

**POST-INDEPENDENCE ENGAGEMENT PARADIGMS IN
SELECTED THIRD-GENERATION NIGERIAN NOVELS**

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to

Feyisike Adejoke

my priceless partner;

and the memories of:

- **Oluwatominiyi Festus Coker** (1974-2011)
- **Adeniji Adaralegbe** (1928-2011)
- **Habeeb Owolabi** (1945-2011)
- **Olumide Gabriel Coker** (1969-2012)

May your souls rest in peace.

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ABSTRACT

African critical discourse is replete with existing studies on first and second generation novelists and their abiding commitment to socio-historical realities. While the first generation writers focused nationalist ethos, the second generation evinced political activism. However, the third-generation novelists, who exhibit a tendency towards political engagement, have not received adequate critical attention and sufficient comparative evaluation. This study, therefore, examines the engagement paradigms in third-generation Nigerian novels.

Psychoanalysis (Freudian and Lacanian) and New Historicism are employed as theoretical frameworks. Psychoanalysis is relevant to the understanding of the internal workings of the human mind at different levels of consciousness which is germane to the characterization in the selected novels for this study. New Historicism entails a dynamic consideration of history and the text from the perspective of both the critic and the writer, which is also central to the selected texts. It involves a close and comparative reading of six purposively selected texts: Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*; Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come*; Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*; Adaobi Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come To You By Chance*; Helon Habila's *Waiting for An Angel* and Bina Ilagha's *Condolences*. The novels are content and comparatively analysed along three paradigms of Child Narration, Development Fiction and Quest for Justice.

Third-generation Nigerian novelists have upheld and consolidated the tradition of commitment in African literature. The novelists have evolved identified paradigms to engage the post-independence challenges of the enabling milieu. Through the paradigm of Child Narration, Chimamanda Adichie and Sefi Attah effectively exploit omniscient narrative technique as a device for projecting socio-historical decadence in

Purple Hibiscus and *Everything Will Come* respectively. Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* and Adaobi Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come To You By Chance* exemplify the appropriateness of the Development Fiction paradigm through the engagement of developmental issues like political corruption, moral decadence and internet fraud prevalent in the twenty-first century. Quest for Justice as an engagement paradigm situates Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and Bina Ilagha's *Condolences* as Justice Narratives. It equally manifests in the crusade for prison reforms in *Waiting for an Angel* and the question of violation of human and communal rights in *Condolences*. Technically, the paradigms foreground the selected texts by exuding metaphors of neo-colonial decadence, evolution of informed and balanced narrators, narrative devices, suspense and images of socio-historical dislocation. The selected novels share affinities of pragmatic engagement of post-independence decadence and refractive temperament, propelled by the frameworks of the isolated paradigms used in the study.

Third-generation Nigerian novels are dynamic and unique in their engagement of post-independence challenges as instantiated in the paradigms of Child Narration, Development Fiction and Quest for Justice. Thus, the refractive capacity of fiction is adequately foregrounded. There is, therefore, an inherent potential of the third-generation Nigerian novel to serve as an imaginative catalyst of socio-political re-engineering.

Key words: Nigerian novels, Child narration, Literature and society, Development fiction, Quest for justice.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The tradition of literature of engagement (*littérature engagée*) is a recurring phenomenon in critical discourse. As a matter of fact, Jean Paul Sartre (1950) advocates a concept of political engagement and commitment. In his view, literature has a vital role to play in ensuring human freedom. Sartre believes that literature, especially a work of prose, has the capacity to guarantee freedom for both the producer (writer) and consumer (reader) of art. This proposition is hinged primarily on the creative propensity of the author in the imagination and creation of an idyllic world, on the one hand and the seeming right of the reader in partaking of the experience of social recreation through involvement in literary consumption, on the other. Sartre captures his argument thus:

To write for one's age is not to reflect it, it is to want to maintain it or change it, thus to go beyond it towards the future and it is this effort to change it that places us most deeply within it ... (236).

