begins to court Augustina, Kingsley's mother—the young house girl who spoke out of turn—and the landmarks of their relationship are marked by education. Finally, Paulinus proposes to Augustina by saying, "If you go to university…I will marry you" (12). What this teaches the reader about Paulinus is positive. For one, in offering moral and financial support for university education, Paulinus is assuming the role usually reserved for the parent and natal family. This fact, coupled with the reader's knowledge that Augustina's father refused to support her university education, despite her intelligence and high grades, allows us to view

Paulinus as a young man who embraces equality and personal fulfillment rather than gender bias and orthodoxy. Secondly, in engaging himself to Augustina, a house girl who must look forward to training as a seamstress, the reader understands him to be a man who isn't greedy or self-important. For a different man would use his British-university education, his legal domicile in the UK, and his been-to[30] status to engage himself to a family with wealth, power, and prestige. As Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi explains, "the 'been-to' is the returnee, the erstwhile, sophisticated world traveler, culturally changed by outside contact and now regarded as a sophisticated outsider at home" (*Juju* 292). Paulinus seems to play the been-to role but does not exploit its potential to make a more advantageous marital match.

When Augustina fulfills the engagement stipulation by gaining admission to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Paulinus is overjoyed. But in his "feverish" declaration the reader learns something more when Paulinus says, "our children are going to be great. They're going to have the best education. They're going to have English names and they're going to speak English like the queen" (12). In this declaration the conflation of "education" with "English" language and names reveals Paulinus' investment in the ideology of Western Education. It is not just equality, fulfillment, enrichment and social advancement, but also about access to social capital through language.

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[30] In the novels of the decolonization era, the male protagonists were often been-to figures but in contemporary novels, it is the fathers who are been-to figures. In *Americanah* and *Chance*, the been-to fathers of Kingsley and Obinze are dead/dying and cannot guide their sons through the world; the supposed prestige of having "been to" the West is no longer usable currency. See the Introduction and Chapter 1 where I wrote about the been-to more pointedly.

In the next section of the novel, we encounter Kingsley, the opara of Paulinus and Augustina Ibe. Opara[31] means "first-born son" (Echeruo 141) but this description does not fully explain it as a socially recognized subject position which enjoys the high social status and resource investment within the Igbo nuclear and extended family unit(s), along with attendant social and financial obligations.[32] Kingsley is a conventional opara: he endorses his father's views, follows his parents' dictates, caters to his mother's tastes, and plans to add to his family's generations as a soon as a job allows him to marry his college sweetheart (Nwaubani 31-32). His life goals and trajectory are shaped by the Igbo-hegemonic belief that a man's first-born son should attain full adulthood and assume the obligations of the opara, *before* the father dies. Kingsley has fully incorporated these beliefs and is able to communicate them as his personal goals when he reflects that "[a]s first son, as soon as I started earning an income, I would automatically inherit the responsibility of training my younger ones [siblings] and ensuring that my parents spent the rest of their retirement years in financial peace. My family were [sic] looking up to me. I was their light, their messiah, their only hope" (34).

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[31] The English language variation is okpara and the Igbo language variations are öpara and ökpara (Echeruo 141).

[32] As Ifeyinwa E. Umerah-Udezulu explains, in Igbo culture "[b]irth order establishes the *okpara* status, which entrusts the first son or an 'achievement-oriented' son with a special position in the family headship. This sets him apart from others. Apart from his father, the *okpara* has the final say [in family decisions]. The son's father is a part of the *okpara* lineage system in his immediate family before marriage, and upon marriage the son establishes his own family, and the pattern continues" (132-133; italics in original). She continues: "Birth order essentially determines the role in individual plays, and the gender-based system endows the *okpara* with responsibility to act as the head of the family. The [Igbo] society bestows the *okpara* with the *ofo*, which is the form of authority to perform ceremonial rights" (133; italics in original).

Though Kingsley has been raised in Umuahia, the capital of Abia State,[33] he is a culturally hybrid figure. While he prides himself on being the opara and will use the traditional obligations of this identity position to motivate and validate his choices, Kingsley is less enthusiastic about other social markers of the Igbo. For instance, he "shudder[s]" to think of food sellers in the open-air markets, for their ignorance is so complete that "[h]ardly any of them under[stand] what [is] said if you d[o] not speak Igbo" (19). Though it is compared favorably to the "rural" communities, Kingsley declares that "[a]fter all was said and done, Umuahia was still one the Third World towns in Nigeria" (70) and finds the city lacks the "diverse opportunities for work" that larger cities like Lagos enjoy (70). Kingsley's estimation of the rural communities is also tied to lack of education and sophistication (25; 71). This reference to the "Third World," shows that Kingsley thinks about polity types in terms of their hierarchical position in relation to other places. His low assessment of Umuahia is associated with speaking Igbo language, rather than English and agrarian and manual labor. Like his parents, Kingsley considers formal education to be a path to self-cultivation, social prestige, economic stability, and professional success. He also thinks of it as the marker of those things, such that people who do not speak or understand the type of English grammar taught in secondary schools are deemed as uncultivated. But Kingsley's judgement about the people in the market is also about socioeconomic class. In Abia and the other Igbo states, junior and senior secondary schools are the primary place to learn English. The language of secondary school

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[33] Abia, like the states of Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo, is considered an "Igbo state" because approximately 95% of the population is Igbo and the land territory is considered indigenous to the Igbo people.

instruction in the South-South, South-East, and South-West is English. While the dominant language of each region (i.e., Igbo or Yoruba) is also taught as a single course, other subjects (e.g., math, science, geography) are taught in English. The cost of secondary school education is borne by the student. Like his parents, Kingsley values formal education so the inability to understand English-only sentences—as opposed to pidgin English, English mixed with Igbo sentences, and sentences in other languages spoken in Umuahia's markets, such as Ibibio—is associated with a lack of social prestige and success. His cultural hybridity is formed through his education, the exposure to ideas by his university-educated parents, but also through his own voluntary adoption of "Third World/First World" hierarchy. At this point in the narrative, he identifies Umuahia's peripherality within Nigeria—a person raised in Abuja or Lagos (or even Port Harcourt) would call it "local"—but has no means of analyzing this situation or linking it to the inability to find salaried labor. Ironically, he judges Umuahia, and the people of the market, but thinks of himself as unmarred by Umuahia's "Third World" status.

Taken altogether, Kingsley has a middle-class subjectivity and plans to develop into a respectable, Igbo man, like his father. However, Kingsley's development is disrupted by three events which occur within days. The first two events are his rejection from yet another engineering job, which bars him once again from salaried labor, and the second is when his college sweetheart ends their relationship at her mother's behest. Both threaten his potential for biological and social reproduction and impede the full access to the opara social identity that his father has laid out for him. This is because the exclusion from salaried labor means he

cannot contribute to his natal family and cannot afford to marry a university-educated wife.[34] For the Igbo, marriage is a status marker that adults are expected to attain. As Daniel Jordan Smith explains, irrespective of "age, education, intelligence or occupation," "a bachelor without children" might have his opinions "openly dismiss[ed] … as those of a 'small boy,'" because he is not married (*To Be*, 60). Victor Chikezie Uchendu's observation that "an unmarried Igbo male cuts a sad picture of hopeless poverty" (175) is also useful in communicating the hegemonic Igbo belief: a man's inability to marry is linked to poverty or a(nother) form of social failure.

The third event is his father's stroke. The family cannot access the hospital because they do not have the money to pay for the services up front. The nurse explains that the medical staff is not "heartless" but must collect some payment because they are "realistic" (Nwuabani 87). When they finally use "long-leg," or the connections of various friends and affiliates to get a bed in another hospital, they learn that they are expected to bring bedding, medical supplies, a mosquito net, a fan, and to sleep outside if they want to stay overnight (89-90). Each request is linked to Nigeria's underfunding of the healthcare and energy system. The battery-operated fan is valuable for the unexpected (but routine) cessation of electricity and the other items are necessary because the hospital's budget doesn't extend to allow for supplies. The family's modest savings are quickly drained by his father's hospital stay. This, finally, places Kingsley in the most vulnerable position of the novel. Ergo, the three events

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[34] Smith's *To Be A Man Is Not a One-Day Job: Masculinity, Money, and Intimacy in Nigeria* details the link between economic status, economic prospectus, and marital partners. See the introduction, chapter 1, and chapter 2.

which initially appear to initiate a picaresque (Cesare 83; 85), instead initiate an alternative bildung formation. They disrupt Kingsley's development trajectory from "opara to middle class, Igbo man."

It is because of the significant need for money that Kingsley disobeys his father's wishes and seeks out his maternal uncle, Boniface, from whom the family is estranged. Boniface, now known as Cash Daddy, has grown conspicuously rich. At this point in the narrative Kingsley has not disassociated his ideas from his parents' and so it is not surprising that he recalls his uncle as "the illegitimate son that my late [maternal] grandfather had fathered by some non-Igbo floozy from Rivers State" (Nwaubani 70-71). In Kingsley's brief description of the familial connection, we understand that Boniface comes to the family as already contaminated: he lacks the ethnic/cultural purity that a child of two Igbo people would have acknowledged by others; his mother has not been integrated into the family by male or female kindred groups; his father has not reconciled his behavior with his family. The inference is that Boniface's mother turned his personage and care over to his father and had nothing to do with him thereafter, a practice which is still prevalent in South-West, South-South and South-East Nigeria.[35] "Out of anger" about the man's behavior, the maternal grandfather is left to struggle with his son as his wives, daughters, and extended

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[35] In southern Nigeria, it is considered wholly acceptable and advisable for a mother to deposit a male child with his father after he reaches the age of 5 or 6. This is done so that men do not neglect their duties as fathers and providers. The anxiety about fatherly neglect is heightened in interethnic unions. It is commonplace for the mother to then have irregular contact with the child which may include annual visits, visits at regular or irregular intervals, or no further contact. None of these outcomes are rare or surprising. Women who do not deposit male children with their fathers may be forgiven as casual fools, but they are usually pitied. Among the Igbo, a man who does not "collect" his child from the mother may never recover his respectability and his social connections (including marriage options) are typically limited thereafter.

female kindred initially withhold material and affective support for the child (71).

Finally, when the grandfather's health deteriorates, "[t]he family [makes] a communal decision" and Boniface is placed in the care of Augustina and Paulinus (71). Kingsley's recollections about Boniface in the Ibe household associate Boniface with low social status, academic ineptitude, and teenage prankishness (53; 71-73). In the end, Boniface leaves the household, and a mutual estrangement ensues.

I recount these events because they communicate the family/kinship system which serves as Kingsley's rationale for approaching the uncle that he hasn't seen in more than 10 years. For despite the Ibe family's general low opinion of Cash Daddy, the latter cannot turn them away. As Kingsley recounts, Cash Daddy "owes" the Ibe family "a social debt," and must recompense them, just as Augustina and Paulinus paid their debt in the form of Cash Daddy's care. The debt is not based on the currency-debt or currency-capital model, but on practices of Igbo sociality and kinship networks, whereby the elder siblings contribute to the material support of the younger siblings and wealthier siblings/relatives contribute to the material support of other poorer siblings/relatives.[36] The fact that these kinship obligations are observed in situations where competition, strife, jealousy and estrangement exist, speak to the hegemonic nature of the conventions. In addition, I recount these events to note that in Nigeria and West Africa more broadly, kinship networks recognize "debt," "payment," "support," and "remittance," which appear to support an investment in consanguinity, though it may or may not. In other words, there is a way in which

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[36] See Smith's *To Be A Man Is Not a One-Day Job: Masculinity, Money, and Intimacy in Nigeria*, especially the introduction, chapter 3, and chapter 6.

behaviors which may appear to the reader as an *individual* investment in the community (or family) is actually the individual's investment in propriety and hegemonic behaviors. This distinction is especially important for the Big Man identity and the chapter will return to it.

When Kingsley finally meets with Cash Daddy and explains the situation, Cash Daddy also recognizes and adheres to the family obligation. As he tells Kingsley, "When the eye weeps, the nose also weeps," a statement which links them as two entities in the same family (face) (Nwaubani 124). He supports the family through Paulinus's illness and pays for a well-appointed funeral when he dies. At this point, Kingsley self-consciously thinks about his position as the opara and joins his uncle's 419 business in order to support his family. The term "419" refer to the 419 statue in the Nigerian penal code which states that whoever steals or obtains goods by fraud shall be charged with a felony. As Daniel Jordan Smith explains:

> …419…first emerged in the 1980s, during Nigeria's economic decline, when the country fell from the heady heights of the worldwide oil boom into a period of political and economic struggle marked by dictatorships, inflation, a rapidly devaluing currency, and widespread poverty and unemployment (Watts 1984, 1992, 1994; Apter 2005). The original meaning of 419 was linked to a specific practice of fraud… in which the perpetrators sent letters and faxes that relied on the symbols of Nigeria's petroleum-dominated political economy—official letterhead and signatures, NNPC insignia, lines of credit, government contracts, and so on—to bait mostly foreign targets into providing advance fees against the promise of a larger payoff. The scams relied not only on the

trappings of the Nigerian state but also its reputation for corruption, enticing

dupes with the expectation that some of the millions of dollars siphoned off by

corrupt officials could be obtained simply by providing a foreign bank account

and advance fees to enable the funds to be released. (*Culture* 19-20)

Cash Daddy's 419 enterprise participates in all the aforementioned forms: fraudulent

letters/documents on government letterhead, baiting foreign and multinational

companies and speculators as well as the collusion of Nigerian government officials

and banking officials in Nigeria and elsewhere. Kingsley initially participates without

reluctance, because he appreciates the money and the way it makes him "fe[el] like a

real *opara*" since he can now afford to support his widowed mother and pay for his

two brothers' university fees and his sister's secondary [high] school tuition (182,

italics in original). But soon Kingsley struggles to fully accept that the mugus (or fools

in Nigerian pidgin English) are not people like him, or at least, not people in the sense

that they deserve consideration in the transaction. He broaches his concerns with Cash

Daddy and explains his reticence to continue collecting money from an U.S. American

mugu who saved it to buy a house (184). Cash Daddy responds with a series of

questions about the woman: "Is she your sister? [...] Is she your cousin? [...] Is she

your brother's wife? [...] Is she your mother's sister? [...] Is she your father's sister? [...]

Is she from your village?" (184). After the final "No," Cash Daddy asks, "So why are

you swallowing Panadol for another person's headache?" (184) Through this Socratic

method, Cash Daddy is attempting to reorient Kingsley's sympathies and worldview.

As Nicole Cesare puts it,

…the central tenet of Cash Daddy Economics… argues that obligation is

conditioned by levels of intimacy: it extends in certain directions based on

familial and geographic proximity rather than toward all humanity. Cash

Daddy expresses a clear distinction between the notion of connection, which

may take place between two distant figures thanks to technology; and relation,

which is based in material circumstances such as kinship or shared

membership in a geographically bound community. As Cash Daddy sees it,

419 exploits connection in order to serve relation, taking advantage of the

proximity engendered by cyberspace in order to create false intimacy and

manipulate the identities of stranger and friend. (95)

This theory of economics explains how Cash Daddy's generosity to Kingsley and his

estranged half-sister can cohere with a business enterprise that deceptively takes

people's life savings. However, Kingsley persists in arguing the point that the mugu is

vulnerable because she has taken out loans to participate in the scheme. Cash Daddy

laughs and says,

Kings, with all the school you went, you still don't know anything. These

oyibo [white] people are different from us. Don't think America and Europe

are like Nigeria where people suffer anyhow. Over there, their governments

know how to take good care of them. They don't know anything about

suffering. (184, emphasis in original)

In other words, Cash Daddy explains that the mugu cannot be a subject that Kingsley

sympathizes with because she is incubated from suffering itself. One ironic aspect of

this statement—"*oyibo* people are different from us"—is that the very oyibo people

who are being exploited might likely state the same. Cash Daddy's statement draws on ontological beliefs about black and white people as well as ontological beliefs about the U.S. and Africa wherein Africa is a place of suffering, and the U.S. is a place of opportunity and democracy. The satiric assault then is on such beliefs since the novel shows us what happens when they are weaponized for inventive and unscrupulous business endeavors.

Another irony is that Cash Daddy's ideas coincide with Kingsley's latent beliefs. Cash Daddy's words allude to the superiority of North America/Europe over Nigeria in the same way that Paulinus' and Kingsley's judgement about speaking English and English names alluded to the inferiority of Igbo language and culture. However, Cash Daddy's assertation that "oyibo" (white) people differ from "us," (black/Nigerian/Igbo) people, and that the governments erase "suffering" is unconvincing to Kingsley (184). This is, in part, because his father's construction of educational acquisition has created Kingsley's belief that he is similar to oyibo people—after all, he speaks English well and has a university degree in engineering. Seeing Kingsley is not satisfied by this explanation, Cash Daddy tries again:

> Ok…You, you went to school. Did they not teach you about slave trade?
>
> They did.
>
> Who were the people behind it? And all the things they stole from Africa, have they paid us back? (185)

Here, Cash Daddy rhetorically links the exploitation of Africa (and its people and resources) and the redistribution of wealth from Africa to the Global North to the

latent question of sympathy. In asking, "[H]ave they paid us back?" Cash Daddy is begging the question of who is aggrieved and who should be pitied/pitiable.

This is an important moment in the novel, because it suggests what Chielozona Eze has called "the postcolonial imagination." According to Eze, the postcolonial or contemporary African sees himself as a "historical victim" who has been violated by the evil oppressor and draws from this feeling of injury, abuse, and resentment to construct an "imagination and moral thought" (*Postcolonial*, xi). The "postcolonial" imagination and morality is caught in a Manichean schema wherein the black/colonized subject is superior to the white/colonizing subject, because he (the black subject) has been injured. This rationale is then used to excuse the lack of empathy for others, including one's own people, community, nation, and so forth. (*Postcolonial*, xi) By using the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade as an apologia for 419, Cash Daddy participates in Eze's "postcolonial imagination." Eze's more robust point is that this imagination hinders an incisive critique of governance and any genuine attempt to find solutions to problems within African nations. In short, the continual recasting of the postcolonial self as the injured and aggrieved object of colonial history is a rhetorical strategy by which powerful people deceive their clients, supporters, citizens, and so on. In Cash Daddy's case, he is attempting to persuade Kingsley, and he thinks of only his intended outcome and not the inappropriateness of the claim. When Kingsley is not persuaded by this, Cash Daddy says, "OK. Since you don't appreciate this opportunity God has given you to abolish poverty from your family once and for all, continue worrying about one evil woman in America. Be there worrying about her and leave off your own sister and your mother." (185) This finally

persuades Kingsley to concede that "Cash Daddy was right. Not being able to take care of my family was the real sin. Gradually, I had learnt to take my mind off the mugus and focus on the things that really mattered. Thanks to me, my family was now as safe as a tortoise under its shell" (185). The previous claims were easy for Kingsley to refute because they contradicted previous lessons he had learned about himself or the world. But the last statement is successful because it coheres with Kingsley self-perception and his goals for his own masculinity. From this point, Kingsley's real tutelage begins. He doesn't mature from a novice to a Big Man by learning how to write scam letters but by re-learning the rules of social success and socioeconomic mobility. The father, Paulinus, is replaced by Cash Daddy. As a mother's brother, the latter is an always already pater figure for an Igbo child.[37] This remaking of Kingsley, then, is altogether legitimate from the ethnocultural point of view.

Yet, it is surprising when we consider that Cash Daddy is grotesque. One repeated example is Cash Daddy's continued defecation throughout the novel. He shits in front of people and insists that people enter the room and listen to him talk while he's doing it. Jed Esty has noted that "[s]catology reveals the problems of uneven development and neocolonial corruption in the public sphere" ("Excremental," 36). Esty claims that in the postcolonial African novels of the 1960s and 70s, scatology had a pointed relevance in its "application to an elite that [was], after all, a residue of colonialism-a lingering efflux of the despised and departed European body" (33). In

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[37] See Uchendu's "Ezi Na Ulo: The Extended Family in Igbo Civilization" which explains that "while the husband/wife relation is gaining in importance, it is seldom the hub of the system. The father/son or mother's brother/sister's son relationships are the traditional emphases in Igbo sub-cultures with consequences for the radical adjustment of the nuclear families in the system which face conflicting loyalties" (185).

this contemporary case, the scatology reveals the common man's awareness of the economies of corruption and his awareness that the corruption lives in the body of the people. By making Cash Daddy's body into the evidence of excess through his fat, greed, sexual appetites, and defecation, the novel's critique of Cash Daddy's ethics become tangible. As Achille Mbembe has asserted, the body of the "used to decipher power" (29). Mbembe claims that it is through the body that the ruler expresses his pridefulness over his power and the ability to wield it in excess.

Though Kingsley literally sees Cash Daddy's shit, he continues on as his protégé. By accompanying Cash Daddy to the UK and Europe, Kingsley sees more evidence that mugus are not to be pitied. They know little to nothing about Nigeria and are still keen to exploit it for financial gain. Moreover, their willingness to participate in their own exploitation becomes a reason to continue the trade. Finally, Kingsley enjoys his identity position. He has risen within the company and enjoys the conspicuous wealth of a Big Man: a high-end apartment, a car, luxury goods, and young adult women whose sexual companionship is exchanged for money. The naïve belief and sentimental education by his civil servant father has given way to Cash Daddy's philosophies. As for Cash Daddy, his fantastic success seems to have no stopping point. He declares his intention to run for governor and then dies unexpectedly due to a poisoning. Kingsley mourns him in this way:

> …Cash Daddy would have been good for Abia State. After all was said and done, my uncle loved his people. He might have pocketed a billion or two in the process, but in the long run, our lot would have been better. We would have had better roads. We would have had running water. We would have had

a public officer who could not bear to watch his brothers and sisters in distress.

Abia had just lost the best governor we could ever have had. I wailed even

louder. (Nwaubani 388)

The most surprising thing about Kingsley's interior thoughts is that they are not

satiric. (In the novel, Kingsley's interiority is never satirized.) This means that he

earnestly believes that Cash Daddy "would have been good for Abia State" and that

"pocket[ing] a billion or two in the process" would still leave the people in a better

position than an alternative candidate (388). This sentiment of "steal just what you

need" is a common one in Nigeria and I hear it regularly when I am in Abia state. In

Nigeria, comments like this refer to the overwhelming presence and presumption of

corruption (Smith, *Culture*, 9). But Kingsley's earnest belief that Cash Daddy was "the

best governor that [Abia state] [n]ever had" is questionable when we recall his

expectation that Cash Daddy would help "his brothers and sisters" (Nwaubani 388).

Who does this refer to? Kingsley? Yes. Because Kingsley has a stake in Cash Daddy's

success as his client, it is clear that he will benefit from whatever corruption takes

place. But who else? There is no real evidence in the novel that would suggest that

Cash Daddy would bring prosperity to the common people. He has used his own

wealth to cultivate clients and other financial networks but has not participated in any

civic engagement at all. Altogether, it seems as though Kingsley's lamentation after

Cash Daddy's death adopts Cash Daddy's self-centered belief that what is good for

him can be presented as being good for others, whether it is or not.

Ultimately, the "middle class" bildungsheld's maturation resolves with an orientation to privatized happiness. This emphasis on the conjugal over the consanguineal can be read through the narrative resolution which clearly shows that the personal achievement of the Big Man does not lead to a boon for the community. For instance, by the end of *Chance*, Kingsley is the proprietor of "KINGS VENTURES INTERNATIONAL" (Nwaubani 393). The business includes the importation of computer and GSM phone equipment and fully air-conditioned cafes in Aba, Umuahia, and Owerri where customers read national newspapers and access telecommunication and internet services (393-394). He has paid for his siblings' university education and his mother drives a Mercedes S-class (392). The emphasis is clearly on his own personal goods and gain which are enjoyed by his natal family. As I have explained throughout the chapter, his "generosity" to his natal family is not *only* an *individual* choice. It must be read alongside hegemonic cultural norms and the requirements of the Big Man masculine identity. He would not be able to access this identity type if he did not extend "generosity" to his natal family, thus this is not what I mean by a consanguineal ethos which seeks connection with a community as though a blood relation existed. My point, then, is that the money that has flowed in through the 419 scams has provided Kingsley with *private* benefits, such as money (for a bride price, business, his family) and that these have been converted into social prestige enjoyed by him (and his mother).

Another example of Kingsley's orientation to privatized happiness is his decision to pursue an MBA in the UK. We know that Kingsley is not going to the UK simply to emulate his father since he ignores his mother's attempt to compare them

(398). The full calculation for pursuing the MBA in the UK is explained through his

mother's thoughts:

> The important thing was for people to see that her son, the CEO of Kings
> Ventures International, had an MBA from a foreign university. In Nigeria,
> foreign degrees carried huge respect, whether they were from Manchester or
> Imperial or Peckham. And now that it seemed as if democracy had indeed
> come to stay, hordes from the diaspora were shaking off their phobias and
> coming back home, and people with local degrees were becoming more and
> more invisible. In the next few years, [she] was confident that her son would
> do well enough to become one of the most respected entrepreneurs from this
> part of the world. An MBA from a reputable foreign school would definitely
> go a long way to making [Kingsley] stand out farther from the crowd. And in
> an economy that was so shaky and unpredictable, it would also be good
> insurance policy to fall back on, in case business went awry. (Nwaubani 399)

The motivation then is not the degree but the esteem and opportunity that the degree

affords. The degree is yet another material item within a hierarchy of materials which

effect the ability to materially and socially reproduce oneself. And herein lies the

tension between the "consanguineal" and the "conjugal" that I have been trying to

elucidate. What appears to be "consanguineal"—or the link between kin groups and

communities—is about the privatization of some good. Here, the "good" is the money

that has flowed in through the 419 scams and the social esteem. Kingsley's plans to

use the money to compete more successfully against those who do not have foreign

degrees is shrewd and self-serving. It imagines the diasporic "hordes" and the "local[s]" and seeks to stand apart from the "crowd" not within it or with it.

In the end, the challenge of representing successful adult development within a locality where people are excluded from developmental means is one that continues to challenge authors. In *Chance*, Nwaubani adopts a satiric mode to create a narrative about how Big Men are made. Drawing from John Clement Ball and Jed Esty, I contend that Nwaubani uses satire to work around the predicament of representation. Rather than distort the narrative structure of the normative bildungsroman, Nwaubani retains it and satirizes the 419 Big Men. In gesturing toward the ethnocultural Igbo-ness of the characters and their shift from ethics to moral relativity, *Chance* performs an allegorical staging of post-colonial Nigeria.

CHAPTER 3: IDENTITY, CONSANGUINEAL RELATIONS, AND INSTITUTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT IN AMMA DARKO'S *BEYOND THE HORIZON*, *THE HOUSEMAID*, AND *FACELESS*

In Chapters 1 and 2, my discussion of the female-authored West African bildungsroman explicated the development of the gendered identity of middle-class characters. My analysis considered the ways in which gender, developmental catalysts, and labor influenced the formation of an adult identity and subjectivity. This chapter develops the theory of consanguineal orientations through Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon, The Housemaid*, and *Faceless*. Each novel articulates a distinct generic form of the bildungsroman. Additionally, each novel depicts the tensions and concerns of individual, social, and national development through the bildung of female adolescents and young women. This chapter will elaborate these claims about the individual novels and also demonstrate that Darko's novels represent a non-linear, cumulative bildung.[38] The extended bildung engages with development structures and continues to reimagine the various ways they are important to "individual" development. Ultimately, the extended bildung narrative emphasizes consanguineal links. I locate the consanguineal orientation within the novels' plot and discourse. On the level of plot, consanguinity is seen through the characters' collective action, negotiation, and interpersonal relationship building. On the level of discourse, the novels do the labor of consanguineal linkage—that is, the creation of a communal body through the incorporation of voluntary and unrelated members—by depicting a gender-sensitive

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[38] I borrow this concept from Maria Helena Lima's analysis of Jamaica Kincaid's work. The recognition of interconnections throughout Kincaid's work is now well-acknowledged, but Lima was the first to articulate this in terms of bildungsroman.

(rather than "gender neutral") reality, critiquing this reality, and gesturing toward an alternative tradition and alternative action.

Beyond the Horizon and the Cultivation of an Adult Gendered Identity

Amma Darko's first published novel, *Beyond the Horizon* (1995), is the most conventional bildungsroman in our discussion, and it follows the narrative structure of previous bildungsromane, particularly of the "first generation African novel" era.[39] In it a young, village-raised woman, Mara, is married at the discretion of her father, to Akobi, the most educated man from their natal village, Naka. Mara begins her marital life in Accra and immediately discovers that her husband is violently and sexually abusive. She also discovers that he is enamored by Comfort, a fashionable typist who works in his office. From Accra, Akobi immigrates to Hamburg, Germany and sends for Mara to join him. There, Mara discovers that Akobi is legally married to a white woman, Gitte, and that Comfort lives in Hamburg courtesy of Akobi. Akobi's abusiveness takes on a new valence when he forces Mara into prostitution in order to finance his future goals, which include a life with Comfort. Mara eventually foils Akobi's plans by revealing all to Gitte and the German government. She flees her pimp in Hamburg and enters a brothel in Munich from which she narrates the story of her formation.

I argue that *Beyond* presents a gender-specific/female-specific subjective experience in the rural and urban Ghanaian context and within the German (European)

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[39] See the introduction where I summarized the characteristics of this type of novel.

context. Specifically, it narrativizes the crisis of bildung maturation into preferred

adult identities. Bildung—as a process and a state of completion—is experienced as a

crisis by poor and gendered subjects who are excluded from successful personal

cultivation because of economic, historical, and societal conditions. Moreover, I argue

that scholars who have scoffed at the representation of Mara and characterized her as

overly naive and subservient[40] have elided Mara's own motivations. This omission is

not for nothing. Mara is our narrator, and she slides into irony, sarcasm, and

contemptuousness as she relates the tale of her transformation. Through these tonal

shifts she mocks herself to a certain extent; she mocks the naivete and the ignorance

that brought her to her present condition. The mockery of and skepticism about the

unmatured subject is the purview of the matured subject. Without proper awareness of

the tonal and stylistic shifts within the novel, scholars have adopted the judgment of

the matured Mara. An additional component which contributes to claims that Mara is

unrealistically naïve is the level of violence and sexual abuse she suffers at the

beginning of her marriage. This, too, must be understood in terms of development and

identity. For, while it is true that Mara's emphasis on her degraded condition as an

unfree prostitute in Germany is not complemented by an emphasis on her degradation

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[40] See Laura Barberán Reinares' *Sex Trafficking in Postcolonial Literature* for her response to claims the Mara is overly naïve, as well as Vincent O. Odamtten's "Amma Darko's Beyond the Horizon, Vending the Dream and Other Traumas of the Obedient Daughter" which takes Mara's naivete for granted. See also MaryEllen (Ellie) Higgins' "Creating an Alternative Library: Amma Darko Interviewed by Ellie Higgins" where she broaches the question of whether Akobi is an exaggeration and notes the skepticism of a University of Ghana professor. Darko replies, "I always say that compared to some of the realities, Akobi is mild" (114). Another consideration to the question of believable characters can be found in Stephanie Newell's *Ghanaian Popular Fictions*. Newell argues that many literary authors incorporate popular narratives and character types to engage West African readers. She asks, "Where would Amma Darko be without the brutal husband and victimised wife, character types which, as we have seen, have persisted in the Ghanaian popular imagination since the late 1930s, generating new social commentaries with each appearance in pamphlets, stage shows, videos and novels?" (160)

during her pre-mature stage(s) in Ghana, it is not true that she was totally oblivious to her condition. As I will demonstrate, she was aware and attempted to make the most prudent decision at each point. Yet, during the pre-mature stage(s) all the decisions were connected to the prospect of attaining preferred adult identities. I identify these gendered identities as that of the wife, the financially successful woman, which she terms "Mara of the City," and the "been-to." Mara attempts to cultivate complementary identity positions that are aligned with locally (village/city) and nationally (Ghanaian) legible factors of success. It is in striving for these identities— without the protections and supports necessary to attain them and in a context that dehumanizes her—that Mara is forced into the identity that she employs at the conclusion of the novel. Ultimately, this section reorients analysis around Mara's own motivation to mature into a gendered identity, and her attempts to be an active participant in her own bildung or formative process.

As the novel indicates Mara is not in control of attaining the conjugal position of wife. Akobi is chosen by her father whose "formula for choosing or accepting husbands for his daughters … took more into consideration the number of cows coming as the bride price than the character of the man" (Darko *Beyond* 4). However, when I write of "wife," I do not simply refer to a relational category or conjugal description, but rather, I refer to a gendered identity. I follow Molara Ogundipe-Leslie in her analysis of rural and urban Nigerian women. Ogundipe-Leslie argued that if we understand "gender …[as] a socially constructed identity" then "[w]ifehood in itself [is] a gender, not a sex or biological role" (14). In practice, the gendered identity of wife emerges

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from a discursive process wherein the identity is first recognized through publicly acknowledged rite, and then recognized again (or codified) via other socially legible behaviors and/or processes. In short, once Mara is married by her father's prerogative, she becomes a wife (a relational/conjugal position), and upon becoming a wife, Mara is motivated to be a wife (a gendered identity). Through the wife gender identity, women may access various organizations, such as community, market economy, and kinship networks. These organizations then provide the means for women's financial and social success. Though success is not guaranteed, the networks function to facilitate the wife's formation in the social/public sphere. In other words, the wife gender identity can facilitate an individual's participation in and ascension through the social group. However, there are obstacles to obtaining a stable wife identity. In *Beyond*, Mara identifies Akobi's preference for Comfort, his physical and sexual abuse, and his financial exploitation as obstacles. Akobi's financial exploitation is so extensive that she is unable to utilize the new friendship networks, her own ingenuity, and her hardworking disposition to scale-up her food-selling business. His exploitation also opens her up to ridicule. For instance, because he takes most of her money and refuses to allow her to make clothes from the traditional cloths she was gifted as part of the bride price, other market women comment on the poor quality of her clothing (Darko *Beyond* 27) and her "crude thick-soled rubber-tyre slippers" (25). Even Akobi is embarrassed to be seen with her, though he continues the exploitation anyway (26). Yet, each time she considers leaving him, she does not. This is because she lacks the familial support to end the marriage *and* because of her motivation to achieve a socially legible and preferred identity.

Other scholars have also noted Mara's motivation and its link to identity. For instance, Vincent O. Odamtten argues that Mara retains a "comfortable blindness" as long as she possibly can in order to be an "obedient daughter" (103). I take Odamtten's point that Mara is an "obedient daughter" but contend that her motivation to the wife gender is also a factor. The wife is also a daughter, but a daughter with greater participation in the market/economic and social spheres. Despite Akobi's abuse and attempt to restrict her from gaining friends, Mara becomes a successful seller of foodstuffs to commuters and also establishes a social network, which includes a relationship with Mama Kiosk, who becomes her surrogate mother. Mama Kiosk repeatedly tells Mara that Akobi's behavior is intolerable. Yet, Mara rationalizes the behavior as "normal" and at one point thinks: "[I] regarded my suffering as part of being a wife, and endured it just like I would a menstrual pain" (Darko *Beyond* 13). This supports my claim that being a wife is a primary motivation for Mara. Its importance is derived from many factors including the coextensive desire to be an "obedient daughter."

Odamtten concedes that Mara is not as naïve as she may sometimes appear (107). This is my point too: at several points in the early, Accra-years of her marriage, Mara attempts to stand up to Akobi or to present the abuse as a matter of public conversation.[41] On one occasion, she travels to Naka to tell her family that she is unhappy in the marriage. The mature Mara reflects:

> I was met with very little sympathy, as I had always feared [...] …so seeing the
> situation as it was, I abandoned the idea of announcing my wish that the

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[41] See page 21 and 33 of Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* for examples.

marriage be dissolved, something I had been intending since I considered the

goats and cows presented for my dowry had probably by now given birth to

some more goats and cows so that my father could afford to return the original

without loss. And as for the bottles of London Dry Gin [presented as part of

the bride price,] I could finance those myself. Then my clothes and jewelry

[which were also presented as part of the bride price,] were left untouched and

I had brought them along. (Darko *Beyond* 29)

The fear about her family's reaction and the mental calculations about repaying the

bride price in the exact currency it was given (i.e., livestock, traditional cloth, jewelry,

imported alcohol) reveal that Mara is not naïve. Rather, she is without the supportive

structures which might make the dissolution of her marriage possible. When her

mother and sister refuse to support the divorce, Mara chooses the available alternative.

She reflects: "I said after all the rebukes that I had just come to the village to have my

child" (29). Thus, Mara continues in the marriage and attempts to seek the best

outcome. As this scene reveals, Mara's self-concept as a person who marries at her

father's instruction and requires her family's support to end the marriage restricts the

options she might choose. The choice to remain in Naka and have a child reinforces

her position as a child of her family and a child of Akobi's family, especially since she

is part of the biological and social reproduction of their lineage.

  After the birth of the first child, Mara considers divorce again, and again the

prospect of a preferred adult identity appears to motivate Mara against ending the

marriage. On this occasion, Mara confronts Akobi about her missing cloth and

jewelry. She correctly suspects that when he visited her in Naka and took the property

for safe keeping, he intended to sell it. She is so angry that she is not afraid of a beating. However, her disposition changes when Akobi reveals that he has sold her property to finance travel to Germany. It is the prospect of being married to a "been-to" that makes Mara put away the idea of divorce. This is a pragmatic decision because, on one hand, Akobi can only afford to emigrate because he has sold her high-value belongings without her permission and there is no way to recoup the large sum it fetched. On the other hand, it speaks to Mara's own determination to establish a privileged position within the hierarchy of identities. As a wife of a been-to, her status would be elevated. Just as moving from Naka to Accra earned Akobi respect within Naka, moving from Ghana to Germany will elevate his social status. In her analysis of Buchi Emecheta's "Been-To (Bintu) Novel," Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi writes: "[b]een-toism registers as sophistication engendered by contact with another world, with the traveler acquiring an improved lifestyle, to confirm the vast difference between the person who has been to the other place and the stay-at-home" (*African* 221). In other words, the interrelated connotations of the been-to are derived from travel and contact with difference. The prestige that the been-to is afforded is directly tied to the fact that he is traveling to Germany, a European country which formerly colonized parts of Ghana, and the belief that Europe will provide some superior experience that will distinguish him from those who have not traveled. During the colonial era and for an indeterminate period after its end, deference was shown to been-tos, in part, because people believed that they would return to the African nation and impart the knowledge from Europe (Ogunyemi, *Juju* 170). But in the novel's present, the reverence for elevated knowledge has given way to commodity. For

instance, Akobi further incites Mara's excitement when he declares, "I will make so much money that I can buy us everything! Everything, Mara! Television, radio, fridge, carpet, even car!" (34). Despite the fact that Akobi doesn't even buy her food or basic clothing items, Mara is overcome by the opportunity to access these commodities. She thinks:

> You could have a television that was spoilt. It didn't matter. You probably did not even watch it or, if you did, you didn't understand anything on it for why should you if it was all full of Simon Templar running up and down boxing people unconscious, shooting them dead and kissing long-legged blondes when you yourself had never seen a gun before, knew nothing of something called Scotland Yard and had never seen your parents kiss? But that didn't matter. What mattered was that you had a television. And if as well as the television you had a fridge and a car, then, eh, between you and the Minister or doctor only his English wife separated you. When he stepped or spat, you too could step or spit. (35-36)

In other words, the ownership of commodities, no matter how impractical or un-useful, is taken to indicate a person's status. The benefit of the marriage, then, would shift upon Akobi's return when he would be able to access commodities and the "been-to" status. This shift would elevate her as well.

With Akobi in Germany, Mara begins to cultivate a new identity that is linked to the city, financial success, and upward social mobility. For instance, when she returns to Naka to give birth to their second son, she is aware that she has "city disease," a desire for city life which is so strong that it hampers one's ability to "revert

to the relatively more organised village life" (47). When she's able to return to Accra, she describes herself as a "bundle of joy," not the baby she leaves behind.[42] In Accra, she sets to her plan to make herself "more acceptable to [her] been-to husband" (47). To that end, she changes what she sells—from eggs and groundnuts to pancakes—and explains: "[m]y change of trade was for the simple reason that I considered it to be more civilised… In short, more compatible with the new me I had set out to be" (47). She uses the proceeds—which are no longer taken by Akobi—to pay for seamstress lessons with plans to eventually open a sewing shop. She wears European dresses instead of African cloth and thinks of this new self as "Mara of the city" (50). This two-year period represents a key phase in Mara's self-cultivation. She undertakes the tasks typical of most bildungsheld: she identifies a preferred adult identity she would like to attain and makes choices that will lead to the identity. In changing her sales' products and learning a trade, Mara shows the seriousness of her motivations. She even quarrels with Mama Kiosk when the mother surrogate suggests that she "forget" Akobi (46). But this identity—Mara of the city—is deeply invested in being a wife to Akobi and thinks of the triumph of achieving her new identity as the ability to be seen at Akobi's side (46). In other words, Mara is still invested in wifehood as a gendered

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[42] Mara leaves her two sons in Naka at the suggestion of Akobi's father and her mother. In Ghana, and West Africa more broadly, redistributing childcare/-rearing to non-parental family members is a culturally recognized practice. However, it is practiced unevenly and the location (e.g., agrarian, urban) or socioeconomic class of the family is not necessarily determinative. For instance, in Adichie's *Americanah* (and *Half of a Yellow Sun*) and Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come To You By Chance*, children of poorer parents move from the village to the household of wealthier relatives in the city, while in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*, the daughter of a middle-class divorcee moves from her mother's custody in the city to her paternal grandmother's care in the village. In each case, the family registers the behavior as normative, and the child is incorporated into the (new) household.

identity and her creation of "Mara of the city" reveals that social and financial success is part of that identity.

After two years, Akobi writes to ask Mara to come to Germany. This is the opportunity to become a been-to herself—to achieve an adult identity that had hitherto been unavailable. Mara jumps at the chance. This becomes one of Mara's last self-determined decisions. The motivation to assume preferred adult identities—namely the wife, Mara of the city, and the been-to—have hitherto existed in conditions that were abusive and unsupportive, at times, but also empathetic and familial at other times. Mara's condition in Germany will be far worse and her motivations become less indicative of her own will and rationalizations and more related to the imperative to survive.

From Accra, the first setting of adult maturation, Mara immigrates to Hamburg, Germany with illegal papers. In Hamburg, there are no preferred adult identities available to Mara because of her race, her origins in Ghana, and her illegal status in Germany. The motivations that wifehood as a preferred gendered identity provided are gone, as is the hope of being Mara of the city who owns a sewing shop. To start, she discovers that Akobi is legally married to a white German woman, Gitte, who has been told that Mara is his sister. Maria Olaussen writes that "Mara's move to Germany represents a symbolic crossing of all borders of decency-there are no longer any set rules and she cannot possibly know what to expect or what can be expected of her as a wife" (76). Mara is not simply upset that Akobi has another wife; she's upset that Gitte does not recognize her as the first/senior wife (Darko *Beyond* 80). By

assigning her the role of a "sister," not even a "senior wife" or a "sister wife," Akobi takes her further away from a preferred identity.