This strain of Sartrean philosophy finds rooting in the African experience in literary creation, given the peculiarities of its milieu of production. This immediacy is necessitated by what Frantz Fanon (1964) observes about African post-independence situation that:

It is true to say that independence has brought moral compensation to colonized peoples, and has established their dignity. But they have not yet had time to elaborate a society, or to build up and affirm values. The warming, light-giving centre where man and citizen develop and enrich their experience in wider and still wider fields do not yet exist. (64).

The need to engage this void as vividly portrayed in the foregoing makes the subject of commitment a feature in the practice and discourse of African literature. This tradition, indeed, has a long and remarkable history. This is due to the very nature of creative engagement in the corpus of African creative imagination. One major factor responsible for this is the predisposition of African literary enterprise to socio-historical representation and responsiveness. It, therefore, follows naturally that African literature has a fetal alliance with the African society. Another driving force for this Siamese relationship is the progressive evolution of African literature in relation to the phases of socio-historical development of African nationhood. This specifically derives from the process of political transformation of African states, from the pre-colonial through the post-independence periods. In essence, the shared experiences from these periods have generally come to shape the thematic thrusts of literature as well as its aesthetic directions.

It must be acknowledged that the development of sub-Saharan African creative writing is traceable to the tail end of the colonial period. This makes it a recent phenomenon that sprouted in the early part of the twentieth century. This development makes creative writers, alongside political compatriots, partners and allies in the quest for positive self assertion. Ultimately, the notion and aesthetic direction of creative energies was firmly grounded in a defensive cause which aimed to proclaim the sanctity of the African essence. This continued till after independence. In other words, African creative writing started out as cultural testaments of an emerging nationhood. It was convenient to blame the woes of the societies on the extraneous colonial powers. While social commitment has always preoccupied African writers, it can be stated that African literature did not

necessarily set out on the commitment path, but on a cruise of self-justification and cultural chest-beating. This was necessitated by ample evidence of trampling on values inherent in the African societies and the relegation of the humanity of the African self by the preceding colonial system. This probably motivated Omafume Onoge (1985) to claim that "a literature using the weapons of words for the legitimate defense of the African heritage" (27). This observation is certainly not misplaced when one considers the scope and constitution of early African literary works across the continent. In specific terms, African writers were on hand to salvage African identity and engage the misconceptions of Africa in the images depicted by European writers like Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* and even Daniel Defoe in his pioneering work of English novel, *Robinson Crusoe*. This cultural manifesto therefore preoccupied writers like Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* (1958). To a very large extent, much of precolonial African literary works fit into this stereotypes of affirmation of the African self. The point deducible from this is that early African writings were tools of cultural education.

Meanwhile, by the 1970's, the first decade of independence had still not brought about a genuine transformation of African society. With independence, the political terrain altered greatly, but this change failed to lead to qualitative improvement in the lives of the people. Various nationalist leaders virtually stepped into the shoes of the departed colonialists, maintaining the same old system and only introducing superficial changes. If anything, these changes suited the ruling elite, working in league with foreign powers that actually controlled the socio-economic policies of African countries. The people, who had hoped to benefit from national independence, continued to be exploited under a new and subtler form of colonialism - neo-colonialism. Confronted with the old problem of domination and

exploitation under a new guise, the African writer reacted in the same way as under colonialism, with the only difference being the targets of the satirical outputs, this time, against former nationalist leaders.

The prose fiction genre, especially the novel, therefore represents a major force that helps to shape consciousness and remains relevant to the societies. As noted by J.M Coetzee (1999):

Like history too, the novel is an investigation into the power of character and the power of circumstance. By exploring the power of the past to produce the present, the novel suggests how we may explore the potential of the present to produce the future. That is what the novel does, or can do. That is why we have it (2).