Moreover, Mara is continually the audience for Gitte's imaginations which are an amalgamation of multicultural acceptance and white supremacist discourse. For instance, Gitte openly proclaims: "When I first met your brother, Mara, he was very lazy, a very lazy African man. At first I didn't understand, because here we hear always that African people are hard workers and love hard work because God made them specially for the hard work of the world" (98-99). Gitte claims that she has reformed Akobi so that he lives as an "ordinary labourer" and performs some of the household's chores (99). As MaryEllen (Ellie) Higgins notes, "Gitte's nationality affords her power over Akobi: she issues him orders, reproaches him for disobedience, and reiterates racist stereotypes of African men" ("Transnational" 312).[43] Akobi is keenly aware of this power dynamic and thinks carefully about how to manipulate Gitte through withholding information. He also manipulates her by nurturing her imaginations about black/African people. For instance, Akobi convinces Gitte that Mara should do all of the housework by saying, "Our African women work even harder than us men, Gitte. And my sister is no exception. They are brought up like that, to work, work, work. They love doing it" (Darko *Beyond* 108). Though Gitte has previously insisted that she will not be solely responsible for the housework and that Akobi must contribute his labor too, she allows Mara to do all of it because Gitte

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[43] See "'About Lovers in Accra': Urban Intimacy in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*," for Maria Olaussen's deft explanation the "complex situation of racial and gender oppression" within the Akobi-Mara, Akobi-Comfort, Akobi-Gitte relationships (74). The redistribution of resources from Gitte and Mara to Comfort is explored in Olaussen's article and within Higgins' "Transnational, Transcultural Feminisms?" While interesting, it remains outside of my present intervention.

believes that "God made [African people] specially for the hard work of the world."

Mara obliges by doing the housework, because she understands that Akobi's legal

status is provided by his marriage to Gitte. This puts Gitte in the privileged position in

their relationship, though Akobi is obviously still deceiving her. According to Higgins,

"In the sphere of Akobi and Gitte's home, the international division of labor manifests

itself alongside and inflects the sexual division, to the denigration of both Akobi and

Mara" ("Transnational" 312). But of the two, it is Mara who is at the greatest

disadvantage because she does not benefit from legal status in Germany as Akobi

does, and she is placed on the bottom of the hierarchy of identities, because of her

female sex *and* blackness.

For Mara, being a person with the unprivileged biological sex/gender, is not

new at all. She has negotiated that and though, she remained in an abusive marriage,

other women, like Mama Kiosk and the unnamed women in her village provided

examples of successful and happy women. In other words, her situation in an abusive

marriage was not constructed as an unchangeable or ontological fact. It was not even a

matter of sex/gender. And a "greenhorn" in Accra, she was mocked, but she had the

opportunity to cultivate a self that was successful and respected, which she did. But

being a person with the unprivileged nationality is a new experience. In Germany, her

"new" designation as an "illegal" African without legal status or protections forecloses

her access to identities that might be comparable to "Mara of the city."

However, the real horror is that Akobi has brought her to Germany to work as

a prostitute. When Mara refuses, Akobi takes her to a party and drugs her. He later

shows her a pornographic film where she is participating in sexual acts with many

men and then he threatens to distribute the video in Naka if she doesn't work as a prostitute. Facing this threat, Mara submits. Akobi's friend represents Mara's prostitution to her in racialized terms: "For an illegal nigger woman like you, there's no other job in Germany, Mara. If you don't get a housemaid job then there's only this, you understand? Because you're too illegal and too black for any proper job, you get it?" (Darko *Beyond* 114) Not only does the man normalize her sexual coercion as "prostitution" (which does not necessarily imply force), but he links legality, race, and labor. This link is borne out in the novel. Mara discovers that the odd-seeming African women she has previously met also work as prostitutes under the control of male partners. Their clients include white German men who call them derogative and abusive names. Eventually, Mara gains a streetwise education from the other African women in the brothels. They share stories of resisting, betraying, and escaping from their abusive partners. Using their narratives as a guide, Mara forms a sophisticated plan to ruin Akobi's schemes by anonymously sending information to Gitte and the German government. Her plans are successful: Gitte divorces Akobi; Comfort is deported and begins a relationship with a Nigerian Big Man; and Akobi is jailed for fraud and slatted for deportation. Mara escapes her pimp with the assistance of a friend and begins to work in Munich under another pimp. It is from this point that she recounts her transformation from unmature young woman in Naka, Ghana to "hardened prostitute" in Munich, Germany.

Thus, Mara's final identity—the one she is obsessed with at the narrative's end—is that of the prostitute. As Maria Frias rightly observes, through Mara, Darko "presents a polyphony of the prostitute metaphor which helps to illustrate the

complexity of the lives of African women emigrants in Europe, at the same time it subversively pushes the boundaries of the traditional male prostitution trope" (121). The "traditional male prostitution trope" that Frias refers to recurs throughout many 20th c. male-authored African bildungsromane. In her analyses of the trope within the work of Ousmane Sembene, Nuruddin Farah, Mongo Beti, Wole Soyinka, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and others, Florence Stratton observed that:

> [P]rostitution is not related to the female social condition in patriarchal
> societies. Rather it is a metaphor for men's degradation under some non-
> preferred socio-political system – a metaphor which encodes women as agents
> of moral corruption, as sources of moral contamination in society. (53)

In other words, the depiction of female prostitutes in this corpus of texts refer to men as *they* are understood to be the historical and national subjects. Meanwhile women exist to refract the societal conditions which men endure but not as subjects of those very same conditions. The polyphonic quality of the trope which Frias alludes to was written into the African literary tradition by women who presented prostitution in diverse ways: as a result of sexual violence and exploitation which referred to women's actual conditions in society (not men's), as a choice made out of necessity, and as a strategy for subverting male dominance.[44] I agree with Frias' observation that Darko re-presents these tropes through Mara's final condition, as a prostituted person and identity as a "whore" (Darko *Beyond* 139).

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[44] See chapter 4 of Stratton's *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* which focuses on the work of Flora Nwapa. Another notable contribution is Susan Arndt's *The Dynamics of African Feminism* which includes analyses of various representations of prostitution in the works of Buchi Emecheta, Bessi Head, Nawal El Saadawi, and Calixthe Beyala.

Furthermore, the various components of prostitution—sexual exchange, commodity exchange, coercion, and economic exploitation—mimetically represent Mara's other (preceding) conditions and identities. For instance, when we return to the beginning of the narrative and recall Comfort's presence before Akobi's marriage, we realize that Akobi married Mara with the intention to use conventions of Ghanaian culture—namely the tradition of women working in- and outside of the home and the positive associations and identities linked to hardworking women—to create his own individual wealth and woo Comfort (115-116). Like Mara, we understand the marital exchange between her father and Akobi (and his father) to be exploitative.[45] This leads to the recognition that the socially sanctioned marriage is also potentially exploitative in conditions that do not accommodate the wellbeing of one partner. The second identity it recalls us to is "Mara of the city," Mara's self-constructed preferred adult identity. Ironically, the "whore" Mara appears as the foil of the ideal "Mara of the city" who was envisioned as a sophisticated person with access to commodities. It is the "whore" Mara who provides commodities to her family (140). As Odamtten notes, Mara's ability to send commodities seems to support the myth that residing in Europe is connected to superiority and financial gain (104). "Mara of the city" had intended to work hard and cultivate her*self* and her skills so that she could testify to the truth of that myth but when she is unable to do so and become "Mara of the city," her family is

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[45] Other texts which develop this point are Laura Barberán Reinares's *Sex Trafficking in Postcolonial Literature: Transnational Narratives from Joyce to Bolaño* (esp. p. 97), Vincent O. Odamtten "Amma Darko's Beyond the Horizon, Vending the Dream and Other Traumas of the Obedient Daughter" (106), and MaryEllen (Ellie) Higgins' "Transnational, Transcultural Feminisms? Amma Darko's Response in *Beyond the Horizon*" which deals with the failure of Gitte and Mara to establish a transcultural and inter-national feminist link which might prevent their exploitation.

wholly unaware because they are too busy enjoying the commodities provided by "whore" Mara to notice.

Moreover, the prostitution represents black, poor, and politically disenfranchised African women in their nation of birth and in Europe. The various types of exploitation make this clear. Laura Barberán Reinares advances a similar claim in *Sex Trafficking in Postcolonial Literature: Transnational Narratives from Joyce to Bolano*. She argues that "[w]hile patriarchy clearly enables Mara's exploitation, the power white and black men exercise over Mara is slightly different: German men exploit Mara because she is black and poor; African men exploit Mara because she is a woman" (Barberán Reinares 102). Both groups of men exploit the sexual division of labor and the international division of labor and both treat Mara as a commodity (97). This nuance further points us to the representational import of prostitution. On one hand, the African men in the novel bring their partners to Europe under the guise of continuing companionate/marital relationships, and sometimes even with the knowledge that some type of sex labor will occur. Drawing upon social science and human rights scholarship, Barberán Reinares explains that the women are effectively "trafficked" as "sex slaves" since the conditions of their living and labor are unknown to them and they will become unable to leave due to structural impediments to international travel, like confiscated passports (100). Within the novel, once the African women are in Germany, the African men benefit from their domestic labor within the households they share with their German wives and their African partners' sexual labor within the brothels. Thus, they benefit from both their position as men within a traditional and contemporary gender system (of Africa and Europe)

and their position as legal residents who control through psychological, physical, and emotional abuse. In her analysis, Higgins notes that Akobi and the other men in the novel "resembl[e] European colonizers and neocolonizers" in their control over communication and knowledge as well as in their inability to genuinely engage the women as partners "in solidarity against common oppressions" ("Transnational" 318). Higgins' observation here is an interesting one since, Mara's mentor in Hamburg tells her several stories about African women who were effectively smooth-talked into prostitution by male partners who claimed that it would alleviate "oppressions," such as the burden of poverty or illegality. Only later do the women realize that they have been deceived and by that point, the men are able to blackmail them with photos and videos. What Higgins points out is that prostitution could effectively be a means for a pair to earn money and purchase legal residency papers for both of them; it could be a labor of solidarity. But like (neo)colonizers, the men act only in their own interest and exploit their advantage.

On the other hand, the novels representation of the prostitution clients creates further analytical and allegorical depth. For example, most of the johns in the narrative are referred to as white Germans. Mara recounts the way they "eroticiz[e her as] an exotic sized object of desire" (Barberán Reinares 101) but then dehumanize her by doing "horrible things" like spitting, calling her "nigger fool," and leaving her scratched and bruised (Darko *Beyond* 3; 2). German men buy sex from Mara and others like her, without any regard for the conditions of the women; they enjoy the

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protections of citizenship, without any regard for those whose illegality place them in peril (Barberán Reinares 100; 103-105).[46] As Barberán Reinares explains

> …German men demand and consume African sex slaves in the shadows of the brothels, but openly prosecute and deport them for their illegal status and activities in the sanctity of the law courts. If we extrapolate this tension to a global context and theorize it through Lacan's configuration of the split subject, one could argue that the global north desires and imports these women (illegally), but then rejects them and deports them (legally). (99)

In other words, the German men (in the novel and elsewhere) are not simply consumers but part of the exploitative system. Moreover, if we extrapolate, as Barberán Reinares recommends, we can understand the women to occupy the positions of racialized labor from the Global South more generally. They are "trafficked" into the Global North in a manner that is facilitated by its citizens and labor in underpaid and unsafe positions that citizens of the Global North benefit from. Meanwhile, the citizenry supports laws which exacerbates exploitation, without any reference to the nation's own culpability and financial gain. Read this way, we can understand Mara as a national and historical subject as well as an allegorical figure for Ghana.

Ironically, when Mara escapes to Munich, she is not outside of exploitation then either. The threat of violence and the compulsion to sell sex has not abated. Her

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[46] As Margarete von Galen's "Prostitution and the Law in Germany" explains, The Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) effectively decriminalized prostitution in 1973 (361-363). However, my point here coincides with Barberán Reinares' point: women without citizenship or legal status to be in Germany are unable to report the criminal acts perpetrated against them, such as pimping and violence.

final pimp is just as demanding (Higgins "Transnational" 314) and Mara recognizes this by referring to him as "Oves," which is short for "Overseer" (Darko *Beyond* 3). He is "not as tolerant" as her previous pimp and provides Mara with "snow to sniff" so that she'll continue to prostitute herself despite the obtrusive feelings of sadness (139). This final male figure has replaced her husband and father in enforcing her identity and status. Unlike the former two, he is white, German, and completely transparent about the nature of exploitation and the threat of violence. There is no appeal to traditions or values. What has replaced the rhetorics that rationalize traditional patriarchy is the logic of financial exchange, exploitation, illegality, and precarity.

But Mara is also part of the exploitative scheme because she receives the money. The narrative conclusion prevents a purely optimistic reading of this by focusing on her depression and by her internal dialogue which seems to assign her partial responsibility. Reflecting on her situation in Munich, Mara thinks: "I was also party to it all even if involuntarily. And I guess that my punishment for it is that I am stuck with Oves for the rest of my life" (139). The ambiguity of "it" makes the referent unclear. "It" cannot refer to exposing Akobi or even the move from Hamburg to Munich because she was not "also party to it"—she was the sole initiator of it. Ergo, "it" must refer to something else which remains unnamed. I read "it" to refer to several things at once—her decision to continue a relationship with Akobi, her decision to go to Germany, her attempt to negotiate her relationship with Akobi and Gitte before she was coerced into prostitution, and her continued stay in Germany. To some extent, these are all choices, because Mara is aware that Mama Kiosk provided an alternative means of living and working in Accra at any time. She trusts Mama

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Kiosk so completely that she is the only one she communicates with in Ghana and Mara sends all the commodities and currencies through her (139). But, as I explained earlier in the chapter, in each instance *before* her sexual enslavement, Mara remains in an unideal situation partly because of her pursuit of a preferred adult identity. This is why she confesses at the end of her maturation: "Yes! I've used myself and I have allowed myself to be too used to care any longer" (1). Mara becomes all the more sympathetic as we realize that she is the only person who knows her complete story and that she lives outside of a friendship community in Munich.

Ultimately, Mara's maturation from the "foolish little village girl from Naka" to a woman who is "[quickly] sinking into a place hotter than hell" (121; 139) revises the literary and extraliterary narrative of upward mobility through rural-to-urban migration and transnational migration. In Mara, Darko constructs a character who is sincere, hardworking, respectful, as well as eager to adopt innovations and learn the skills of the world. Though she remains close to traditional edicts as a young woman, Mara is not *only* or *always* a disengaged, compliant, or naive object within her tale. However, as Darko illustrates, personal and/or individual traits, agency, and greater knowledge are not defenses for/against the conditions that pervade the society. Thus, neither Mara's subjective evaluation of herself nor an evaluation of commodities or experiences which adhere to hegemonic beliefs can re-create Mara as a subject who has access to the structures of personal development or the political protections that make development of the individual and social group possible.

The Housemaid and Consanguineal Relations

The second part of Darko's cumulative bildung is *The Housemaid* (1998). Through a juxtaposition of regressive traditional relationships with progressive supportive relationships, *The Housemaid* interrogates various consanguineal logics and the societal situation that they emerge from. *The Housemaid* features dual protagonists which are a noted characteristic of African women's literature (Stratton 97, 104-105; Andrade *Nation* 117). The two protagonists are Tika, a 35-year-old successful businesswoman, living in Accra, Ghana, and Efia, a 14-year-old girl who lives with her family in the underdeveloped village of Kataso. Before I explicate the consanguineal logics and demonstrate the link between consanguineal orientations and bildung, I will explain each characters' identity so that Darko's representation of the positive potential of these orientations can be fully recognized. The first protagonist, Tika, is interpolated through several intersectional factors which include parentage, marital status, fertility, occupation, socio-economic class, and place of residence. Tika is the only child of wealthy parents, and she has spent her entire life in Accra. Her father was born and raised in the village of Kataso before he migrated to Accra and acquired considerable wealth. As a "son" of Kataso, he and his descendants are presumed to "belong" there, and, as members, must contribute accordingly. This is one tangible aspect of consanguineal associations, and it remains relevant in rural and urban contexts in West Africa. It becomes tangible through the exchange between members of a self-determined group. Where the wealthy member's contribution to the family or village may be awarded with decision making power, social status, and currency, the contributions of the less-wealthy members may be awarded with housing

(particularly in a coveted area, such as the city), financial support, currency, and even commodities. These are the expectations of a "son" or "daughter" of the village. Tika's mother, Sekyiwa, is her father's much younger second wife who is not from the village. Because her father rejected his first wife—an indigene of Kataso—to marry Sekyiwa, the younger woman has not been successfully incorporated into her husband's family or natal community.

Added to this, their marriage was not a happy one. Once Sekyiwa became wealthy through her husband's initial support, she mocked his age and impotence and flaunted her lovers until the old man died. Tika's paternal kin and the rest of the village resent Sekyiwa. Tika's identity is interpolated through the aspects of both of her parents. On one hand, she is recognized as having "the blood of Kataso flowing in her veins" and on the other hand, she is recognized as the child of "an enemy" (36). This designation as a corrupted *insider* is read through Tika's birth and her umbilical cord. For instance, when Teacher, a character who will emerge as a mediator, initially thinks of Tika as having insecure links to the village, Teacher accounts for this judgement by recalling that while she was born in the village and her umbilical cord was buried on its land, Tika "was delivered in a hospital in the city and had had her umbilical cord flushed down into the sewage system with countless others" (35). The destruction of the umbilical cord in a "sewage system" and in the company of "countless others," rather than its careful placement within the family compound is held to represent Tika's inability to understand traditional cultural values of Kataso. The changed birthing practices suggest "modern" or updated conventions but also the

corruption of "traditions associated with village life" (Higgins "Ngambika" 65).[47]

These contradictory designations for Tika—as a child of an indigene and as an outsider and city-dweller—will become meaningful for the plot and the narrative discourse.

Though Tika is aware of the reticence of the Katasoans, Tika uses the same intersectional factors to judge herself. She constructs her self-identity through her "dual" parentage,[48] marital status, biological reproduction, education, occupation, and socioeconomic class. Also, she identifies two events as central to her situation: her departure from school and the end of her first relationship. At 18, Tika failed her Ordinary-level exams.[49] Sekyiwa recognized the event as an opportunity to ingratiate herself to Tika who blamed her for mistreating her father. Because Sekyiwa is "100 per cent illiterate [and] stinking rich," she offered to set Tika up in business rather than to fund a tutor (*Housemaid* 18). Her mother's start-up money and the tutelage from her mother's friend allows Tika to end her formal education and enter into the coveted import-export trade. However, neither woman tells Tika that the profit from the industry is not very great once the customs' duties and bribes are paid or that some of the male officials will only accept transactional sex, not payment in currency or goods. When she realizes this a few months into the business, she feels "she ha[s] no option

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[47] See also Veronica Barnsley's "Midwives and Witches: Reproductive Health, Rights, and Development in Amma Darko's *The Housemaid*," especially pp. 123-129.

[48] Tika is hyperaware of having one parent who belongs to Kataso and one parent who does not. While Sekyiwa is not associated with any particular natal home, Tika recalls Kataso through her father's natal association. He would tell her, "This is where my umbilical cord was buried.... [S]o when I die, please take me back there" (*Housemaid* 29).

[49] As in the U.K., the fifth and sixth forms are the final two years of Ghanaian secondary education. Successful completion of the Ordinary level (or O level) exam at the end of the fifth form allows students to begin the sixth form where they may take additional exams and qualify for university admittance.

but to consent" (*Housemaid* 23). The result of Tika's business dealings are considerable wealth and the end of her high school relationship.

In the novel's present, Tika reflects on these events as she acknowledges that "it had never been [her] dream… to be single and childless at the ripe old age of thirty-five" (Darko *Housemaid* 17). Yet when she discovers that she is pregnant, she decides to get an abortion. She refuses to marry the father because he is one of her transactional sex partners and she tolerates him only for the sake of her business. She also refuses her mother's offer to help her raise the child, because she is still angry about her mother's treatment of her father. Ironically, Sekyiwa's attempt to reconcile with her daughter by providing a business has led to more resentment since Tika blames her for the conditions of her labor. When Sekyiwa begs the question of who will inherit the wealth they are accumulating, Tika states that she will "give it to the people of Kataso" (27). She goes through with the abortion, and following complications with the procedure, she also has a hysterectomy.

The other half of the dual protagonist is Efia, the 14-year-old who becomes the housemaid. Her identity is also read through factors such as parentage, socioeconomic status, (prospect for) job training, and location in the village (agrarian polity). The novel makes it clear that the village of Kataso does not afford its inhabitants the means for individual or community development, which would be education, job training, or the development of agrarian, manufacturing, or market exchange industries. It also makes the point that young people leave the village for the surrounding cities due to the absence of these modes of social and economic advancement (29-30). In the cities, their lives are not better. In fact, their labor in the city is characterized by conditions

such as lack of suitable and safe housing, lack of stable social community, the necessity of transactional sex, low and unstable wages, and physically demanding work (32). But the city provides access to commodities which are envied in the village. Their location in Accra, Kumasi, and Takoradi is a point of pride for the people in the village (31). Here, again, the commodity changes the characteristics of the labor itself.

Moreover, Kataso is a site of combined-and-uneven development. The family and social relationships, and the ethnocultural logics which govern them, pre-date European colonialism. The novel offers several examples of these relationships and logics, namely, the Katasoans conception of themselves as a separate group even when residing in various cities, the practice of communal migration and celebration exemplified by the yam festival,[50] the rituals which govern autochthonous claims (such as the burial of the umbilical cord), the kinship structure and logics of familial affiliation and obligation, and the power of the traditional ruler. Though these have remained, the community's modes of exchange and social reproduction has also integrated structures which emerged with capitalist modernity and European imperialism, which were two coterminous phenomena, though not the same.

The two central characters meet when Tika contracts Teacher to find her a housemaid. Though, Teacher is so-called "by virtue of her profession," she enjoys considerable popularity, trust, and status, and the receipt of useful food items, and money because she successfully places female adolescents from Kataso in good

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[50] Though yam festivals are common throughout West Africa, it is notable that people do not attend the "local" or "city" yam festivals but return to their home to celebrate the harvesting of yam because it is tied into the cosmological belief systems.

housemaid positions in Accra (34-35, 56). Teacher initially tries to dissuade Tika because of the general contempt that people have for her mother, but when she realizes that Tika is dealing with complications from an abortion, she relents. Teacher selects Efia as the housemaid because she is a member of Tika's father's kindred. Her payment is clearly outlined in the novel, and it follows the standards which have existed through the 20th c. and remain today. Efia will receive room and board, good treatment, and job training. Tika's generosity and feelings of obligation also lead her to pledge that "before we part ways [Efia] will have her own sewing machine, plus ample money to get started in life" (42). On the eve of Efia's departure to Accra, her mother and maternal grandmother wake her up during the night and reveal a plan designed to transfer Tika's wealth to their family. Efia's grandmother explains that Tika is a "wasted woman" "with no womb" and that her father was Kataso's "illustrious son" (46). She then claims that the dead father's "ghost wants to return to his family all that his evil wife stole from him," and asks, "The money that Tika used to start her business, wasn't it part of her mother's blood money?" (46) She tells Efia that when she goes to the city, she must become pregnant and claim that one of Tika's transactional sex partners raped her. Efia's grandmother anticipates that Tika's shame about transactional sex and her desire to be a mother will lead to Tika's adoption of the child. She envisions that Efia will be retained as a housemaid and childcarer, and that Efia's child will inherit wealth which will "trickle down" to them (48).

Though initially surprised, the presence of her mother and the allusion to her father's co-planning of the plot convinces Efia to agree with the plan. According to Naana Banyiwa Horne, Efia agrees, in part, because her grandmother utilizes the

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cultural tropes of the grandmother figure to elide the deceitful nature of the scheme. As Horne explains, Efia sees her grandmother as the "sage" who possesses wisdom and the acumen to provide moral guidance (112) and the "muse" who inspires young people to "seek creative solutions to life's challenges" (113). Moreover, the planning scene itself seems to support the grandmother's adherence to cultural practices: As Horne explains:

> This behaviour [of waking a young person to give advice] is a common cultural practice, and in that sense, the grandmother of Efia is acting in accordance with cultural norms and performing her role as sage and muse according to a traditional archetype. The young woman, leaving to work in the city, needs words of wisdom [and] inspiration to guide her, and the grandmother is the right person to provide this guidance. But in Efia's case the grandmother exploits this time-honoured practice to manipulate her granddaughter into becoming the key player in a scheme hatched by the old woman to defraud Tika. (120)

In other words, Efia's knowledge of cultural practices makes her more apt to follow her grandmother's directives despite how shocking and morally transgressive they sound. Horne also notes that Efia's grandmother uses traditional cosmological belief in the communication between living people and ancestors to convince Efia that her plan is moral (120-121). For instance, the grandmother claims that "the ghost of Tika's father" was responsible for selecting Efia as the housemaid so that he can be near her, the grandmother, because she is "someone who could hear an understand his distant voice" (Darko *Housemaid* 45).

In Accra, Efia quickly earns Tika's appreciation for her good work and she, too, appreciates Tika. Efia is enthusiastic about her newfound mobility in Accra, a much higher standard of living in a comfortable apartment, and the responsibility and free time which accompanies her tasks. She is equally enthusiastic about her sexual freedom and the trust and praise of her mother and grandmother. So, she sets to performing both types of labor. Labor is central to Efia's access to skill training, currency, commodity acquisition, and even upward mobility which she (and her family) has been excluded from. But the theme of gendered labor is one of the ironies of the plot. Like the other female characters, Efia has two types of labor. On one hand, the domestic labor can provide her with the aforementioned benefits (Horne 124), just as it did Teacher who was brought to Accra at eleven years old to work as a housemaid and then enrolled in school. Though Tika doesn't offer to support Efia's education, her renumeration is generous and can be depended upon. But Efia is instructed to jeopardize her position and instead perform the labor of biological and social reproduction. Efia's child will actually extend their family into a new generation and the family envisions that she will enrich them through Tika and raise the status of the family within Kataso (48). Sex, then, is central to this labor and by requiring Efia to have sex with men in order to gain materially, Efia's parents and grandmother recreate the situation of Sekyiwa and Tika (Barnsley 125; Bungaro 32).

When the pregnancy is revealed, Tika does not react as expected. All of the schemes envisioned that she would confront Efia in anger and that the mother and grandmother would beg Tika for mercy. In each scenario, the grandmother narrates Tika as acting alone. Instead, a frustrated Tika seeks out Teacher and together, they

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conclude that something is amiss. When Efia finally names the man, Tika's suspicions are confirmed because Efia accidently names a very wealthy man who is sterile. Tika then convinces the man to appear before Efia's mother and grandmother, acknowledge the relationship, and commit to marriage once the child is born and a paternity test has been taken. Efia, her mother, and grandmother know that the plot has failed because the man will not be the father and Efia will be revealed as a liar. Her mother and grandmother immediately criticize Efia who then steals money from Tika and runs away. She hides with friends in Kumasi and gives birth to a girl in a temporary squat. The infant dies soon after birth and Efia recognizes that the baby has Down's Syndrome. Because she thinks that Down's Syndrome is punishment for her family's misdeeds, she boards a bus to Kataso with the intent of having rituals performed over the baby so that what she presumes to be Tika's curse will be lifted (102-103). When the smell of the dead child becomes overwhelming on public transport, she buries the dead infant in a shallow grave before eventually returning to Accra and confessing to Teacher. Rather than condemnation, Teacher listens and promises to help her reconcile with Tika.

The end reveals the bildung (or character formation). Though Efia remains somewhat in-formation, Tika's experience of attempting to extend opportunity to Efia and facing exploitation from Efia's family has led her to Teacher. Despite the frustration of dealing with Efia, the connection with Teacher has reoriented Tika toward challenging social relationships. This is where I locate the narrative's broad endorsement of consanguineal relationships. Though Tika's mother is one of the challenging relationships that she is considering at the end of the novel—so is her

relationship with Efia. Tika is willing to entertain the idea of reconciling with both of them, despite betrayal and misgivings. The consanguineal bond has been formed with unrelated persons, namely Teacher and Efia, who volunteer her association with the other. This is the consanguineal association which serves as a model and foundation for the feminist praxis which might transform social and political relations in rural and urban environments in the African context. The novel does not suggest that this one relationship is enough. Rather, the novel depicts that many conditions/contexts in the novel remain unchanged. In keeping with realist literary fiction, *The Housemaid* does not resolve the larger conflicts with the narrative, that is, the exploitation of women by governmental and bank officials. However, it suggests a way that marginalized subjects and those in peripheries may form links which enrich their lives regardless.

Ultimately, the narrative places the two meanings of consanguinity in contest. The first meaning of "blood relation" as a logic of affiliation is undermined by the narrative of familial exploitation. Both protagonists are lured into sexual exchange by their mothers and grandmothers. In both instances, the effect on the adolescent is ignored in favor of potential material gain. The other meaning of the term emphasizes voluntary association and negotiation. These latter consanguineal relationships are the positive ones. The tension between the two meanings of consanguinity recalls us to Claude Ake's distinction between the indigenous and the traditional. In "Building on the Indigenous," Ake wrote:

> The indigenous is not the traditional, there is no fossilized existence of the
> African past available for us to fall back on, only new totalities however hybrid
> which change with each passing day. The indigenous refers to whatever the

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people consider important to their lives, whatever they regard as an authentic

expression of themselves. We build on the indigenous by making it determine

the form and content of development strategy, by ensuring that developmental

change accommodates itself to these things, be they values, interests,

aspirations and/or social institutions which are important in the life of the

people. (13)

Ake is actually writing about political and technological development in Africa, but I

find his distinction appropriate for thinking about the development of the family

institution. As Obioma Nnaemeka notes, the

distinction Ake makes between the traditional and the indigenous is an

important one because it frees us from the reified notion of culture as it is

evoked by 'tradition' to clear the space for the functioning of the now and then,

and the here and there—a dynamic, evolving hybrid of different histories and

geographies. (377)

This "hybrid," which is attentive to "histories" and responsive to the dynamism of

contemporary life, is yet another way to describe a consanguineal praxis. The

challenge, which Ake acknowledges, is in gathering the courage to turn away from the

current ways of being and rationalizing so that a change can develop (14). In terms of

the novel, what I am suggesting is that it narrativizes an indigenous consanguineal

praxis as well as a "traditional" consanguineal logic which is authorized by archaic,

regressive, or abusive sentiments or behaviors. Though the indigenous consanguineal

model is clearly preferable because it does not depend on codified relational types

with empowered and disempowered subject positions, it is not a mandate. The

indigenous must be created, and this is work that does not guarantee precision or quick success. By ending the novel with the implication that Efia and Tika will enter a vulnerable space and attempt to reestablish a relationship with new terms, The Housemaid suggests that consanguineal relations are possible.

Faceless and Institutions of Development

Faceless is the last novel in the cumulative bildung project. It is also the most generically different from a prototypical bildungsroman[51]. In this section, I will explicate the way that Darko links the nation's institutions to individual and social development and argue that *Faceless* engages in commenting upon the crisis of development for poor and gendered persons. I follow MaryEllen (Ellie) Higgins in my analysis of *Faceless*' attention to the family, the media, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as aspects of individual development. Higgins argues that *Faceless* is a work of "grassroots fiction" which depicts "ordinary women and men" as they try to "ameliorate contemporary problems" ("Ngambika" 58). Higgins uses the Tshiluba concept of Ngambika, which refers to the "complex balance of power that affects women in relation to social, economic and political structures," to analyze the cooperative action of *Faceless*' characters (58-59).

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[51] Take, for example, the different genres that scholars have associated with *Faceless*. Edgar Nabutanyi has written about it as a "crime fiction novel" and Ato Quayson has characterized it as "journalistic," an "urban novel," and a "mystery thriller" (*Oxford Street* 214, 217-229). Higgins has noted its "blen[d] … of mystery and resistance literature" ("Ngambika," 68), but her more prominent argument about grassroots fiction will be engaged throughout this section. Read apart from the other two bildungsromane, I consider *Faceless* a novel of social criticism.

Like *The Housemaid*, *Faceless* is set in Accra and the protagonist position is shared. The novel begins with one protagonist, the fourteen-year-old Fofo, asleep on the street. Fofo is homeless and typically sleeps in the squalid neighborhood known as Sodom and Gomorrah. She has eschewed her usual routine of spending the night with the homeless youth who make up her community in order to sleep near the open-air market in the Agbobloshie neighborhood, where she will begin a new job washing vegetables early the next morning. Fofo is experiencing a pleasant dream about living in a house with a toilet when she is awakened by a man attempting to rape her (Darko *Faceless* 26-27). Recognizing her attacker as Poison, Fofo decides not to resist the rape attempt. He is not only a much bigger man but a notorious gangster who commands a criminal network which controls the area through violence. Despite this decision, Fofo impulsively fights back and escapes. Ironically, the novel presents Fofo's self-defense as both intuitive and counter intuitive. It is the former in so much that it is motivated by the "fight-or-flight" adrenal glands which the body activates when in danger, but it is counterintuitive because the momentary defense causes Poison to continue to hunt Fofo. The next day, Fofo abandons her plans to begin a new job in the market and decides to visit her mother, Maa Tsuru, and ask why Poison has attacked her. Though Fofo doesn't know how they met, she is aware that they know each other. Because of the previous night's attack, she must move through the neighborhoods stealthily in order to avoid Poison and his crew. When she arrives at her mother's home, Fofo learns that her elder sister, Baby T., is dead and that her body has been found at the market. Her mother is too overcome to explain any other details.

The second chapter introduces the second main character, Kabria. As a married, university graduate, who is employed at MUTE, a local NGO, she is firmly within Accra's middle class. Her architect husband works at a comfortable position, and he drives a company-issued car. Their three children attend a good school, and their only embarrassment is Kabria's old Volkswagon dropping them in front of their school. Kabria's household includes a house maid who is properly taken care of. (She receives room and board, food, and the fees for her seamstress training course. Like Tika, it is clear that Kabria takes her stewardship seriously.) It is immediately clear that Kabria is overworked and underappreciated by her family, but it is also clear that this exists within the stable domestic context which is common for professional women who work outside of the household in various parts of the world, regardless of where the country is situated in the global division of labor.

In Kabria and Fofo, we have two characters which are distinct and un-alike. Kabria is a mother, wife, and worker. Fofo doesn't have a stable home or job. She is no longer a child—a fact that the novel stresses—but not yet an adult. She has little formal education and has lived on the street for more than a year. Fofo's primary relationship is with agemates who also share the squat. Together, they live within the complex and stratified community of people who might be referred to as homeless, street children/people, degenerate, and so on. Their community consists of people who make up the informal economy of day-and-night workers, street hawkers, market laborers and also the extralegal and illegal economy of thieves, drug transporters/sellers, sex workers and so on. Fofo and her mates survive by stealing, working infrequent jobs when available, and sharing food as it becomes available.

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They also survive by drinking locally produced liquor and having sex, for pleasure, distraction, and transactional purposes. Like Fofo, many of her friends have a living mother and other known family members. Most are not orphans, but the absence of protective parental figures is directly linked to their homelessness and poverty.

The two characters meet at the market when Fofo, disguised as a boy, snatches Kabria's purse. When the people of the market catch Fofo with the solen purse, Kabria immediately recognizes that the young thief may be in danger of a severe beating or death, and she lies to get Fofo away from the crowd. Having saved Fofo, walked "him" out of the market, recognized her as female, and given her a small amount of money, Kabria gets into her car to depart for work, when Fofo yells, "I want government" (*Faceless* 73). When the confounded Kabria asks her what she means, Fofo reveals that the mutilated body found in the market is that of her sister. This revelation prompts Kabria to inform her MUTE colleagues and together with a local radio station, Harvest FM, they begin to investigate the murder of Baby T. The conclusion of the investigation is not a happy one. They discover that Baby T. was sexually abused, sold into sexual slavery, and eventually beaten to death by Poison. Despite the violence of Baby T.'s murder, by depicting the process of co-operative investigation and critiquing developmental institutions, *Faceless* enacts a consanguineal orientation.

In a more pronounced way than the previous novels, *Faceless* highlights structures and institutions which make development possible for individuals and communities. The three key structures within the novel are familial structures, social/civic structures, and media structures. As in Darko's earlier novels, the family is

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an institution of individual and social development. Here, too, the parents of the young characters are insufficient protectors, teachers, and guides for the adolescent girlchild. In *Beyond* and *Housemaid*, the parents are from agrarian communities with minimal access to formal education and appealed to ideas about tradition. As the novels depicted, they had a belated reference for behavior of adolescent and adult children. Notably, in the two previous novels, the adolescent and young adult female child shares her parents' views. The earlier section has described various ways Mara retained ideas from her natal community even after introduction to other ideas and Efia's acquiescence to her parents' and grandmother's directives. Conversely, *Faceless* is set entirely in the city and amongst families like Fofo, "whose 'village' happens to be inner-city Accra" (140). This reveals that within Accra, it is possible to experience the structural exclusions that so-often characterize the African village, including poverty, lack of access to education, lack of industry or employment, poor/inadequate healthcare, lack of social services and government offices, and "traditional" forms of patriarchy perpetuated through language and behavior. This is what Maa Tsuru and her daughters are faced with. Like the Katasoans in *The Housemaid*, the decisions made by parents, such as Maa Tsuru, and young people, such as Fofo and her friends, are governed by materialist concerns. When asked to explain how she came to live on the street Fofo narrates the transition from school child, to pickpocket and thief, to homeless youth. She says, "When there is no food, you don't wait to be asked by anyone to go out and beg. Hunger is a foe and it is overpowering" (129). After she joins a gang, she decides to live on the street so that she can keep the money she makes rather than turn it over to her mother (130). But

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where Fofo had somewhat of a choice, other friends do not. When telling about her friend's transition to homelessness, Fofo describes the difference clearly:

> [Odarley] didn't leave home. She was sacked. By her own mother. She sacked her like a fowl. She said Odarley was troublesome. That Odarley was stealing her money. She was a bad mother. She just didn't want Odarley around after Odarley's father left her for another woman and she too found another man. (132)

Odarley's case is not unusual as the novel's repeated episodes reveal. In one instance an FM station ask two adolescents, one male and one female, about "passionate dreams" (25). The FM station anticipates that the homeless youths will dream of "material things like shoes and dresses…or blankets for warmth at night" (25) but the male adolescent surprises the reporter by saying:

> My dream…is to be able to go home one day to visit my mother and see a look of joy on her face at the sight of me. I want to be able to sleep beside her. I wish her to tell me she was happy I came to visit her. Whenever I visit her, she doesn't let me stay long before she asks me politely to leave. She never has a smile for me. She is always in a hurry to see my back. […] One day she said to me, 'Go. You do not belong here.' If I don't belong to where she is, where do I belong? But I know that it is not just that she doesn't want to see me. She worries about the food that she has. It is never enough. So she worries that it may not suffice for her two new children if I joined. (26)

The teen, like Odarley, is pushed into the street by his mother not because of affect (or lack thereof) but because of insufficient food. The mother leverages the survival of the

two "new children" against the survival and self-sufficiency of the elder child. Other

characters within the novel also recognize that the material requirements for human

life and their scarcity influences the family institution. As Ms. Kamame, a researcher

with a local NGO, puts it:

> [Within] cities, there is a fragmentation, which results in behavioral flexibility.
> A woman like Fofo's mother, whose 'village' happens to be inner-city Accra,
> is more likely to lose her sense of onus rather speedily when pushed by
> joblessness and poverty and non-existent male support. Her physical and
> emotional detachment from her children is made less difficult in the harsh
> conditions of the inner city life. She let Fofo and [Baby T.] out onto the street
> with virtually no guilt at all because her psyche had accepted the situation with
> ample ease. (140-141)

Ms. Kamame's explanation is broadcast on the radio and serves to inform the listeners

(within the novel) and the readers of the novel about material conditions which

support the "onus" of motherhood. Altogether, various characters' life recollections

and analyses function to denaturalize mothering.[52] Mothering—the labor of physical,

emotional, and psychological support for the living human—is presented as

conditional. Through repeated presentations of impoverished urban mothers, Darko

suggests that mothering (and the "mother-child bond") represents behaviors that are

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[52] Fatherhood is also denaturalized through the sisters' unnamed biological father, their stepfather
Kpakpo, and their seemingly affable neighbor known as Onko (Uncle). These men all represent
different types of male failure. The biological father was superstition and irresponsible, while the
stepfather and Onko are predatory rapists. The father figures are held up as the true failures of the
contemporary family institution. That is one reason that the novel focuses much of the attention on the
mothers. As female humans who birth life, there is an implicit suggestion that they will be more apt to
change destructive behaviors.

unlikely to be enacted by humans in degraded living and social conditions. The pre-adolescent and adolescent children are pushed into the street and barred from home because the mothers do not want the financial responsibility of providing for their sustenance. In Maa Tsuru's case, she was supported by her elder two sons until they left home soon after Kpakpo's arrival in the household. The financial loss from their labor was not recouped until Kpakpo sold Baby T. into a prostitution ring when she was twelve. Importantly, Maa Tsuru justifies accepting this money—and the possibility of continuing a relationship with Kpakpo—in materialist terms: She claims that she cannot do without the money.

Furthermore, despite Maa Tsuru's performance of grief and contrition after Baby T.'s murder, she is incredulous when asked why she never attempted to look for her elder two sons. She knows where they work and other information that might make it possible to find them, but she never concerned herself with their whereabouts. This reveals that Maa Tsuru's attachment to her children is more conditional and situational than sentimental depictions of motherhood allow for. Furthermore, Maa Tsuru doesn't deny that she may resume a relationship with Kpakpo if he were to return. Though he is the perpetrator of deception and violence which directly contributed to Baby T.'s sexual slavery and murder, Maa Tsuru cannot imagine a life without a male partner. (Importantly, Kpakpo never contributed financially to the household. He has not worked for several years when Maa Tsuru meets him and his previous source of income is derived from running small-level scams which exploit the lack of affordable housing in central Accra. This is an important detail because Maa Tsuru frames her decisions in turns of the necessity to access currency, but she

has chosen a partner who has neither a place to live, an income, or any desire to work at all. Maa Tsuru's unacknowledged motivation is companionship.)

Interestingly, the novel does not spend as much time on fatherhood. Of course, fatherhood is also denaturalized through the sisters' biological father, their stepfather Kpakpo, and their seemingly affable neighbor known as Onko (Uncle). These men all represent different types of male failure and betrayal. The biological father is superstitious and irresponsible, while the stepfather and Onko are predatory rapists. The father figures are held up as the true failures of the contemporary family institution. But there are no recollections of children going to meet their fathers or NGO workers discussing how the stress of the city affects fathering. The implication seems to be that female humans have a far greater stake in the lives of their children and may have a greater means in changing outcomes.