In other words, prose fiction possesses an identifiable attribute of social commitment. This, it partially owes to the nature of artistic preoccupation in African creative imagination, on the one hand and the expressive liberty it seems to have on the other. Furthermore, inherent in the genre of prose fiction is a prolificacy of sub-genres, such as the novella, the prose poem and the popular fiction, all of which contribute to its continued relevance and sustainability as a relevant art form in literature. In addition, the history of the modern prose form in Nigeria shares an almost parallel antecedent with the various developmental stages of colonial/neo-colonial experiences in Nigeria. Thus, the genre of prose fiction has become a veritable site which the writer utilises for self-portraiture and positive assertion, especially against the colonial prejudices of void space. This can be instantiated in such works as Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

In effect, the prowess of Nigerian fiction, through the use of peculiar literary conventions and image clusters, has greatly assisted shaping and redirecting socio-cultural thoughts of the populace through art. Charting alternatives and creating a

vision of society as a tool or power to influence economic, social or political factors thus remain key motivations for the Nigerian writer. Through this, values and norms which are culturally subjective are reconstructed with a view to eliciting positive or negative reactions from readers. The tomfoolery of early educated Nigerians represented in texts such as Wole Soyinka's *The Interpreters* and Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* are quintessential examples in the above connection. By lampooning the inferiority complex of some educated Africans in relation to western values, the texts help to reconstruct positively the images of certain aspects of indigenous Nigeria culture, such as marriage rites and the celebration of common humanity.

It is worthwhile to note that the propensity for social reflection by African prose fiction is generally a product of both nurture and nature; nurture because of the pattern of evolution of African letters and nature because of the peculiarities of the form. From the ground-breaking work of Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, through the post-independence corpus of creative engagements in the literary space, it is indubitable that the prose-fiction genre, in Nigeria, like its counterparts in several parts of the continent, serves as a melting pot of shared socio-historical experiences and communal angst. For example, Ayi Kwei Armah in *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* and *Two Thousand Seasons*, concerns himself with the political and economic predicament of Ghana. Also, Ngugi wa Thiongo chronicles the socio-political angst of Kenya through the various stages of the country's evolution in works like *Weep Not Child*, *Matigari*, and *Devil on The Cross*. South African writers like Dennis Brutus, Andre Brink and J.M Coetzee are notable anti-apartheid crusaders in their writings. Similarly, the poetry of Okot p'Bitek, most especially in *Songs of Lawino* centres on the decline of human values and the

prevailing socio-historical circumstances in the same way as Naguib Mahfouz and Nurudin Farah denounce inhumanity in North Africa. Meja Mwangi also focuses on the reinstatement of the common good in his satirical works on Kenyan society. As such, the responses of African literary preoccupations have been an abiding faith in functional literature. This is in agreement with Foucault's (1994) observation that:

It is one thing to articulate and take up a stance on the political struggles in the midst of which one finds oneself situated historically but it is quite another to seek an epistemic standpoint outside those ongoing conflicts from which that stance can be validated (109).

This directly relates to the various attempts by writers in Africa to immediately engage with history, and affect their enabling milieu, thereby affirming the position of Paschal Kyore (2004) that "writers challenge the authority of the status quo, the politicians. They do this by violating the space of hegemonic discourse, deconstructing that discourse, and serving as a voice of the subaltern (14). It is therefore understandable that the fictional manifestations in Africa continue to oscillate between social realities and historical exigencies of the enabling milieu. As shall be explicated in this thesis, the prose fictional engagements of the post independence Nigerian era represent a definite testament to the above critical probing. This ultimately sets apart African form from those of the aesthetic bent as the dichotomy between the functionalist school and arts for art's sake connotes. This is in line with Mary Kolawole's (2005) view that:

Literature is an extended metaphor and a symbol whose intertextual interactions transcend literary transactions. It derives from the impact of a wider range of pretext-linguistic, cultural, philosophical, ideological, historical or political (11)

Thus, the above succinctly captures the intellectual and ideological motivations of the writer, and the attempt at deploying literary resources to negotiate the dynamics of the society.