Read through *Faceless*, the second structural category which makes individual development possible is the social service wing. In the novel, the NGO, MUTE, functions as just such an organization. MUTE is not an acronym but the word MUTE. Its employees describe MUTE as:

> The Alternative Library. Every social, gender and child issue was of interest to MUTE. Their sources were newspapers, magazines, radio, television, hearsay, gossip, telephone calls, and observations. On a few occasions, Kabria or another of her co-workers had had to play the investigative reporter. (63)

Thus, they support members of the public by collecting and compiling information. MUTE attempts to preserve the knowledge of Accra as a historical and dynamic

society (104-105) and function as an archive of sorts. It is probably not an unmeaningful detail that the founder, Dina, is currently unmarried because her previous husband divorced her after "four turbulent years of childlessness" (62). Darko brings the labor of mothering and the labor of social service into relation as two modes of social reproduction available to female persons. However, *Faceless* suggests that NGOs cannot serve a population as comprehensively as government bodies or education and empowered civil societies can. The NGOs mostly function to enrich the lives of the middle class. For instance, MUTE is typically lauded by educated people who research specific topics, and this suggests that these people are their primary "public" or audience.

However, MUTE accepts Fofo's request for help and investigates her sister's death. They successfully politicize Baby T.'s forced prostitution and murder and Fofo's plight as a street child. They also adopt the care of Fofo herself. Initially she stays in Dina's home and eventually they place her in a rehabilitation facility which will educate her and provide job training. They plan to continue to serve as guardians. Despite this, it is clear that MUTE is not an organization which functions primarily to rehabilitate discarded persons.

Another example of an organization that serves the public is the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG), an NGO founded in 1967 as an affiliate of the International Planned Parenthood Federation ("Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana"). Kabria discovers PPAG pamphlets, one of which reads "*Sexual Health for Quality Life*?" in her fifteen-year-old daughter's exercise book (*Faceless* 58; emphasis in original). Her first reaction is panic at the thought of her daughter being sexually active.

She later realizes that her daughter has planted the pamphlets for her to discover. The inversion here is that the adolescent girl-child has prepared the parent for a discussion about sexual activity and health. The mother's empowered position in the parent-child relationship gives her the ability to proceed with the discussion or to decline. Kabria proceeds by returning to read the pamphlets. She learns that PPAG has a new "consultancy" (97) which includes a "Youth to Youth Approach" and "Peer to Peer counselling" (99) designed for "ages ten to twenty-four" (98). Kabria reflects on the change in the organization:

> In her time, PPAG was identified …mainly with pills and condoms. The new PPAG and the diversity of their programmes overwhelmed her. Counselling and information on sexual and reproductive health. Voluntary counseling and testing for HIV/AIDS. Diagnosis and management of Sexually transmitted diseases… (99)

As the interior thoughts reveal, Kabria's reaction emerges from her subject position as a mother, a woman of a certain generation, and a worker in the public sector. She is worried about her children, surprised by the forthrightness of the younger generation, encouraged by the communication, and inspired to share the information. Specifically, she wonders how PPAG's new programs may be able to reach Fofo and other street children (100-101). This is an important consideration since homeless and impoverished children, adolescents, and young adults are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and violence. Without any immediate answers, Kabria reacts by educating her own children about street children. Though they are familiar with the sight of

children selling wares and food in traffic and in public spaces, they are unaware that many of them are destitute and/or homeless.

Of the social service organizations noted in the novel, few serve at-risk populations. One of these is The Househelp Agency (132). This organization seeks out (and is occasionally found by) teenage girls and young women who are in danger of being sold into prostitution. Often, the girls/women they serve are from outside Accra and have been lured by a person connected to their natal family or village. (This person would function as Teacher did in *The Housemaid*, but with ill intentions.) In the most common case of house help procurement, the maid's transition into Accra is known to her family which anticipates the financial relief of having a child sustain herself (as in the case of *The Housemaid*'s Efia), the financial benefit of receiving goods or currency from the child's labor (as Maa Tsuru anticipated for Baby T.'s labor in *Faceless*), or both. The benefit to the family can potentially add another obstacle to the would-be victim, because once in Accra, a person sold into prostitution must not only contend with the high cost of returning to one's home (if that is possible), but also the high social and psychological cost of being a burden on the family, if she is accepted back. Once The Househelp Agency identifies a potential victim, they help her escape, house her, and find her a real domestic position. They fund their operations by receiving a percentage of all house help wages (200-201). However, because their work results in the loss of enslaved girls/women from violent, powerful, and rich individuals (and organizations), they do not publicize this aspect of their work and they do not report suspicious people to law enforcement (202). The result is two-fold:

first, they continue operating without harassment[53] and, second, they serve far fewer people than they otherwise might. Additionally, their network serves two general population types: (1) older adolescents and young women from Accra who know how to go in search of them and (2) adolescents from villages who are identified as vulnerable by discreet observers. Preteens and younger adolescents from Accra whose exploitation is structured and commodified before the age of thirteen—those like Baby T.—would not be able to find such an organization and the organization would not be able to reach her. Thus, the organization is unable to serve the needs of all the vulnerable people who need them.

Altogether, the social service organizations reveal that people are building structures for individual and community development, but also that access to them is as stratified as the urban city. The social service apparatus is not ineffectual, but it is no substitute for government which must support an effective law enforcement, juridical branch, and social service apparatus in order to support the development of individual people and society. Without the nation's investment in its social services institutions, successful individual development remains the domain of the middle and upper classes. The poor classes—exemplified by Fofo—age but do not develop. Fofo is an amalgamation of mature and immature behaviors. She is not a child, but not a woman; she is hardened but vulnerable, immature, sometimes irresponsible and unable to care for herself.

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[53] Poison, the gangster who profited from Baby T.'s sex slavery, intimidates witnesses, investigators, and community members through threats, harassment, such as sending human feces to MUTE (*Faceless* 199-200), and violence (133).

The third category which supports individual development is a responsible and popular media. In *Faceless*, Harvest FM serves this function as does Sylv Po, the host of the popular "Good Morning Ghana" (GMG) show. GMG broadcasts news and information-based programs as well as programs on current affairs and popular topics to a broad audience. Because it is radio—as opposed to television or internet—it reaches listeners who may not own a device, may share one in a communal housing or work setting, and may be in transport or in public spaces (i.e., in an open-air market, in front of a tailor's shop, etc.). Like the novel, the radio program cannot replace the police or juridical branch, but it can function to establish a conversation about life, behavior, mores, and incite dialogue that compels people to speak about social issues. Darko does not assume that dialogue is automatically transformative or progressive. For example, *The Housemaid* begins with people who hear a radio broadcast about a dead baby and then descend into arguments about the licentiousness of men and the irresponsibility of women (5-10). In this case, the information provides "evidence" which various speakers use to support pre-established beliefs about male and female gender types. The example also aptly depicts the "social" character of radio "media." Unlike the individual and solitary consumption practices of radio in the Global North—exemplified by the current podcast listening practices—in West Africa, radio is still heard *with* other people. The radio content is then taken up by the people listening. Ergo, socially engaged media production is the precursor to progressive change.

Prompted by MUTE, Sylv Po produces a series of shows about Baby T.'s murder, Fofo, and the plight of homeless children and youth which is referred to as

"the streetchild phenomenon" (136). Rather than rely solely on MUTE, he integrates

other experts and the comments and questions of listeners. The series effectively

politicizes the condition of the children and raises the consciousness of the listeners.

For instance, when one listener calls in to ask: "Why should someone like me with a

job and a relatively comfortable life be bothered about the street children

phenomenon?" (141) Sylv Po's on-air guest, Ms. Kamame, a researcher with another

NGO, responds this way:

> You should! ... Because the consequences of the phenomenon affects the entire
>
> society of which you are an integral part. Ours is a society where the family is
>
> the nucleus of our culture. These children are growing up outside the culture of
>
> bonding to a family. The physical and psychological effect of detachment is to
>
> render them easily susceptible to survival through jungle street tactics and foul
>
> means. Then me and you who thought it was their problem alone, wake up one
>
> day to the rude realization that we have no choice but to share this same one
>
> society with them." (141)

This answer reframes the listener and street child from the position of separate and

disconnected individuals to the position of affiliated members of a shared society. As

Higgins explains, "*Faceless* concentrates on internal division within the city: by

identifying Sodom and Gomorrah as the site of sin, more privileged characters – with

the exception of Kabria and other grassroots activists – attempt to divest themselves of

any responsibility to alleviate the suffering of its poor inhabitants. The urban

underclass is dismissed as an Other and their struggles receive little priority on the

national agenda" ("Ngambika" 65). Absent a civic or governmental institution that can

investigate and implement change, accessible media, like Harvest FM, function to inform and politicize the condition of the urban underclass.

Ultimately, a popular and socially-engaged media is an arena where ideas combat one another, are tested, revived, and so on. Often, the most inflammatory ideas lead to ideas that are palatable and socially transformative. The series prompts a teen to call and ask if a law can be enacted to stop one's parents from having more children. Though the question might seem laughable, Harvest FM takes it up and produces content around it. It polls people, interviews "the common man" on the street, and consults with legal practitioners. The determination is what one might assume—no law can be enacted to stop one's parents from producing additional children and creating a living situation which might lead to the expulsion of elder children from the household. The point here is not that the answer is what we (readers or imagined radio listeners) might assume. Rather the point is that the radio program takes up the question as worthy of inquiry and delineates why such a consideration might be made.

Through these three works, Darko creates a cumulative, non-linear bildung narrative. The formal structure of a linear bildungsroman mimics a line on a map. The content of a linear bildungsroman is communicated through a narrator who has mastered the subject and can speak with some authority. Darko's works are not like that. Each one disrupts the form. *Beyond the Horizon* begins at the end with the matured Mara recounting her formation. This frame technique is not so unusual. But the circularity of the narrative from end, to beginning, to end disrupts the convention of concluding with

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the bildungsheld's reconciliation with society. Instead, the end is the point where Mara is least able to see herself and least likely to be integrated into the community, symbolically or otherwise. Similarly, *The Housemaid* begins at the point where the narrative climax occurs and we read from near-end, to the beginning, to the end again. Also, *Faceless* begins with the murder of one sister and the attempted assault of another. The investigation of Baby T's abuse and murder structures the forward progress of the narrative. Said differently, instead of the recollection of Baby T's life, we read about the circumstances which lead to her death. And finally, the experience of being supported through the traumatic episode allows Fofo to be a child instead of a grown-up. Taken together, Baby T. and Fofo disrupt the convention of linearity which would otherwise depict the protagonists' aging and development toward adulthood. Moreover, the mastery of the content is also undermined. Both *The Housemaid* and *Faceless* feature multivocality wherein less significant characters provide histories, opinions, and gossip. Their contributions are central to how we understand the story and its discourse such that the multivocality undermines the convention of the narrator's mastery of the life-story which is found in linear bildungsromane. In addition to disrupting linearity within each novel, the groups' continued representation of marginalized female characters as representative figures and its continued depiction of the challenges of their development extends each narrative's discourse beyond its pages.

CHAPTER 4: AN INVERTED EDEN AND A POST-WAR CAPITOL:

READING CONSANGUINEAL ORIENTATIONS DURING AND AFTER

WAR IN LÉONORA MIANO'S *DARK HEART OF THE NIGHT* AND

AMINATTA FORNA'S *THE MEMORY OF LOVE*

In the preceding chapters, my analyses of African bildungsromane written by women has considered gender as a central aspect of individual development and an aspect of political economy. Moreover, the chapters demonstrated that the novels were orientated toward consanguinity and/or conjugality. In each discussion, I carefully situated the political, social, and/or economic context of the novel's setting. In this chapter, I further my claim about contemporary, female-authored bildungsromane through Léonora Miano's *Dark Heart of the Night* [*L'interieur de la nuit*] and Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*. Specifically, I consider bildungsromane set in the most fraught circumstance—that of armed conflict and war—to further develop my claim that gender is narrativized as central to adult development and identity. My goal in this chapter is to demonstrate how female authors think about individual and social development in fraught circumstances and to excavate the consanguineal orientations communicated by the novels' discourse. Finally, I conclude the chapter by situating these works in relation to theories of the bildungsroman.

Within the Inverted Eden of *Night*

In this section, we consider the most uncommon setting for the novel-of-development, the subaltern community. *Dark Heart of the Night (Night)[54]* begins as the bildungsheld, Ayané, returns to her village from France on the eve of her mother's death. While there, the village is overrun by insurgents who are attempting to overthrow the central government. The insurgents hold the villagers' hostage and force them to participate in traumatic rituals. It is the trauma as crisis and the efforts to recover from it which informs our understanding of the last type of the West African bildungsroman in this study.

Specifically, my analysis of Miano's *Night* will do three important things. Firstly, the chapter will explain how the female protagonist's gendered identity is constructed through intersectional factors which position her as an outsider within her natal village. Additionally, it will consider the gendered identity of the militia leader, Isilo, and ultimately both identities will be related to subjectivity and consanguinity.

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[54] For the remainder of the chapter, I will refer to the novel as *Night*. In this instance, my decision to refer to the book by a different title follows Leonora Miano who vocally rejected the US edition's title, book cover, and foreword in an article published by Michael Orthofer. Miano writes that "Dark Heart of the Night has nothing to do with the original title. It resembles Conrad's Heart of Darkness, and voluntarily sends [the] wrong messages" (Orthofer). She goes on to write that "Cameroon is not the setting of the novel which was … inspired by a documentary that I saw on children at war" (Orthofer). Miano has indeed stated that the violence in the novel does not draw upon Cameroonian history but "accounts she had read about child soldiers in the Liberian conflict" (Spleth, "Civil War" 90). However, this leads to logical problems. On one hand, Miano's gesture to an unspecified "elsewhere in Africa" seems to support the construction of a blank, undifferentiated, "dark continent." On the other hand, Miano has not critiqued positive reviews or scholarship which allude to the representation of Cameroon as the fictionalized Mboasu. The issue here, then, seems to be with the US publishers' totalizing of the real Cameroon and conflating it with the violence of the narrative. However, within France—and in the French language which reaches most of her readers—Miano has been tasked with the question of whether the original title, *L'interieur de la nuit*, constructs a "dark," violent, ahistorical Africa. I find Magali Compan's "Writers, Rebels, and Cannibals: Léonora Miano's Rendering of Africa in *L'Intérieur de La Nuit*" highly insightful on the subject. While a more thorough consideration of *Night*'s title and the publication of Miano's work in the US would be insightful, it is outside of my present analysis.

Secondly, the chapter will demonstrate another way that trauma is depicted in the African bildungsroman. Whereas chapters 1 and 3 noted the relationship between sexual trauma and formation, this chapter will discuss the trauma of war and history. Thirdly, the chapter will make a claim for the elasticity of the bildungsroman genre.

We must begin by understanding the space and "place" of the novel before we turn to gender. The novel is set in Mboasu, a fictional West/Central African nation, which I will analyze as a proxy for Cameroon. Eku, the village where most of the plot takes place, is located in a peripheralized region of the country. I use "peripheralized" to emphasize the on-going processes which create the relational attribute. In other words, Eku's "location" in the periphery is not fixed; rather it is continually recreated by the on-going processes within the economic and government sectors.[55] To be peripheral within the economic sector means that they are not included in the system of production or product/currency circulation which make (local) economic markets viable. The result of this peripheralization is the total absence of industry, such that male adolescents and men leave the village for months and/or years at a time to sell their labor elsewhere (Miano 4-5). The women, and the older men who remain, participate in subsistence farming without any support from the government which might assist them through agricultural training, introduction of technology (for irrigation etc.) and a host of other things.

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[55] See the Introduction where I explained my usage of "periphery."

Similarly, to be peripheral to the government is to be excluded from the political, judiciary, and legislative systems which create laws and shape citizenship. The omniscient narrator relates the village's marginal status in this way:

> Almost no one ever came their way. Their little village was virtually at the border of the country, and the most educated citizens would not have been able to place it on the map or say what language they spoke there or what their customs were. The people who governed Mboasu did not even know they existed. They were nothing. (42)

As the quote indicates, the village is not just a geographical outlier: Eku's people, language, and culture are excluded from the national imagination and the concept of what Mboasu is does not incorporate them.[56] The people are "nothing" to the nation. Likewise, the nation is nothing to the people. The thoughts of the village matriarch, Ié, is one example of the villagers' low esteem for the nation and tenuous link to it. She thinks:

> They had been telling her for years that this territory [within which the village was located] belonged to a bigger body, a great country called Mboasu. Administrative capital: Nasimapula; financial capital: Sombé; ten million inhabitants registered; heaps and heaps of little villages like this one, and towns and cities. She had been told that she had a nationality, that she was a citizen of a state. (Miano 17)

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[56] I am thinking of "imagination" in the way that Benedict Anderson does in *Imagined Communities*. As Anderson notes: the nation "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members" (6). And yet, as Anderson explains, the way citizens imagine the nation becomes a positive part of the nation's construction.

The phrase "[t]hey had been telling her for years," reveals both that the information is conveyed and that there is resistance to internalizing citizenship and nationality as a tangible reality. Ié, like other villagers, is able to recognize the rhetoric of the nation— "great country"—and name its political and financial capitals but does not identify with them. Based on Ié's recollections, we can assume that Eku and the villages like it have been excluded by the nation's economic and political elites. The people are aware of their exclusion, though they may be ignorant of the processes which (re)create it.

Despite this ignorance, Ié's resistance to internalizing "a nationality" or an identity as "a citizen of a state" is aptly based upon her belief that Mboasu is an organism of France. As the narrator explains:

> To Ié, [France] did not mean that much. France was just some white missionaries who had set up a dispensary a few kilometers away, not far beyond the spring where the woman [sic] drew their water. France was just the country's first primary schools run by the same missionaries who had preached a faith her forebears had once pretended to espouse. And *this* France, which had taken possession of the lands on the other side of the hills and which had sown the seeds of change that enticed the young people, *this* France she scarcely knew. So *the* France that was said to lie beyond strange, unimaginable seas, *the* France they said you could only reach by getting into machines that flew through the sky, *this other* France was not of the slightest interest to her. All she knew and all she wanted to know of the earth was this clearing, this enclave with its protective wall of hills. (Miano 16-17; my emphasis)

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The juxtaposition between "this France," which refers to Mboasu, and "the France" reveals that she recognizes both the difference and the radical continuity between the bodies. On one hand, "this France" is personified as "white missionaries" and objectified as "primary schools." Ié understands it to be "a few kilometers away" (16), however, the geographic proximity belies the social and cultural chasm which has not been crossed. Ié claims to "barely [know]" it, and what she does know is characterized as preaching, taking possession, and enticing.

This awareness that Mboasu is constituted vis-à-vis France, and not by the land mass itself or the people themselves, speaks to Ié's situation: she is a noncitizen of the nation. As Mahmood Mamdani explains, many post-independence African nations maintained the bifurcated power system that previously operated under European colonialist governments. Upon independence, citizenship was expanded to include middle and working class "natives," typically urban-dwellers, while customary law was maintained in the rural areas (Mamdani 17; 136-137).[57] As someone who lives in a village, Ié correctly surmises that she is not a citizen in any real way. As Mamdani would argue, Ié is a subject of customary law and of the customary leader that the government approves of (17).

Incorporated as a subject within the village community, the people use the language of perpetuity to invoke the link between the past, present, and imagined

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[57] Mamdani explains that this process of deracializing citizenship, which expanded its access beyond white/European and Asian/Arab (i.e., Lebanese, Indians) groups, was not complete in all urban areas, for all "native" urban dwellers, or within all post-independence nations. Additionally, his claim is qualified by the variety of customary laws, the dramatic different in citizenship rights, the struggle to reform civil society, and the reassertion of race-based citizenship claims. See *Citizen and Subject*, especially chapters 1 and 6.

future. The narrator relates their lives, including their work and migrations, their social and family formations, the natural world, and their neighbors in the region in an ethnographic way (Miano 4-5). The constancy between past, present, and imagined future creates an Edenic vision of the village. It is as though Eku's leadership depends upon a narrative of the village which constructs the people as unchanging (and unchanged) even as they acknowledge changes in other ways. Despite this construction, the village itself is a cartography of the change and human movement. For instance, the huts (houses) in Eku are arranged so that one area is for "ordinary people," while another area is for "integrated foreigners" and those of "mixed genealogy" (43-44). This undercuts two things: (1) the belief that "foreigners" are ultimately disruptive of the polity and (2) the belief that the village consists of ethnic purity. Nevertheless, the language of perpetuity alludes to an Edenic quality, to something unspoiled by modernity or new ways of knowing and being. But their village is not one of sanctity, satiety, and safety. Instead, the perpetual garden of their existence is marked by subsistence farming, economic hardship, oppressive village hierarchy, and normalized violence against women and children.

Moreover, Eku's exclusion from the national and economic networks has been pervasive enough through the years that particular normative constructions of subjectivity and individuation which circulate in the Global North—and in parts of the Global South marked by transnational migration of people, products, and ideas—are not hegemonic there. One example is the absence of normative rights claims.[58] In *this*

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[58] In *Human Rights, Inc*. Joseph Slaughter writes that the law, like the bildungsroman, "begin[s] by imagining the normative, rights-holding citizen-subject—an abstract "universal" human personality that "presumes particular forms of embodiment and excludes or marginalizes others" and that has been

Eden, the girl-child does not have a right's claim to her body by which she might protest rape (Miano 21), and the adult does not have a right's claim to the nation-state by which they might protest marginalization. Altogether, this Edenic tone which the elders utilize, alongside the community's peripheralization, serves as the social and political context for the novel, its genders, and the development of the bildungsheld. This is one reason that I refer to the village as an "inverted Eden." Though it has the marks of human movement, it has been neglected by the government. It is an example of the development of underdevelopment when it should be vibrantly remade with labor and agriculture projects as well as various forms of market exchange.