It should be noted that the Nigerian milieu represented in its literature is one that is peculiar. This is as a result of the phases of development of the society which continue to put writers to task. It is also evident in the fact that years after independence, the nations continue to be the guinea-pig of case studies of developmental malfunctioning. As a matter of fact, while the rest of the developed societies are contending with issues of secondary and most often, tertiary levels of human advancement, African nations are still preoccupied with the primary issues which are taken for granted as givens of humanistic existence. Iheriohanma and Oguoma (2010) link this to the aftermath of independence:

It appeared that the euphoria of independence, and the unanticipated load and pleasures of leadership paraphernalia it bestowed on those involved in the anti – colonial struggle and emergent African leaders blurred the vision of these nationalists. This is because, the incipient national consciousness of the anti – colonial struggle appeared to have derailed soon after independence instead of crystallized into formidable force for unification of all the various peoples into a united and strong continent (410).

The foregoing suggests that the nationalists that took over from the colonial powers were not necessarily prepared for governance. This is however contestable given many factors, the most poignant being the fact that the attainment of independence for Nigeria was not an overnight venture. Rather, it was the end result of series of consultations and debates and, in fact, experimentations, if one remembers that the federating units had gained sovereignty before 1960. In fact, a region like Western Nigeria, under Chief Obafemi Awolowo recorded remarkable achievements on all

facets of the socio-economic fronts. One, therefore, aligns with the submissions of Kyari Tijani (2008), in an article entitled “Metaphors of Underdevelopment: Reflections from Nigeria”, that:

...Nigeria can be a more severe case; a more special instance. This can be seen when Nigeria with its enormous resources, both human and natural, is compared with other countries; countries with similar history and circumstances. Despite its endowments Nigeria does not seem to have performed any better, if not worse than others, with fewer endowments and potential, be it within and outside the African continent. This had been the fate, and the tragedy of Nigeria, and of Africa (138).

Tijani goes on to further carpet the elite and the ruling class for the woes of underdevelopment besetting the Nigerian nation state. One is of firm conviction that the leadership of successive governments in Nigeria is primarily responsible for the existential challenges that continued to denigrate the humanistic ethos in the country and foist pains on communal existence.

From the foregoing, literature and writers appear entangled in the strife and void of developmental challenges. For this, satire and social commitment become, understandably, the aesthetic framework and stylistic directions to follow. These facts, coupled with the heritage of functionalism in African art, combine to foist a responsibility of social commitment on the vibrant African prose fiction. Of course, it is a well accepted fact that African literature has a propensity of functional and dystopian literature. This is not only because of the realities of the post-colonial African state, but also because of the process of artistic creation in pre-colonial societies. Specifically, oral arts derive their social relevance from the abiding faith in the issues of their enabling milieu, and also the realisation of the fact that, for African writers, “the trajectories of their literary practice and *oeuvre* are firmly moored in the socio-cultural landscape, feeding on folkloric elements like folktales,

songs, chants, proverbs, myths, epics, legends, riddles, among other aphoristic and loric employments” (Tsaioor, 2009, 2). It follows naturally that since written African literature is an amalgam of oral tradition and socio-historical realities, a committed African writer would seek to thematise issues of direct socio-historical concerns to the enabling milieu. This is in consonance with Orwell’s (1957) conclusion that a “novelist is not obliged to write directly about contemporary history, but a novelist who simply disregards the major public events of the moment is ... a plain idiot”(10). One certainly agrees with this, given the fact that, a writer is part and parcel of society and most times derives motivation for writing from what obtains in the immediate environment.

To properly situate the foregoing argument within the ambits of this thesis, the circumstances of the post-independence Nigerian writer must be clearly appreciated. First, there is need to understand the phase of history regarded as post-independence Nigerian society. While post-independence Nigerian writing takes off from the early sixties and is characterised by the disillusionment which followed the euphoria of independence, third-generation Nigerian writing occupies a strategic place within the post-independence period. To use Osofisan (2004), delineation, third generation or twenty-first century Nigerian literature would also mean a “post-military Nigerian era”, beginning of course , May, 29th, 1999 when Nigeria’s forth republic took off. It is noteworthy that this period witnessed as direct fallout of the harsh economic realities noticeable in the military regimes of Babangida and Abacha, there was a major creative dearth which is traceable to factors like challenges of the publishing industry, brain drain, decline in the standard of education and the ebbing of reading culture. The point is that with the emergence of democratic governance in Nigeria, literature started to gather momentum, and there

was a major renaissance in the creative enterprise. With the increase in the number of Nigerians abroad also came voices from the Diaspora. These writers share the common quest of roots and soon formed a vibrant tradition. Notable among them are Chiamanda Adichie, Sefi Attah, Helon Habila, Chris Abani, Helen Oyeyemi, Diran Adebayo, all of whom seem fired by the encouragement that their links with the west provided.

This thesis critically critiques the manner of socio-historical representation and engagement by novelists in the dawn of the post-independence Nigerian society. Cognisance is taken of the fact that Nigerian literature; especially the novel genre, seems to have suddenly found a renewed voice in championing the cause of the nation state. This creative efflorescence in itself is a by-product of struggle. Writers who dot the landscape, share common experiences of economic deprivation, hopelessness and disenchantment. Their emergence is actually akin to the fulcrum of this thesis, that is, in spite of odds; the voices remain strong and defiant. The essence is not only to explicate the pervading despair in the polity as a result of the attendant disillusionment and truncation of the dreams of political independence, but also to foreground the peculiarities of woes bedeviling the nation state. This, of course, is directly related to the political upheavals, economic downturn, civil strife and ethnic uprisings that have become synonymous with the social context. In other words, the context of literary production is representative of the textual ties of the text. Context therefore becomes a measure of textual commitment in the milieu.

The terms of engagement of Nigerian fiction change with these trends in the social milieu. The implication of this is not lost on the literary productions. This is because as the Nigerian body polity continues to grapple with varying developmental challenges, the novels adequately thematise these realities. These are

actually realities engendered by the existential dynamics. The point, therefore, is that, in line with the observation of Kyore (2004), that, “ in the post-independence era, African writers have drawn on recent history for their imagination and have mostly turned to concerns about governance in the post-colonial states” (8), the issues that attract third-generation Nigerian novelists are, therefore, directly related to the immediate challenges of the enabling milieu.

In portraying the contemporary dictates of the actual milieu, contemporary Nigerian prose fiction parades an array of dynamic and innovative routes which engender viable thematic thrusts, apt character portraitures and refreshing stylistic platforms which achieve the twin purpose of socio- historical relevance and aesthetic pungency. An understanding of the prevailing social conditions as well as the exigencies of political economy, first-hand , puts the literary productions right at the centre of socio-political and historical dynamics.

The Nigerian literary landscape shares the angst of Nigeria’s tortuous quest for development. Tracing Nigeria’s history through literary production certainly manifests in the interrelationship between the literature and the country’s political history. As a matter of fact, Nigerian literature reflects Nigeria’s history and political manipulations in a manner which has encouraged critics to brand the corpus of Nigerian literature, fiction, that is, a rare blend of history and fiction.

Given the fact that the heritage of African letters is firmly rooted in an abiding faith in socio-historical experience, the writers’ role as society’s conscience is a visible trademark that runs through Nigerian literature. To start with Achebe’s (1958) classic, *Things Fall Apart*, the preoccupations of the prose fiction writers have been synonymous with the phases of socio-political evolution of the Nigerian nation state. Achebe has also, in the words of Gikandi, (1991), been “using the

artistic form as a means of social reform” (2). This is a fact that has become a common thread through first to present generation of Nigerian writers. In other words, the search for a common good and the satirical force have come to be an inheritance of literary productions. This is understandable given the fact that “contemporary Nigerian writers are moulding the national consciousness as well as drawing sustenance from it” (Kirpal, 1988,53).