The Outsider Female Gender

The form and function of gender is always contingent on the society's socioeconomic base and the cultural and political infrastructures that they create. Ayané's gender becomes legible based on the following intersectional attributes: her designation as female; her age; her residence in France, and her parentage. These are the dominant factors which influence how her gender is read. Her designation as female is the gender attribute which readers are most accustomed to identifying so it is the specificity of the other gender components which reveals the most.

Firstly, as a young woman, Ayané is not old enough to access matriarchal power. In Eku, older women form a matriarchal community which is afforded respect. They are able to pass social judgements, to spurn through words or behavior and to

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historically defined as "always already [white, propertied, and] male" (43). The paradox is that the human may assert his/her human rights only after imagining that they exist. Slaughter's study develops the argument that "human rights are, in practice if not in principle, not the natural rights of humans qua humans but the positive rights of citizens" (12).

generally enforce conventions among the people. The matriarchal power and their prerogatives are a result of the conditions of labor which require the men to leave the community.

Another factor which places her outside the matriarchal order is her physical domicile in France. Though her life in France is very much outside the narrative, the village people understand her ability to move through transnational space as contravening a normative female gender (Miano 12).[59] Within her village community, transnational mobility renders Ayané's female gender as suspect or corrupt placing her outside of normative female gender constructions. To the women of the village, Ayané's migrancy carries none of the panache of high status, upward mobility, and successful "professional" development. Her mobility takes her farther away from culture of the people.

The last attribute which structures Ayané's identity is her parents' marriage which the village disapproves of. Part of the disapproval is caused because her father rejects the convention of endogamous marriage, and instead marries a woman from another village. The women take the father's marriage as an affront to themselves and their way of life.[60] In addition, they assume that Ayané's mother considers herself to

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[59] Though the belief that the movement of women is subversive to women themselves has been prevalent in literature about rural or less sophisticated people, it is not limited to them. The anxiety about unmarried women's movements to the "West" is also pervasive in places where women are constructed as symbols, representatives, and carriers of national/-ist culture. But this is not to imply that transnational mobility is always considered a subversive quality in a female subject. As chapter 1 and 3 reveal, transnational mobility can allow women to access preferred gendered identities.

[60] The English version reads: "He had offended the country's young ladies by ignoring all of them and going off to find a foreign woman" (Miano 7). Here the different meanings of this single word, country, communicates the discrepancy between how the villagers conceive of their identity and Eku vis-à-vis Mboasu, and how Eku would otherwise be constructed in a different sort of postcolonial African nation. Country means both "an indefinite usually expanded piece of land" or region, and it also means "the land of a person's…citizenship" and "a political state or nation." ("Country") By referring to Ayané's

be superior to them because her village is "one of the suburbs closest to Sombé, the [nation's] financial capital" and has infrastructure which supports running water, unlike their own (6-7). They take the construction of separate cooking and lavatory facilities for her mother as proof of this snobbery (7).

The other source of controversy is based on the lifestyle of each parent which subverts gender norms and places them outside of patriarchal and matriarchal control. The parents reside in the village but not according to its norms and expectations. One key difference is that Ayané's father does not become a migrant laborer. As I have noted, the processes of peripheralization make it necessary for the men to leave the village to earn money. Rather than participate in this, her father remains in the village and supports his family by making clay figures which he decorates with images and symbols that have no meaning to the people.[61] He also refuses polygynous marriage and participates in bringing water from the spring, which is gendered as women's work. The women decide that "this man [is] no man at all" (8).

Similarly, her mother doesn't adhere to gender expectations and creates contempt by not attempting to integrate with the village or its culture. She does not feel burdened by poverty or suffering (11), but she also does not feel the pride of controlling one's household and children, or participating in local village affairs and in money-lending enterprises, both of which are run through the women's group (22).

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mother who is from "a neighboring village" (Miano 6) as a "foreign woman," the narrative is further communicating the village's belief that Eku is apart from Mboasu.

[61] The village's contempt may be due, in part, to Ayané's father's continual subversion of labor norms. Sarah Jones-Boardman writes: "[In] parts of Cameroon, while tilling the soil is work suitable for a noble family, making pots or doing other artisanal activities is not—that would be the work of "gens de caste," respected for their creative activities but also looked down upon. In becoming a potter, [he] had taken a step down in class hierarchy" (195, footnote 99).

Also, her mother is considered a "witch." To be called a witch is an insult, but we must also understand witch within the social-cultural order of many African societies. As Mercy Amba Oduyoye writes,

> It seems that women in male-dominated cultures are often left with only two alternatives in their relationship with men: to defeat men by non-physical means (for example, witchcraft) or else to allow themselves to be shaped by culture and the demands of society. When women are not allowed to use physical means to challenge male oppression, men often fear that women will use mystical powers to avenge them. Men kill, beat, rape, and enslave women; yet, it is women's silence that troubles them most, leading them to their fear of imaginary female aggressiveness. In Africa, this imagined silent activity of women is called witchcraft. (qtd. in Ogunyemi, *Juju Fission* 9)

The witch identity is a female gender that is linked to a woman's perceived power or defiance. The witch is ridiculed, feared, and shunned for her power over others, in part, because the power cannot be easily identified or disrupted by the group's political, social, or religious leaders. This link between the fear of women's biological and social power is borne out in the accusation that she uses supernatural power to turn her husband away from normative masculine behaviors and beliefs (Miano 22-23).

Ayané's gender identity is the result of her parent's companionate monogamous marriage. Her parents are supportive and loving. Unlike other female children, she is educated and then sent to the university in Sombé which is a privilege that even the male children are not afforded. But Ayané's parents' relationship leads to

prejudice against her. She is called a witch from the time she is born by both women—including Ié, who becomes the leader of the matriarchal order—and other children. As a child tells her: "Witchcraft runs in the family, you know: you'll be like your mother" (23). Ironically, Ayané's parents' decisions have also constructed her identity as separate from the village. They've eliminated the acceptable routes to biologically and socially (re)produce Ayané as an indigene of Eku. For instance, rather than follow the convention of having Ayane in the village, her parents offend the village by giving birth to her in a hospital. Also, they create a name for her, rather than using a name from the group (Miano 9). Sarah Jones-Boardman argues that the choices render Ayané illegitimate in the eyes of Eku (198-199).[62] She is deprived of an autochthonous claim to the village. I follow Peter Geschiere and Stephen Jackson in using autochthonous to imply "an origin 'of the soil itself' and meaning, by inference, a direct claim to territory" (2). At this point in the narrative, because of the radical disruption of a claim to the village as home, we can understand that a person like Ayané might decide that she must exist somewhere else.

In terms of genre, Ayané is a bildungsheld unlike most. She begins life outside of society.[63] The typical bildungsroman moves the novice from the security of home and home-ways to the uncertainty of the world or insecurity of knowledge. But this

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[62] Jones-Boardman makes the point that Eku incorporates and cares for different types of children, including orphans, but only if they have already been understood as part of the village community.

[63] There are, of course, exceptions to this in all bildungsroman traditions. In particular, within African American, Caribbean, and ethnic American bildungsromane, it is much more common to encounter a bildungsheld who begins life their bildung from the outside of society. This is often because the narratives are representing the way that societies gender, racialize, and minoritize subjects. Placing the bildungsheld outside of the societal safety, legality, approval (etc.) is one way of creating this narrative discourse. For example, see Pin-Chia Feng's *The Female Bildungsroman by Tony Morrison and Maxine Hong Kingston*. Feng's introduction provides a thorough explanation of what I have described.

bildungsroman begins by establishing the protagonist's exclusion from the group. This is a point I will return to when I make a claim for her consanguineal link to the postcolonial nation and its people. What is of importance here is that the novel opens up with Ayané's temporary return to a home that has always rejected her. With the death of her mother, Ayané no longer has any living relatives in Eku who claim or support her. She is completely alone there.

By the time her mother is buried, Ayané can no longer leave the village, because a militia has surrounded it and ordered everyone to stay. On the night that Ayané plans to defy the order and walk to Sombé, the militia descends. Ayané quickly hides in the tree, and from this position she hears and sees most—but importantly, not all—of the oration and events. In a long, protracted scene, the militia leader orates the militia's revolutionary aims which are to disrupt the political and economic class that exploits the nation's resources for its own gain. He then lectures the village on the evils of colonialism and neocolonialism and the glories of Africa. At this point, Ayané realizes that she recognizes the militia leader from her university days. The leader is Isilo, a young man who was a graduate student in History when she was an undergraduate. Isilo continues his speech and chastises Eku's male leader for his poor management of the village. When Isilo declares his plan to take adolescent boys and girls with him, the leader of Eku protests and is killed, as are several women. The culmination of the scene is unseen by Ayané who does not understand it until much later. It in, Isilo commands his men to murder an orphan boy and forces the entire village to eat his cooked flesh. He claims that the shared ritual will cleanse African people, thereby

allowing them to participate in revolutionary action. After this is done, Isilo and the

militia leave the village with the adolescents they've claimed for their fight.

The Cult(ure) Hero and Postcolonial Melancholia

Before we understand this trauma, we must consider Isilo, the militia leader, because

Miano gives him a backstory as a student organizer and Pan-Africanist (57), both of

which place him within the historical circuits of the postcolonial nation and make his

identity legible within the West African context. In Africa, the student union organizes

to change the administration, to increase financial support for students, to request

improvement of facilities and so on. Because the university system is deeply

intertwined with the political system, especially in Cameroon, the student union is

essentially engaging with the political arena. Their suggestions to the university

administrators are political in so much as they are about the allocation of money and

resources. Similarly, they respond to the political and economic situation. Take, for

example, the student revolt at the University of Yaoundé (the only university

institution in Cameroon until 1993) which lasted from 1990-1996. According to Piet

Konings, this collective action directly responded to Structural Adjustment

Programmes (SAPs) introduced after the economic crises of the 1980s (179). The

reform movement fractured into two groups along "ethno-regional lines": "the

'autochthonous' Beti students who tended to support the ruling [party] …. People's

Democratic Movement (CPDM)… and the Anglophone and Bamileke 'stranger'

students who were more inclined to support the major opposition party, the Social

Democratic Front (SDF)" (180). Another well cited example of politically active

student groups is the Association of Students and Pupils of Mali (Association des

Eleves et Etudiants de Mali) which played an integral role in ending Moussa Traoré's twenty-two-year regime in 1991 (Smith, "From Demons" 249).[64] It is this tradition of politically engaged collective action that Miano has written Isilo into.

However, the Isilo we see in Eku is no longer just a student organizer. He is a culture hero. The culture hero is not an exclusively male gender; it is open to persons of the male and female sex.[65] As Ato Quayson explains, the "culture hero" is not a single idea. He continues:

> It is more a series of ideas and practices that come together in varied social and cultural settings to foreground notions of heroic agency and action. These ideas and practices are themselves expressed in different forms in the indigenous arena, so that it is always important when [centering] elaborate networks with other forms of expression. (*Postcolonialism* 86)

These "series of ideas and practices" are derived from local, colonialist, national, and transnational characteristics, and this makes the gendered performance of cultural heroics highly variable. In short, it can be a gender, but it is an inadequate representational category. Thus, as a gender, it must be sketched in relation to the local, national, and transnational context, the historical circumstance, and the economic situation. Quayson reinforces this when he writes that "[i]t is important to perceive the idea of culture heroism in Africa as a form of *process* in dialectical

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[64] For more about the political labor of student organizations across a breadth of African countries, see Bratton and van de Walle's "Popular Protest and Political Reform in Africa."

[65] Ato Quayson notes that authors, such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Ayi Kwei Armah, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, and Ama Ata Aidoo, "produce images of female culture heroism," but argues that these literary female figures do not "parallel" the social and political realms in the way that the male figures do (*Postcolonialism* 93). However, elsewhere Quayson notes that "political women" are understood as culture heroes in societal contexts (*Calibrations* 36) and argues that writers (of any sex) are understood (by themselves and others) as culture heroes (*Postcolonialism* 88-89).

relationship to a wide variety of forces both material as well as politico-historical" (88, emphasis in original). As Quayson explains, the culture heroics of African politicians in the postcolonial era included capitalistic and Marxist varieties (16). The Marxist vein, exemplified by Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, attempted to utilize the cult of the culture hero as part of "the effort toward collective mobilization" of the people toward a decolonial framework (16). We can see Isilo attempting to do this same thing.

Furthermore, in Isilo we have a character whose identity is affiliated with the nation. But here, the nation is neither Mboasu, nor Yénèpasi where Isilo is from, but the pan-African nation. Isilo has a Nkrumahian concept of the African nation; it is an aspirational project, not just because it is unfinished as a philosophical ideal, but because it is impossible in the current state of globalized, unequal exchange. Unlike the villagers who form the psychological and affective link on the local and regional level, Isilo forms an affiliative link with the continent of Africa. Africa, here, is a fiction. What Isilo says would shame a history undergraduate due to its very simplicity. In other words, Isilo's rendering of Africa relies on an ahistorical tale which couples the "African past," with "perfection" and moral rectitude in an overdetermined romance. In Isilo's telling, Africa is a proper Biblical Eden.

Isilo's affect, is, of course, historically belated. He was born after the great assaults on West and Central Africa: after the Arab and European Slave Trades; after the first wave of physical, psychological, and economic rampage by European imperial and colonialist domination; after independence and the retrenchment of "native" elites. Ergo, his melancholia is not the result of direct trauma, but of its overwhelming inheritance. The inheritance is the impossibility of finding a life outside

of these historical determinants; this is the postcolonial African condition. In *Signifying Loss: Towards a Poetics of Narrative Mourning*, Nouri Gana refers to this as "melancholic identification which is transhistorical and transgenerational" (37). According to Gana, "identification is…a function of melancholia…[and] melancholia itself can be seen…as a function of the work of mourning" (33). Gana suggests that "the ego of the postcolonial subject is a precipitate of melancholy identifications, which it internalizes but of which it can provide no finite account" (38). The Isilo that Ayané encountered at university already had a melancholic subjectivity in that he was not a subject prior to the loss of Africa. Rather, the loss of Africa—as a pan-continental nation and ethnocultural home—was the very thing that constituted his subjectivity. As Ayané recalls, Isilo was considered "frozen inside, insensitive… while at the same time capable of being moved to tears at the thought of certain historical figures like Shaka or Soundiata" (Miano 57). This indicates the extent to which he has integrated the loss of these figures into himself. As Gana explains, the loss "stirs into consciousness at the threshold of subjectivity [and remains] in the subject's reflection of/on [his]…nothingness" (118). Then, through the process of experiencing the nothingness, recognizing its cause, and experiencing the loss, the subject forms his subjectivity based on both attributes, though, eventually, they cannot be neatly separated. As Gana puts it: "the paradox of postcolonial subjectivity [is] a paradox of identification, namely the dissymmetry between the *identification with* and the *identification of* the object" (119; italics in original). This "paradox" and "dissymmetry" is also indicative of the culture hero who owes much of his fame and

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power in the political sphere to a constructed *identification with* the nation and a self-serving *identification of* the nation.

Thus, it is not surprising that Isilo's identification of/with the pan African nation calls upon Egypt. He tells the people that they are all descended from a pharaoh, lectures them on the knowledge within ancient Egypt, and about the conspiracy which hides Egypt's link to black people (Miano 59-60). It is clear that Egypt has been constructed as an apologia for the perception of Black African backwardness (i.e., social, political, technological backwardness). But the paradox is that the pharaohs of ancient Egypt are no more or less available than Soundiata. As someone born in a later century, Isilo must access them all as texts; they are all hypothetically available for social, political, and psychological purchase. The culture hero selects his referents for their viability within the discursive process of meaning-making. In Gana's theory, Isilo's (mis)identification of Egypt is part and parcel of melancholia. Gana adopts Gayatri Spivak's definition of catachresis "as a claim for something for which there is 'no historically adequate referent'"[66] (38). Recognizing catachresis then, allows us to "study the melancholic dimension (of identifying with the unidentifiable)" (38). If we take Isilo's postcolonial melancholia seriously, as I am suggesting that we do, then we can understand the appeal to Egypt "not as a sign of linguistic abuse…but as a signal, a stamp or a symptom of the abused" (38). Said differently, the misnaming of Egypt is the symptom of the abuse of people, land, and resources which Isilo is attempting to identify and historicize.

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[66] Gana cites Spivak's *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, 60.

However, within the narrative, the issue is not that the people do not understand his melancholia, but that they do not understand his intended meaning at all. Apart from Ayané (who is hiding) only one other person can speak/understand French. As this young man serves as Isilo's translator:

> Eku's sons listened…It was very well translating the foreigner's words into their language, [but] there were still words for which Eku had no equivalent and they rang as hollow to their ears as an empty calabash. Words like "Egypt", "pharaoh", and even for some of them, the word "Africa". (Miano 60)

What we learn is that the issue is not that Isilo is using Egypt to displace Mboasu, Yénèpasi, or another neighboring region. Rather, the conditions of peripheralization have created such pervasive ignorance that they do not recognize Egypt (or Africa) as a signifier. Their attention is heightened due to the circumstances, but the potential to establish a radical, Pan-African connection is undone by decades of government neglect of the village. Isilo's attempt to politicize the struggle and educate subsistence farmers is also undone by the very government officials he is attempting to overthrow. In a way, this protracted scene dramatizes the mutual unintelligibility of "revolutionary language" and rural inaction. Here, I am identifying "rural inaction" as a language, not only because most of the people of Eku say nothing, but because the history of popular organizing has always had to contend with the question of how to communicate to rural or less formally educated people. That Isilo as culture hero is unable to construct a message for them says a lot about the chasm of knowledge by educated organizers.

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Though he is a young man, Isilo resembles the "second phase" of the culture hero who emerged as "the direct aftermath of decolonization when different political figures came into the limelight and their followers created fantastic stories about them to augment their political capital" (Quayson, *Postcolonialism* 87). The cannibalism ritual is Isilo's fantastic story. He acts in concert with the middle-age politicians who fund his militia, but he speaks with an appeal to interethnic, African, international, progressive cooperation. By presenting the culture hero, a figure who is otherwise associated with positive ethno-cultural tropes, with a violent, abominable, political campaign, *Night* thematizes the limits of exploitative rhetorics and sketches the devolution from progressive post-independence political praxis to violence.

Mourning and Consanguinity

The murder of the child and cannibalism constitutes the traumatic event which sparks Ayané's voluntary association with the wider polity, which I have been calling consanguinity. Though Ayané is an adult, the process reflects a shift in her subjectivity. I argue that the process of coping with the tragedy is indicative of consanguineal association with the people. I do not suggest that the process concludes. Rather, the novel indicates that it is on-going at the end, but this continuation is evidence of Ayané's maturation not liminality.

Ayané initially leaves the village when the militia departs. She walks to Sombé and eventually to the home of her estranged maternal aunt, Wengisané. At this point, Ayané could remain in the town until the international airport reopens and subsequently return to France. Instead, Ayané and her aunt go to the village with food and clothing supplies. Ié greets them coldly but they are allowed to stay and even to

attend the vigil for the dead. At the vigil, one woman, Inoni, attempts to speak and explain her participation in the ritual. The other women silence Inoni by physically restraining her. Ayané tries to intervene but is unsuccessful. Later that night, Ayané creeps to Inoni's hut. She is surprised to find that Inoni is waiting for her. Inoni tells Ayané everything about the murder and cannibalism. Because she is shaking and hitting her body against the hut rhythmically:

> Ayané had to hold her to try to calm her down, and it was the first time that she had had physical contact with a member of the clan. Even when she was a child and the local kids had pretended to come and play with her, they had not touched one another. She had never put up a fight, even when they insulted her mother. They had not wanted to touch her and she had never tried to convince them that it was worth it. And now, she had to support Inoni. (Miano 129)

In this moment, trauma allows the women to cross a boundary. Inoni is traumatized and enraged because of their shared participation in the cannibalism ritual. This allows her to leave her prejudice against Ayané and her mother behind. Ayané is traumatized by the information and this allows her to cross the physical barrier despite fear of rejection. She is no longer holding herself back from convincing others that being in community with her is worth it. The touch is not trivial; it is weighted due to the fact that it breaks an enforced norm. Ayané who has previously confronted others through her words and her distance from the village now transitions to confronting norms by attempting a physical connection. Inoni accepts her touch.

But this moment is not "process." By the time Ayané returns to her aunt Wengisané, she is angry, disgusted, and horrified by the information. It is Wengisané who is the

voice of reason. She asks Ayané to consider the circumstance that brought about the villagers' coerced decision to participate in cannibalism rather than die. Ayané is still unconvinced and explains that the people do not have "pride" (134).[67] This moves the attention from the people's material conditions—they are unarmed, undefended by political citizenship, uneducated, underfed/immobilized by the militia—to an appeal to understand the intrinsic quality of the people. Ayané's argument positions "pride" as a humanizing trait; in doing so, she elides a myriad of structural inequalities which "pride" cannot surmount. Wengisané responds in two ways: she critiques Ayané's affiliation with Eku and further historicizes Eku's conditions. According to her aunt, Ayané's affiliation with the village is misguided because it is based on particular way of reading race and the self. Wengisané says: "Yes, you are ashamed. Like all Africans, like all blacks who can only see themselves through the eyes of other people. You think what they said about us is true, that we are animals without souls" (134). In this response, Wengisané collapses the space between discrete sacrilege/violence of war and historical blasphemy. Wengisané recognizes that the nature of violence carries associations which are racialized to explain war as a condition of savages, as a condition of Africans. In other words, she traverses the space between cannibalism as ritual → cannibalism as accusation against "savage" Africans → Africans as savages.

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[67] The full exchange is interesting because it speaks to the understanding of colonization of people groups and destruction of their civilizations in the South-South context. Ayané says: "Pride is something you can't teach people! The Native Americans couldn't read or write, but they chose to die rather than give in" (134). Wengisané responds: "A fat lot of good it did the Amerindians not giving in….All over the States, Indian names have been preserved like memorials to the kicks in their faces, and those who now celebrated their courage only did so to get recognized. It was so much more glorious to have defeated courageous adversaries" (135). Another project might very well take up how the violence against Native peoples in the Americas (across two continents and several island chains) is presented in African literary and nonliterary writing, but this is outside our frame.

The accusation here is that Ayané's internalization of the white gaze and racial shame (because "Africans are savages") impinges her ability to see and understand the people of Eku.

The next morning, they are told that Inoni has committed suicide. The village women do not know that Ayané spoke to Inoni during the night, but they believe that she is the cause, nonetheless. Ié says, "You are a witch by nature. There is nothing you can do about it, but neither can we. You are a bringer of evil and we cannot accept you among us" (138). Ayané leaves the village and returns to Sombé. She is still confounded and Wengisané is still attempting to get her to understand. It is over the course of days that Ayané's consanguineal orientation that was evidenced by her brief connection with Inoni begins to show. Though she hasn't completely stopped believing that "the dark was thicker in Africa than anywhere else," she "[feels] as though she is discovering Africa" (137). This quote reveals the incomplete process of consanguineal affiliation. I read it as consanguineal because Ayané is re-establishing a connection with the people and place voluntarily. Wengisané, her blood relation, is a link but is not the extent of the connection since Ayané is attempting to learn about elements of the culture that her parents never taught her (139). Thinking about the knowledge journey she intends to embark upon, Ayane considers the choice to "step toward these familiar strangers, a genuine step without narrow-minded prejudice, by which she would get to know them and not criticize" (140). In her mind, "[t]his way…was long and tough and led, if not to acceptance, at least to understanding and respect" (140).

The Post-War Capital of *The Memory of Love*

Another novel which depicts bildung and the formation of gendered identities is

Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love (Memory)*. Set in the capital of Freetown and

amongst educated, middle-class people during the aftermath of war, *Memory* does not

initially appear to have much in common with Miano's *Night*. Unlike *Night*, it refers

to a real civil war that lasted more than a decade and killed more than 50,000 people.

Furthermore, despite the novel's present moment in the years immediately following

the war's end, the continual reference to "before" reveals that the chronological

present has an interwoven relationship with "before," such that any attempt to

foreclose the events in narrative or chronological time would be an impossibility.

However, the similarity is that both narratives bring their protagonists to a

consanguineal affiliation with the people and nation. In *Night*, trauma was Ayané's

catalyst. Though trauma is a significant aspect of *Memory*, [68] the consanguineal

orientation is not prompted by trauma but despite it. This is a fact that I will return to.

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[68] Scholars of empathy/affect theory and trauma theory have rightfully noted *The Memory of Love* as a significant work of African and postcolonial literature. There are a wide range of examples. In "Beyond Eurocentrism," Stef Craps uses trauma theory to argue that the novel "critique[s]… the application of Western therapeutic models in the Sierra Leonean context" (52). Despite the nominal benefits of the "European… talking cure" (54), Craps argues that the novel continually attention on the "state of normalcy"—which is, in fact, a state of continued struggle to maintain life—undercuts "the assumption underlying Western notions of trauma recovery" (53) and latently endorses local coping mechanisms (55). In Chapter 4 of *Affective Relations*, Carolyn Pedwell argues that liberal and neoliberal rhetorics of empathy "efface the economic and political structures [that create traumatic events] and [turn] towards an individualist politics of feeling" (126). Pedwell explicates the claim that empathy is not about "emotional equivalence…but rather … [it is a] complex and ongoing set of translational process[es] involving conflict, negotiation and imagination with potentially transformative… unpredictable implications" (128). Through her reading of *The Memory of Love*, Pedwell develops the schematic of "empathy and/as translation," which "involves taking conflict, miscommunication, lack of commensurability and even failure as starting points for transnational politics" (147). This "affective translation" requires "privileged subjects" to relinquish "the desire for cultural mastery and psychic transparency" (147). *In Perceiving Pain in African Literature*, Zoe Norridge considers "pain" and "suffering" rather than only trauma and argues that *The Memory of Love* (and other African literary works on pain) have the potential to address human rights and heal both the reader and the characters.

Within *Memory*, we find the narrative of the post-independence nation and an ensemble of characters. Through them, the novel constructs a literary biography of the nation which focuses on three eras: the independence era of the late 1960s, the civil war era of the late 1990s, and the present post war era of the early 2000s. But it is a partial and refracted narrative of Sierra Leone's "life," one which incorporates several characters as analogous or representative of the nation[69] though the novel does not attempt an exhaustive account of any era.

For the characters, Norridge identifies psychological and spiritual healing with the cessation of pain and the reconciliation with the presence of pain (Norridge 172-174). She also identifies the ability to tell one's story/narrative as a central aspect of retaining/reasserting the humanity of the traumatized. However, rather than a blanket endorsement of the Western "talk therapy" model, Norridge asserts that "bounding pain" – or preventing the free circulation of the story/narrative – is a strategy for containing pain so that it does not perpetuate increase the psychological or spiritual harm (190-200). See also Norridge's "Sex as Synecdoche: Intimate Languages of Violence in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* and Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*" which argues that depictions of Africans in pain are connected with "sexual desire" and "physical desire" of viewers in the Global North, including NGO workers. "Other works consider the recovery from trauma in the novel. For instance, Dave Gunning's "Dissociation, Spirit Possession, and the Languages of Trauma in Some Recent African-British Novels" considers how *The Memory of Love* critiques and incorporates both "Western" psychoanalytical and local (Sierra Leonean) constructions of trauma and disassociation. Meanwhile, Z'étoile Imma's "Rewriting the SLTRC: Masculinities, the Arts of Forgetting, and Intimate Space in Delia Jarrett-Macauley's *Moses, Citizen and Me* and Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*" which argues that the two novels critique the "truth and reconciliation" model of public reconciliation and trauma recovery. Also, Irene Perez-Fernandez's "Emotional (Un)Belonging in Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*" departs from trauma theory and uses Sara Ahmed's theories of emotions to argue that emotional connection is a method for post-war, post-traumatic recovery. Forna herself muses about literary fiction's ability to produce empathy in "Selective Empathy: Stories and the Power of Narrative," before writing about the political potential of storytelling.

[69] In bildungsromane and war novels it is common to encounter the character who is born, married, or initiated (into an occupation or social group) during the independence era. This coincident of new birth/beginning is a trope which opens up allegorical interpretations of characters, events, and discourse. Examples of bildung narratives which do this include Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's *Coming to Birth*. Take for example Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Half of Yellow Sun* which feature characters who declare a mission at the end of the war and tie that mission to a sense of the self. In *Destination Biafra*, it is the protagonist, Debbie, who will dedicate her life to children orphaned by the war rather than return to the U.K. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, it is Ugwu who will undergo self-imposed penance and then complete a novel which is imagined as a narrative of Nigeria's formation.

The narrative point of view shifts between four central characters: Elias Cole, Nenebah/Mamakay[70], Kai Mansaray, and Adrian Lockheart. Their lives are intertwined, and it is through their interconnected narratives that we learn about the general causes of the war and the imperative of the people who have now survived it. The narratives of Elias Cole and Adrian Lockheart provide frames for *Memory*. Elias is a retired university dean who is presently dying of lung cancer. Through Elias' recollections, we learn about the hopefulness of the post-independence era and the repressive regime that emerged in the late 60s. Also, we learn that the university is an institution that both stands-in for the central government and serves as a bellwether for it. Said differently, it becomes clear that the way university officials use their power to suppress dissent and protest is related to the way that the central government uses its power to eliminate elections and the multiparty system. This (mis)use of the university's institutional power coheres with Elias' ideas about politics more broadly: the powerful rule and the disempowered are ruled.

Whereas Elias' recollections of the 60s and late 90s recalls the reader to the nation's "birth" at independence and its present, Adrian Lockheart provides a different framing and leads the Western reader through the unfamiliar world of contemporary, post-war, Freetown.[71]. His framing can be characterized as "before any knowledge"

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[70] As Mamakay explains, the cultural norm is for a child to have two names. Thus, she is known by both names in the novel. Kai primarily refers to her as Nenebah, whereas Adrian primarily refers to her as Mamakay.

[71] Zoe Norridge notes both the usefulness of constructing Adrian for the "Western reader" and her experience of working with reading groups in the UK. The reading groups claim to identify with Kai or Nenebah, rather than Adrian ("Sex" 24). See also Janice Spleth's "The Interplay of Fiction and International Law in Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*" which considers Adrian as a "representative of the international community" (88) and considers how Sierra Leonean characters react to his white savior mission.

and "after some knowledge and experience." The former represents the beginning of the novel when Adrian is so unstimulated by his life in the UK that he decides to go to Sierra Leone and offer his services as a psychiatrist. It is this combination of ignorance about Sierra Leone's history and diffused (and misused) good intention for a "war torn country" that Forna tactically exploits to demonstrate the ineffectualness of foreign do-gooders. In the period after he gains knowledge, Adrian returns to the UK bereaved by the death of his lover, Mamakay. He departs Sierra Leone with the awareness that the "help" he has provided in the country is not really what is wanted or needed, despite the earnest contributions. The latter part of Adrian's framing—when he has returned to the UK and is experiencing the discomfort of being without his wife, lover, and children—also supports my reading that a conscientiousness "do-gooder" comes to realize that "no good has come of it."

The two characters who represent consanguineal orientations, and a possible Sierra Leonean future, are Mamakay and Kai. They are challenged by traumatic events and their reverberations, but ultimately, they reject trauma as a personal attribute. Following this rejection, they both return to a self-selected community group and attempt to re-establish an adult identity. It is in this attempt to formulate an adult identity—one which is educated by the traumatic experience, matured by the reflections upon it, and cultivated through self-directed experiences—that I identify bildung as a process of gendered development.

On Mamakay

Mamakay initially appears to be a secondary character, but I argue that she is central to the narrative's plot and discourse. She connects all of the central male characters:

Elias is her father, Kai is her college sweetheart, and Adrian becomes her lover. Moreover, Mamakay is a character interested in national affairs and the people. For instance, she eventually lectures Adrian Lockheart about the financial incentives of NGOs in the city. She also indicates her alignment with the people, and not with the powerful, by creating a social world outside of her father's world and aspirations. She does not trust her father because she recognizes his collusion with the politically repressive university administration. Though she intended to be a historian, like her father, she left the university before graduating after he prevented her from attending a student protest where he knew students would be arrested. From that point, she distances herself from him. By linking Mamakay's bildung to Western education, Forna mimics the bildung convention of male and female colonial and postcolonial writers. [72] She constructs, the education and the decision to stop the education as important events in the young person's life. After the end of the war, Mamakay chooses to work as a musician, outside of the formal political or academic spaces where compromise might interfere with conviction.

But this is not the extent of Mamakay's consanguineal orientation. Mamakay embodies Audre Lorde's formulation of "the erotic." In "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," Lorde writes: "There are many kinds of power, used and unused, acknowledged or otherwise. The erotic is a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling" (48). As if she were following Lorde's theory, Mamakay uses

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[72] See the Introduction where I explained the conventions of the colonial and postcolonial African bildungsroman. Various scholars have treated the topic. See Stratton (80-107), Boehmer (114-118) as well as Nyatetừ-Waigwa and Mickelsen who centers education in their texts.

her erotic energy to connect with people and Freetown as home/place and to perform creatively. She is presented as an embodiment of social and familial reproduction, outside of exploitation and ownership. Her sexuality is a source of personal power and satisfaction. This positive depiction of female sexuality and desire in the cultural and geographical African context functions discursively, by critiquing the discourses which pathologize the black body and construct the black, female body as a site of violence and victimization. As Ayo C. Coly argues in *Postcolonial Hauntologies*, these colonialist discourses haunt contemporary discourses of the African female body and its sexualities. It is one reason why the female body and the sexual female body is not more visible (Coly *Postcolonial* 6). Thus, following Coly, I understand Mamakay's body as part of a politics of sexual pleasure (6) which rejects colonialist and nationalist symbolization of the female form. Moreover, I read Mamakay's sexuality as an aspect of her consanguineal orientation because it is not avarastic: it does not operate out of ownership, control/power, or transaction. Through it she gives pleasure and gives pleasure: first to herself and then to her partner.

Mamakay's sexual practice is not restricted to one lover or to the national hero. At different points in the novel, Mamakay has relationships with her former love(r), Kai, and her current lover, Adrian Lockheart. With both lovers, Mamakay is able to enjoy active sexual desire and practice. Kai and Mamakay (who was then known as Nenebah) were partners and lovers during their university years. Their relationship continued and progressed as the armed civil conflict spread through the countryside. As residents of Freetown, they were both in the metropolitan sphere within a peripheral country. In concert with their young late adolescent/early adult age, there

geographic location in Freetown positions them away from the early violence, warfare and terror that their countrymen and women face. "Inside" of Freetown is also the inside of a class position where they have access to a university education and the financial support to pursue it. In this "inside," they are "inside" of each other, as well. This is revealed through vivid, present-tense narration of their lovemaking:

> War gave new intensity to their lovemaking. On the floor, facing him. Nenebah with her legs around Kai's waist. He, inside her, a nipple in his mouth. One hand squeezes the surrounding breast, his tongue flicks back and forth, round and round. The fingers of his other hand, in the warm V of her thighs, imitate the same motion. Her breathing rises and quickens. As she comes, he holds on to her, an arm around her shoulders, pressing her down on to his cock. With the slowing of her shudders he rolls Nenebah on to her back, his fingers in her hair, moving forward and back until he loses himself. Afterwards he lies, still inside her, slowly softening, her hand stroking the back of his neck. In time they both sleep held in the same position. (Forna, *Memory* 235)

In the description, there is a repetition of "inside her," "in the warm V of her thighs," "still inside her" and finally "[i]n time." The war contextualizes their "lovemaking" and "gave" it its particular "intensity" but despite being enacted by two bodies, "in" communicates that Mamakay's body is the site of the eroticism and the sexual communion. The language of their sexual intercourse suggest that she is the plane and power that fuels the mutual physicality and lovemaking.

If, as I have suggested, the "inside" of the country is Freetown, a metropolitan sphere which historically protected some people from early civil conflict due to its

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concentration of power, and sex occurs "in/side" of Mamakay's body, then does Mamakay function as a protector? I would argue that her eroticism does serve to protect both herself and Kai from the dehumanization and physical and psychological alienation of armed and psychic warfare. It is a type of power, a knowledge vector and contains the potentiality for self-discovery (Lorde 49). And yet, of course, we know as readers of literature and the world that the protection is not complete or sufficient when the energies, economies and exigences all call for war(fare). We learn at the end of the novel, that Kai's relationship to Mamakay ended after he was abducted from the hospital and subjected to sexual violence. The scars to his body and psyche distort what was formerly a mutual, loving intercourse between the two lovers.

Having parted from her Kai, Nenebah meets Adrian as Mamakay, and eventually they begin a romantic and sexual relationship. But how is the reader to understand why the most prominent female character has explicit sex throughout the novel, with not one but two men? Again, the concept of the erotic is useful as is an awareness of Mamakay's choices. Mamakay is not a trope. She doesn't succumb to the African mother/African whore trope that so many first generation, male African writers were critiqued for. Instead, Mamakay is permitted a measure of subjectivity that allows her to be read as an individual, not as the mimetic representation of land, country, people redeemed or reduced.

This is, in part, because Mamakay owns her sex, sexuality and body. As Ifi Amadiume points out, "Ownership to access [to sexuality] is consequently a major problem that radicalizes our discourse on sexuality because logically, it points to the question of subjectivity and choice as opposed to objectification, possession and

forced penetration" ("Sexuality" 2). In the post-matriarchy that Amadiume is exploring, she traces the ownership of the female body, and through it, female sexuality, from the female midwife in traditional societies, to males who hold the social positions of "fathers" and husbands in traditional and modern societies (2). Mamakay is not subject to either of these ownership claims, though she is part of a modern society. Her father, Elias, has not appealed to any moral or filial obligation that would control her sex/uality, though he is aware of her relationship with Adrian.

With Adrian, Mamakay conceives a child. Though Adrian tries to persuade her to emigrate to the UK and live with him, Mamakay resists. She tells Adrian, "This is my home. This is where I want to live. I want to raise our children *in this place*" (378; emphasis in original). Adrian does not understand her choice, because while the personal and professional unhappiness that he experienced in the UK influenced his decision to come to Sierra Leone, it isn't significant enough to surmount the belief that his country is better. Also, Adrian's repeated recollection that his mother was "almost" born in Sierra Leone but was actually born in the UK is significant. By the time that Mamakay is pregnant, we understand that Adrian is trying to recreate the historical, patriarchal protection of a woman/spouse/partner by getting her to safety so that she can give birth. In this way, Adrian is similar to most of the white characters in the novel: he is "happy" to be there just as long as he can leave when he's ready. Adrian thinks that Sierra Leone "is no place to live one's life" (*Memory* 418), but it is an interlude to a life lived elsewhere. Adrian does not take Mamakay's clear difference in perspective seriously but excuses what he decides is her lack of information, as he concludes,

It is his fault, not Mamakay's, for she knows no other life. […] Here there is

nothing, they are both at the mercy of this place, like everybody else. At home,

his home, it will be different. She will be happy, for what is there not to be

happy about living beyond the shadow of disaster. (418-419)

Rather than try to understand her commitment to "home," a commitment rooted in an

erotic desire – wherein the psychic and spiritual awareness of self, prompts her to root

herself in "home," and pleasure in her friends, her artistic labor, and her lifestyle

(Lorde, 49-50) – Adrian can only assume that she is ignorant of the comforts of "his

home" and that it will be superior enough for her to "be happy."

In "Emotional (Un)Belonging in Aminatta Forna's *The Memory of Love*,"

Irene Pérez Fernández reads Mamakay's preference as resistance against "historical

discourses of happiness" (218). According to Pérez Fernández, "Freetown is presented

… as a place that offers the possibility of happiness and recovery; the opportunity for

new beginnings even in adverse circumstances. Such a view of the capital city

questions happiness as a social construct associated to privilege and social hierarchies,

and it subverts discourses that attribute happiness to specific (Western) ways of

living" (215). I follow Pérez Fernández in reading Mamakay as a character who is

invested in Freetown. Furthermore, her insistence that "[Freetown, Sierra Leone] is

my home. […] I want to raise our children *in this place*" (*Memory* 378) reveals her

consanguineal orientation toward the nation.

Eventually, Mamakay experiences pregnancy complications and dies during an

emergency surgery, at the same time that her girl child is born. It is Kai who delivers

her baby. During the operation scene, there is a narrative digression where the reader

learns that Mamakay previously told the younger Kai that she wanted him to deliver her children. It is not a simple ironic gesture then, for Kai to be put to the task of midwifery. He has lost some of his inner peace and body to night terrors, intrusive thoughts, anxiety and impotence due to the sexual assault he suffered during the war. As a result of these psychological and psychic traumas, it was Kai who left Mamakay. He was unable to tell her of his trauma and, still, unable to fully leave his hope that they would somehow reconcile. Yet, the digression in the surgery reveals that their connection, forged through eroticism, desire, and sexual practice has created a sustained understanding and love.

Taken altogether, Mamakay's erotic power, her continued love for Kai—which does not discount her love for Adrian—and her commitment to Sierra Leone is the reason why the child ends up living with Kai and not with her father, Adrian. The idea that Mamakay's sex/sexuality/eroticism/pleasure would be the determining factor in her child living in Sierra Leone is compelling if we consider Lorde's observation that "the bridge which connects [the political and the spiritual] is formed by the erotic—the sensual—those physical, emotional, and psychic expressions of what is deepest and strongest and richest within each of us, being shared: the passions of love, in its deepest meanings" (50). In this reading, the child's place/home in Sierra Leone with Kai is not quite literary realism. It is not a realism that takes patriarchy, passports and the discourse of global/capitalist advancement as determining factors. In those realisms, Adrian is the *biological* father, the patriarch, the giver of a name by which the child will gain the security of First World British life, with a passport like a parasol. The realism of eroticism functions differently, however. It seeks connection,

deep joy, pleasure, and power. Thus, Adrian and Kai respect her wish that her child be raised in Sierra Leone. The ending of the novel further suggests that Mamakay is a construction as "home" and of Sierra Leone is a place for the future generations.

On Kai Mansaray, Bounded Trauma, and the "Father" Gender

Kai Mansaray's transition into a mature gendered identity occurs in the context of significant trauma. Unlike Mamakay, who experienced psychological effects of the war, Kai experienced sexualized violence. Because of this, it is necessary to consider Kai's response to trauma in relation to his bildung and his consanguineal orientation. Kai's reaction to trauma is markedly different from others. He is not a melancholic or a post-independence malcontent, like Isilo. Further, in comparison to other characters in *Memory*, Kai is not the character who immediately appears to need psychiatric or therapeutic intervention. That character, Agnes, has attracted much of the scholarly attention.[73] Scholars have focused on her fugue state applications as a metaphor or a means of coping with impersonal nature of violence and the untenable requirements that "reconciliation" makes upon people. In contrast to Agnes, Kai appears to have a unified psyche.