At every phase of African history, the writer continues to be a driving force in the humanistic quest for a better society. For the Achebe generation, comprising Wole Soyinka, J.P Clark-Bekedremo and Christopher Okigbo, the preoccupation was presenting an authentic identity for the African self. The transition to independence however propelled an agenda for social reformation on literary works of the sixties. The post-independence Nigerian writer builds on a long established tradition of consistently exposing social ills and bad governance. This is because, as societies advance, so also do the militating factors which rear heads under different garbs. Examples of such menacing developmental challenges are ethnic uprisings, resource agitation, political injustice and incidences of economic migration to the West. In other words, the endeavour of the present crop of Nigerian novelists is to locate their thematic directions of their works within contemporary realities in the Nigerian milieu. The writer is therefore not only a chronicler or mirror of history, but an interpreter of same. The point is that the Nigerian writer, just like any African writer, has been faithful to the continent’s phases of socio-political and historical revolution. To agree with Kehinde (2005):

Historically, Africa has passed through the stages of the slave trade, colonialism, independence and neo-colonialism. These have provided immense possibilities of themes and visions for African writers. The themes range from the romantic temper of negritude to the critical pessimism and social realism of the present. African

literature and African history are thus like Siamese twins. The historical phases of the African continent can also be described as representing the moods that African literature has undergone. The pre-colonial period typified a “paradise on earth,” an idyllic stage. The colonial period was that of “paradise disturbed,” that is, a period of optimism for a “better tomorrow.” However, the postcolonial/neo-colonial phase suggests a mood of “paradise lost,” a period when African writers have become more realistic than ever before. The writers now examine critically how Africans have been governing themselves and what they have made of their independence (224).

The critical imperative arising from the above is noteworthy. It underscores both the manner of response in the corpus of African creative imagination and the *raison d’etre* for a committed literature. In this connection, it may well be argued that the motivation of majority of African writing stems for a quest for “paradise” at every stage of history. In other words, the contextualisation of the search for the idyllic is synonymous with African literature. For the purpose of this study, the search is interrogated along paradigms which seek a better negotiation towards this noble goal. It calls for an in-depth appraisal of the strategic direction of social and historical representations by contemporary Nigerian novelists. There is therefore a need to examine the strategies involved in narrating the emerging angst as well as recurrent issues in the cycle of development of the Nigerian society. The need to interrogate the literary manifestations of the developments that have shaped the aesthetic and thematic preoccupations of Nigerian contemporary prose fiction writers thus becomes pertinent.

Admittedly, since the writers are, to a large extent, fulfilling the mandate of Mutiso (1974), that politics in literature is a healthy phenomenon because good literatures in the present contemporary African society, aim to, “extrapolate the major social and political concepts that will be used for the socialization of present

and future generations” (244). It is therefore a natural consequence for Nigerian writers to deploy the creative imagination in partaking of the larger Nigerian project. First is the collapse of the Nigerian dream, encapsulated in the aspirations and ideals of independence and subsequently rendered a mirage by a combination of factors, all of which are deeply rooted in the failure of political leadership, the military incursion into politics, social disenchantment and collapse of values generally. Emerging from this psycho-economic and social crucible is a renewed attempt by fiction to play a key role in rekindling hope and charting a fresh course for the restoration of humanistic ethos and positive self-assertion in the scheme of things.

The ideological leaning of emerging writers seems to be located in the indomitable existentialist spirit for positive self-assertion. As such, the writers, united in angst and jointly battered by negative social realities, are such voices in the vanguard for change. The kind of change however extends beyond a superficial social lampoon to a conscious domestication of the common wealth in the self.

The contemporary socio-historical circumstances of the Nigerian nation state have a lot in affinities with several post-independence African societies. The incidence of underdevelopment, has left the continent lagging behind in global affairs and the citizens’ groping with the basic need of survival occasioned by the attendant instability in political leadership. This parlous state of affairs is appropriately captured by Praud (2005):

Post-independence Africa was much more complex. No longer were the promises of liberation and the prospects of nation building enough. Issues concerning politics, gender roles in society, the reality of racial and cultural hybridity, and class locations were now too obvious to ignore. Social justice, freedom of speech, women’s rights, equality of chances, and putting an end to corruption in these centralized, authoritarian post-colonial states, are all themes, which began to appear in the writings of this new generation.

Africa, it must be stated, continues to rank lowest on the rung of development. Viewed from the perspective of post-independence betrayals prevalent in most African societies and the subsequent wave of military dictatorships across the continent, the story of Africa has been one of strife and despair, ruins, devastations and general instability. Given the fact that the humanistic space in the society is at the receiving end of developmental vacuum, literary endeavour, in this connection, takes a centre stage, and understandably rise to the challenge.

A worrying dimension to the cycle of disenchantment which has engaged the attention of critics over time is the seeming endlessness of the turmoil. The fact is that the development void in the continent is not recent; just as the social commitment agenda of literary preoccupation is intrinsically tied to its peculiar milieu. This leaves society – to be understood as literature and the individual character at the centre of it, with no option than to trudge and redefine self within the available space for self-realisation. The proposition in this thesis is as such an attempt to affirm the unwavering commitment of literature in leading the vanguard of creative engagement to the challenge of development. The fact is that, as long as the political space is fraught with oddities, the polity may never be able to wriggle out of the burden of socio-political upheaval. Hama Tuma (2002) rightly notes:

Today, Africa is in a deeper mess. Deprived of its sovereignty, ruled by kleptocrats who have mortgaged its future to the World Bank and the IMF, ravaged by maladies ranging from malaria to AIDS, humiliated and plundered, Africa is in a dire state... Inter ethnic strife are fanned, genocides are aplenty, puppets are on the thrones, misery and famine stalk the people. There are myriad threads of misery the writer can weave into captivating tales and stories... The writer's task is not to merely describe the reality be it in dull or captivating words but to present an imagination of the real, to weave a beautiful tapestry out of the sadness of what is and the bright colors

of what should be. Achebe puts it well when he says the writer should explore in depth the human condition.

It is obvious from the above image that given the myriad of negative social issues prevalent in the post-independence society, literature has more than enough issues to confront. This implies that a responsive and committed creative output is now one that takes on board the issues that Hama Tuma highlights above. In other words, the frontiers of measuring the degree of commitment have been extended since the scope of social woes appears to be infinite. It is, therefore, incumbent on literature, for our purpose here, prose fiction, to evolve practical and pragmatic strategies aimed at making meaning out of existence. Our contention in this thesis is that what currently preoccupies the mass of contemporary prose fiction, specifically in Nigeria, are resurgent and dynamic voices that constantly challenge the status quo and foregrounding positive self-representations.

To this end, this study critically examines three identified engagement paradigms deployed in contemporary prose fiction, in Nigeria. In consonance with the age-long tradition of literary commitment in prose fiction, the paradigms engender fresh engagements paths in narrating the realities of existence in the society. Specifically, the post-independence era has been characterised by fresh challenges and issues which generally affect the socio-economic landscape and the welfare of the citizens generally. Prominent among these issues are civil strife and resource agitation, gender discourse, the quest for greener pastures in developed societies and the question of citizenship and identity.

It is natural to anticipate a commensurate response from literature given its interconnectedness to social realities in African creative imagination. For African letters, narrating socio-political despair is an inseparable mandate that has become a distinguishing feature. It is indubitable that African literature is a literature of

commitment. The pursuit of socio-political agenda is deeply rooted in the African tradition where the artist is the conscience of the society and leads the crusade to right wrongs. This foregrounds the satiric mode in African creative imagination. In the present circumstance, the commitment paradigm is such as made dynamic by strategies which the contemporary writers have evolved in capturing prevalent issues bordering on the 'state of the state.' This further substantiates Kehinde's (2005) observation that:

The theme of postcolonial betrayal is a common motif in contemporary African literature. The writers imaginatively chronicle numerous abuses to which the African masses have been subjected. To a great extent, the postcolonial African writers prioritise dystopian fiction. They depict their continent as a society characterized by human misery, such as squalor, oppression, diseases and overcrowding. In fact, the writers have a sensitive perception of a world of desolation, alienation, hopelessness, insecurity and the like (226).