In addition, Gana's theories about trauma, melancholia, and mourning, which I used to explicate *Night* are not applicable to Kai. In writing about rural and agrarian people who are unincorporated by the nation's project, Miano incorporates historical contexts for which Gana's analytical tools of post/coloniality and psychoanalysis are most appropriate. However, Forna's novel focuses on a different polity type, a

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[73] See footnote 16 in this chapter.

different "character type," and a different reaction to the traumatic incident. Thus, I follow *Memory*'s rendering of Kai's narrative to argue that Kai "bounds" his trauma. I borrow the concept from Norridge's schematic to argue that a significant aspect of Kai's development occurs because he prevents the trauma from encroaching on his future. He does this by limiting the narrative of the trauma. Said differently, he doesn't allow the story of the violence to become the story of his life. I will support this claim by revisiting the incident and its effects.

Kai's trauma is personal. It is embodied violence. We can understand it as warfare against the body itself since violence is a technology of war and the body is made a site of that technology. Sexualized violence is part of the structure of warfare in so much as it organizes the complex and interrelated flows of power, resources, and people. Though all people in/around an armed conflict (or war) are not subject to sexualized violence, the fear of it and the steps taken to avoid it become part of the "elements …[that] constitute … [the] self-subsisting space" (Rowe) of (relatively) privileged persons as well as those who are more vulnerable. As we see in *Memory*, one objective of sexualized violence is to control others and gain power.

Kai's traumatic episode is given one of the few time cues within the novel, though it is general rather than precise. We are told it occurs "[n]ights" after 24 January 1999 (429). This date corresponds with a rebel-coordinated offensive called "Operation No Living Thing" (Gberie 125). The narrative refers to this assault on the city and the people,[74] but in accordance with the narrative style, it is somewhat

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[74] The reference is made through Mary, a minor character who is friends with Kai, Mamakay, Tejani, and others in their social circle. When Kai tells her about his appointment at the US Embassy, she shares her news: she plans to take custody of her child who is currently being raised by her parents. Kai

oblique. Instead of a precise day, we learn the circumstances. Kai has been living and

working in the hospital for weeks, along with all the available nurses and doctors.

There are more wounded than resources or medical personnel. One morning, Kai is

walking down the corridor amidst "the dying and injured, looking for the next patient,

someone likely to survive" (Forna *Memory* 429) when a rebel fighter bursts in and

commands him at gunpoint to follow. They also take Balia, a young nurse. Kai has

previously noted Balia's attraction to him and her attractiveness, though he is

uninterested because he is with Mamakay. At the behest of the rebel fighters, Kai and

Balia operate on their wounded for hours. In the evening, Kai tries to negotiate their

release, but their commander insists that they will be released in the morning. Because

Kai is aware that rape is a technology of war, he stays awake throughout the night

while Balia—who also seems to be awake—huddles beside him. Sometime during the

night, the power differential shifts. Their use value, previously derived from their

medical training—their ability to sustain and safeguard life and limb—has eroded. The

narrative presents this as a matter of fact:

> Something had changed since the morning when Kai and Balia had been taken
>
> from the hospital…. Kai knew there was only one thing it could be. The rebels
>
> had staked everything on the battle for the city. Now they were losing. The
>
> prize was slipping through their fingers. […] Nothing awaited save death. [The

thinks of the child this way: "October 1999. So many children born in a single month. In Kai's view Mary's capacity to forgive seems, quite simply, immeasurable. May's parents had taken her son away to raise in the village. Who knows how many children born in the same month in the same year are being raised all over the country like that? Children like Mary's son who have one thing in common. They were all born nine months after the rebel army invaded the city." (Forna *Memory* 366) Kai's reflection encapsulates the spiritual, psychological, and emotional labor that a woman would undertake before (and while) decided to raise a child conceived through rape but elides any mention of the rape itself.

rebels] had nothing to lose and they would take Balia and Kai down with them. (431)

With death a likely consequence of battle, Kai and Balia are no longer useful as medics. The immediate shift for Balia is that she is deemed the site and object of sexualized conquest, violence, and power. Kai's use is not immediately clear but the shift in their regard for him is. The assault begins when "newcomers" in the rebel group enter the room where Kai and Balia are being held and demand Balia. When Kai tries to defend Balia and reassert her expertise rather than her use as a sexual object by saying, "She is not my girlfriend, she's a nurse," a newcomer retorts: "She's your girlfriend. Look how fine she is. Why don't you share your girlfriend with us? You tink say because you na big doctor, you deserve better than we" (430). The last statement captures the shift that has occurred: the traits that would otherwise fuel admiration for Kai—his age as an older man, his status as a relatively young adult man, his medical training—is part of their contempt. Kai is now a representative of the privilege they cannot attain. One of the rebels does attempt to reassert Balia and Kai to the position they previously occupied. He says, "These two came from the hospital. I saw them there. Let us leave them" (431) but having been interpolated as objects of warfare and spoils of war, the statement is not enough to recuperate them in the eyes of the rebels. What follows is a tense and violent scene: Balia attempts to evade the men who attempt to wrangle her; Kai is beaten and then stripped. Then, the two are brought together as the rebels circle them. The rebels command Kai at gun point again: "Fuck her or I kill you" (432). The narrator presents us with Kai's interior thoughts which initially implies his submission to them:

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Kai pulled himself up to his knees. He did not know what to do. Could see no

way out. They would kill him and Balia, too. Of that he was certain. He made

to move towards her. She did not shrink back, but hugged herself and sobbed.

All around him they were baying now. The person with the stick hit him at

intervals. He stopped still. He felt the gun at his temple.

'Fuck her or I fuck you.' First spoken and then screaming into his ear,

combining with the ringing in his head to make him dizzy. 'Fuck her or I fuck

you.' (433)

In this scene, we observe that the desperation of the situation leaves Kai to consider

that raping Balia—"fuck[ing] her" at their command—is the only option that will

sustain their lives. When he "stop[s] still"—a positive action that the rebels accurately

register as his refusal to participate—he becomes the site and object of sexualized

violence. I follow Norridge who asserts that Kai "achieves a …form of self-

determination, one that asserts the individuality of refusal" ("Sex" 29). The narrative

shows us the consequence of Kai's action:

The gun was removed from his temple. Kai tried to force himself to think. He

was helpless. He felt something—the gun barrel—being pushed between his

buttocks, heard the laughter, felt the end of it being rammed into him. The pain

was acute and rippled through his body. Clapping. Cawing laughter. The gun

barrel was thrust further into him. He flopped forward and was forced up, back

on to his hands and knees. (Forna *Memory* 433)

The consequence of refusing to rape Balia is being raped. The language of Kai's rape

is direct and explicit. The violence and cruelty of the event is not cushioned in

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anyway. The reader might understand this as an unlikely and even unintended

substitution by Kai, since it is his defense of Balia which made him a target.

Thinking of Kai's rape as a type of substitution for Balia can be understood

when we remember that rape is about power, rather than sex. Thus, the rape of the

male/masculine Kai satisfies the same objectives as the rape of the female/feminine

Balia. Reading Kai and Balia as substituted or interchangeable "objects" for violence

is strengthened when we consider Balia's fate. During Kai's assault, she "lunge[s]"

towards him and is shot (433). Thus, (male) Kai is raped for refusing to participate in

the rape of (female) Balia, and (female) Balia is killed while attempting to interrupt

the rape of (male) Kai. I emphasize the biological sex because the scene undercuts the

assumptions about biological sex, violence, and the nature of heroics. While both

characters behave heroically, it is the male character (Kai) who lives with the trauma

of sexualized violence and the female character (Balia) who is killed performing an act

of protection. Later, when the rebels order him into the back of a truck, he takes Balia

as she is "dying, not yet dead" (433). The rebels take them to the peninsula bridge and

order them out. Faced with an execution, Kai falls backward over the bridge railing

with Balia's body. But, here again, the rebel shoots, and here again, it is Balia who is

shot. From the perspective of *Memory*'s discourse, I argue that Kai's rape collapses

the experiential difference between the "privileged" and the disempowered. For, as

Janice Spleth notes in "The Interplay of Fiction and International Law in Aminatta

Forna's *The Memory of Love*," the central male characters all are "relatively

privileged" through their sex, gender, "Western" education, and careers, meanwhile

"the violence of the conflict … is often evoked through the lives of women" (177-

178). Kai's rape makes visible the rape of men, the rape of the disempowered, violence against non-combatants, and the savagery of war itself. As a privileged character with a male body, he is not who rape "should" happen to. Thus, his violation makes the violence of the sexualized assault hyper-visible within the narrative, just as, ironically it is hidden in the actual world because of compounded judgement against male victims.

The psychological and physiological effects of the violence is extensive: Kai cannot sleep, not even after consuming alcohol or sleeping pills. He is unable to maintain an erection and his relationship with his college sweetheart, Mamakay, deteriorates. Eventually, his hands begin to shake uncontrollably, and this threatens to take away both his surgical skill and the immense pride and peace that surgery gives him.

Finally, following Mamakay's death Kai reveals the events to Adrian. In doing so, Kai breaks the silence that the traumatic episode imposed as he allows Adrian to use his psychiatric training to guide him through a verbal retelling of the traumatic events. The ability to narrate the violent scene, rape, and Balia's murder provides Kai with some relief. We know this because after these events, Kai is able to drive across the peninsula bridge. He has previously avoided it. Though it is a central structure and infrastructure of the city, he's directed his work and leisure travels so that he never crosses it. There is metaphoric weight of making the bridge a structure and infrastructure[75] – of travel of the citizen, soldier, rebel; of goods; a linkage point – and

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[75] My claim about the structure of sexualize violence of war and the infrastructure of the bridge take inspiration from Carole Levine's "'The Strange Familiar': Structure, Infrastructure, and Adichie's *Americanah*."

a site of violence. The crossing of the bridge does not symbolize total healing or triumph over trauma but rather it symbolizes that Kai's disposition is not primarily informed/inflected by trauma. This personal and embodied history is pertinent but not determinative. He is not a trauma *victim*, though he has experienced trauma.

Furthermore, Kai's emphasis on consanguineal orientations over personal happiness is made clear through his refusal to emigrate and his development into an adult gender. Unlike the gender of the Big Man and Cult(ure) Hero and their attendant subjectivities, Kai develops into an everyman and a father. Though neither are identarian groups, each is a gender. To properly understand them as such, we must first situate his decision to forgo immigration to the United States. Immigration to the U.S. loams over Kai through the novel. His parents and elder sister have been residents of Canada since Kai was a university student. His best friend, a fellow surgeon named Tejani, has already immigrated to the U.S. with an H1B visa and continues to encourage Kai to do the same. In the U.S., Tejani has a romantic partner and an expectation of a comfortable life with unfettered access to the infrastructures of transportation (gas/petrol), communication (electricity/internet), leisure (electricity), and water. Kai never claims that these things are not desirable. On the contrary, they are what he desires. Immigration to the US would also provide the intangible benefit of removing him from a place where he was traumatized and where day-to-day effects of the war appear to him in the surgery, on the street, and even within his home which he shares with his cousin who was widowed when rebels killed her husband. But by forgoing immigration—and the opportunity to be the African exemplar in the U.S., hailed as a member of the *global* middle class– Kai is able to become a father.

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Fathering, much like mothering, is not a biological designation in the African context. Rather, fathering refers to the activities of bringing up a child by contributing to its material well-being and moral, intellectual, cultural, and spiritual education. Fathering is the more appropriate term because the actions/investments are tied to constructions of masculinity and not just to perceptions of personhood.

Throughout the novel, Kai has stood in as the father of his widowed cousin's son, Abass. In considering his immigration, Kai has continued to think about how Abbas, will handle his departure but while doing this, he has resisted the idea that he is functionally Abbas' father. Abbas, however, already understands that Kai is a father to him. For instance, Abass does not correct a stranger when he refers to Kai as such, though Kai himself waits for the child's correction. The second child that he fathers is the daughter that Mamakay conceives with Adrian. Kai's self-creation as a father is symbolic. It is consanguineal in the literal and metaphoric sense that I have developed through this work. He is literally the kinsman of the young boy but has no shared biological or marital links to the little girl.

My argument here is that "father" is a gendered identity which Kai claims as a positive self-concept. Z'étoile Imma makes a similar observation when she writes that "[f]or Kai, it is in his paternal role that his humor, patience, and caring nature are most suitably expressed" (146). As I have here, Imma argues that "Forna's reimagining of fatherhood as a healing practice is again affirmed through the novel's optimistic and uplifting ending, which centers on Kai enjoying a day at the beach with Adrian's and Nenebah's now two-year-old daughter, whom he is raising, frolicking, laughing, and singing alongside Abass" (146). My intervention is that "fatherhood" is a not only a

"healing practice" for the social fabric but for Kai himself. I agree with Imma's claim that "Kai Mansaray represents a model for post-war Sierra Leone masculinities" (142) and recognize that Forna has crafted a masculinity which contends with trauma without any assertion that Kai will conquer it. Instead, he will live with it—bound it—but construct an identity which is not dependent upon the trauma.

While I read Kai's decision to remain in Sierra Leone as necessary for his adult gender, I also read it as novel's own endorsement of the affiliative link to the country. Kai is constructed as a representative of Sierra Leone. As Aminatta Forna observes: "Kai…offers the reader a different way of seeing [Sierra Leone]. Through Kai's eyes we see the country, its past and its secrets, the nuances to which Adrian is not privy…." ("Selective Empathy" 37). Mamakay has a similar affiliative link. Her intention to stay in Sierra Leone and grow the country through childbirth, social relationships, and work-labor is indicative of a positive social presence. Irene Pérez Fernández argues that "Mamakay is the character in the novel [that] represents this idea of constructing a new collective nation for the country after the war" (218). The perspective endorsed by Pérez Fernández is correct and to it I add the idea that "constructing a new collective nation" involves the geographical fixity of the body within the nation. Yet neither Mamakay nor Kai are constructed as exemplary characters. In literature, exemplary characters are typically self-conscious of their special-/uniqueness, their extraordinary privilege or sacrifice, their ability to create, and so on. Neither Mamakay nor Kai are like this. In forgoing this, Forna creates another way to understand their consanguineal orientation. In the novel's rendering, this orientation is not abnormal, but normal. It requires no treatise or psychological

excavation. This is not to say that forgoing the opportunity to immigrate to the Global North is made possible by idealism alone. The preceding chapters, like this one, have demonstrated my attention to material factors which make individual development possible. *Memory* acknowledges these material factors too. The healthcare sector is the most in-depth point of focus as is Kai and Mamakay's positionality. Their middle-class positioning creates the opportunity to be educated, employed, and the potential for societal, class, and transnational mobility. Both characters have relative affluence, safe and stable housing, food, medical security, and this is why their refusal to go abroad is possible and why it is read as (African-)self-affirmation. The fact of materiality is one reason why the novel is not critical of Sierra Leoneans who leave the country. Quite the opposite is the case if we consider that Kai, the only man still living in Sierra Leone at the end of the novel, commiserates with those in difficult circumstances and bears no grudge or ill-will toward Tejani, or nursing staff who find their futures in United Kingdom or other places in the Global North. Ultimately, it is clear that while some Sierra Leoneans respond to financial, social, and political pressures by emigrating, others draw from their relative privilege and decide to stay. This is not a utopic vision but an optimistic and pragmatic one. It suggests one way that Sierra Leone's institutions can be supported by an engaged and active community which values consanguineal associations.

Consanguineal Affiliation in the Time *During* and *After* War

Ultimately, both novels are bildungsroman which depict the protagonists' formation as a process of moving toward connection to the nation and its people. In my reading,

Miano's *Night* collapses the distinction between "war novel" and bildungsroman which presumes that bildungsromane are necessarily oriented to narrate an individual's pursuit of personal happiness, which is what I have been calling conjugality. Eleni Coundouriotis uses this definition of the bildungsromane in *The People's Right to the Novel: War Fiction in the Postcolony*. Writing about the distinction between novels which depict war and the bildungsroman, she says:

> The war novel…attempts a people's history and sits outside the frame of the *Bildungsroman*, the genre that dominated the literature of an educated, assimilated class in whose hands the novel took on the confrontation of the individual and society as tradition, modernity, political corruption, religion, and patriarchy. [Footnote 1] The war novel instead attempts to capture the people's perspective and give a collective account of ordinary people in the historical transitions from colonialism to independence and the post-independence and globalizing eras. It focuses on the politically marginalized, trying to imagine a perspective from below. (1-2)[76]

I agree with many of her claims about the war novel. It seeks to ennoble common people by narrating their plight within literature and presenting their lived experiences (2; 11). However, I disagree with Coundouriotis' generic distinction. As this analysis of *Night* demonstrates, it "addresses the dangers of reinforcing stereotypes by balancing its specifically historical project" (2) through the conversation between

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[76] Coundouriotis' footnote 1 refers to Joseph Slaughter's *Human Rights, Inc.* p.267.

Wengisané and Ayané, it represents the conditions of the rural people (including their suffering) (4), and it contains some of the same naturalistic depictions of war.[77]

Furthermore, Miano's novel depicts the issues of identifying a home by narrating a character whose claim to home (village) is constantly undermined and whose claim to home (country) is insecure. In *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood: Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures*, Ayo A. Coly argues that their novels constitute "home" discursively. Their literature, Coly continues, presents home as a space where gender affects participation in political and social life. Ergo, the "home" of African nationalist discourse, the home of the African male-authored novel, and the "home" of the African female-authored novel are not identical. The difference is not derived from biological essentialism, but from the materiality of gender[78] and literary deployment of "home" (xi-xviii). In the case of *Memory*, the nation as home is re-evaluated for its potential for the character's personal growth, happiness, and healing. Kai and Mamakay are resourced characters who resist the totalizing depiction of Sierra Leone and imagine it as a place where their lives, and the lives of their children, can be lived with joy.

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[77] Coundouriotis writes, "The argument that I make here is sharply focused on naturalism as a way of coming to terms with the experience of war and attempts to delineate the naturalist environment as the war experience. War, in other words, is a special case, an environment out of the ordinary that is governed by different laws, those that are explained through naturalism" (5). An analysis of naturalism is outside the interests of this dissertation, but *Night*'s incorporation of naturalistic description is worth noting since it complicates Coundouriotis' generic distinctions in just the way I am trying to.

[78] By materiality of gender, I mean the way that gender affects income, education, employment/job acquisition, citizenship, and access to the state protections etc. See the Introduction which explained this.

CONCLUSION

When I began this project, I set out to discover something new about contemporary African women's literature. Despite some embarrassment at the quality of the writing, I have been impressed by what these pages revealed. The preceding chapters analyzed bildungsromane by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, Amma Darko, Léonora Miano, and Aminatta Forna. The novels were selected to represent various nations within West Africa, and the thematic and stylistic breadth of the genre. In all of these variations, I demonstrated that the contemporary West African bildungsroman focalizes the centrality of gender to developmental trajectories and bildungshelds' motivation to attain a preferred adult identity. Furthermore, I demonstrated that the West African bildungsroman presents social and national institutions of development as central to individual and social development.

Moreover, my work considered whether the bildungshelds were orientated toward conjugality or consanguinity. For instance, Chapters 1 and 2 considered how middle class (adjacent) subjects negotiate events which threaten to disturb their bildung. For each character, a location with a metropolitan patina was significant to their pre-mature self-concept and their adult identity. For Ifemelu, Lagos was a site/sight of combined and uneven development, but also of Big Men, been-tos, and Americanahs. For Kingsley, Umuahia was a "Third World town" in Nigeria but U.S., U.K, and European cities functioned to complement his image of himself as a "real opara" with Igbo cultural values *and* a Big Man.

Meanwhile, Chapter 3 demonstrated that poor, disenfranchised, young women could represent Ghanaian national subjects. Finally, in Chapter 4 I explained how

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Leonora Miano and Aminatta Forna used narratives set during armed conflict to discursively critique discourses about Africa. In Miano's *Night*, Ayane is the educated, sensitive, bildungsheld who wants justice. But we discover that she too must learn about her own prejudices and that a real aesthetic education might be possible if she continues to pursue consanguineal orientations. Through *Memory*, Forna presented multiple representatives for Sierra Leone. By writing about the aftermath of war as a setting which can support life, these novels are nothing less than a provocation to reconsider acceptable discourses of happiness and self-fulfillment.

However, my preliminary discoveries now point to further avenues of investigation. For instance, what is the relationship between class and orientations towards conjugality and consanguinity? Though I have argued that both Ifemelu and Obinze are oriented to their own privatized happiness, the novels clearly perform consanguineal labor by begging the question: What other narrative of development is there for middle-class adults in Nigeria? How else can young adults seek out and attain preferred adult identities? In both Ifemelu and Kingsley's case, they choose identities which aligned with particular hegemonic thought. So—a reader might ask—what is the radical alternative? Another question might engage narrative structure. For instance, what is the relationship between normative structures and middle-class characters? Can novels which depict the harsh and unrelenting struggle to develop while in poverty adopt these structures? Or, like Darko's *The Housemaid* and *Faceless* will they shift towards different non-linear structures and open up for multivocal narrative contributions? Another question might be: how can we think about novels set during and after war as showcasing radical possibilities? Can we understand the

"bounding" of trauma and the choice to associate as a positive and community-altering act? Though this last question refers to Miano's *Night* and Forna's *Memory*, it also implicates the bildungsroman more generally. For, the question it glosses is the one that prompted the study itself:

- What is meant by individual development?

- Is it an orientation toward something?

- Is it development into some gender or identity?

- Can it be "successful" if others register it as a minor change?

These questions, too, resist any easy response. But the analysis of the novels themselves provide us, yet again, with something to explore.

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