What the above signals is that the era of utopian fiction or cultural nostalgia has become history. What preoccupied the pre-independence creative temper of the Achebe tradition was the fact that "writers on the continent have felt the urge to do battle for African culture, to restore it to its pre-colonial wholeness, especially in the face of western ideological distortions and the resultant effects of these distortions on the African image" (Nyamndi 2006, 568). This has however given way to issues of post-independence disillusionment now becoming a novelistic mantra. The task of relentless socio-historical engagement in prose fiction is, therefore, an imperative for post-independence prose fiction writers. This is confirmed in the aesthetic and thematic inclinations of selected prose fiction writers who are by-products of the post-independence Nigerian experience in this study. It is intended that the writers and their works would be analysed along specific paradigms through which it appears

they have been effectively engaging the peculiarities of the enabling milieu. The writers are exemplars of an indomitable spirits identifiable in the spirit of positive self assertion.

The choice of selected prose fiction writers of Nigerian extraction who may be said to belong to a post-independence generation is a conscious attempt at locating socio-historical dynamics within the purview of literature. This will further demonstrate the critical affinity of African letters to its milieu of production. Actually, we seek to foreground, through the writers, a binding phenomenon that is grounded in a desire to shape and forge on in the midst of a society embroiled in a seemingly state of dysfunction and void. The attempt in this work is to establish the fact that, rather than submit to the forces of annihilation, the self, as portrayed in the selected texts has emerged a dynamic entity, externalizing and, manifesting potentials that position it as proactive and consistently engaging. This thesis identifies a unifying thread of engagement drive in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*; Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come*; Helen Oyeyemi's *The Icarus Girl*; Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*; Bina Ilagha's *Condolences* and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance*.

This thesis examines the manifestations of committed literature abiding in post-independence Nigerian prose fiction. The imperative of an obvious resurgence in the late nineties of the new generation writings cannot be dissociated from a new existentialist-driven vigour. This is propelled by an apparent resolve within the milieu to evolve what can be literarily termed 'survival strategies' within the body polity. What is obvious is the fact that a combination of personal experiences of the writers and the communal angst gives credence to this renewed energy for positive self-assertion.

To put the argument in perspective, the resilience of the post-independence writer in the face of odds in remaining ever conscious and resolute readily comes to mind. This is adequately demonstrated in the ideological dispositions of positive self-assertion in the face of nihilistic forces. It should be stated that the evolution of the third-generation literary figure is a product of struggle. Apart from Osofisan's (2004) contention that they are writing in the "age of unacknowledged muse" (p.1) majority of the writers are also victims, one way or another of a society that is unfavourable for human fulfillment and survival. This explains why the writers are preoccupied in their various works with the challenges encountered by the average Nigerian, in a bid to eke out a living. Their objective is obviously to make a difference and engender pragmatic engagement of the enabling milieu in their thematic and ideological posturing. The point, therefore, is that the tools of engagement are deeply rooted in a sound philosophical conviction that can be located in the existentialist temper. In other words, this study analyses the platforms harnessed in evolving pragmatic paradigms by the selected writers. Hence, this thesis identifies paradigms and strategies deployed in engaging socio-historical realities in the textual references.

It should be stressed that the textual references share borders of thematic unity and are worthy exemplars of the post-independence literary productions. There are traits of common concerns along the territorial precincts of themes, diction, characterisation as well as stylistic directions. In order to create a comparative base, this thesis shall analyse the texts in a comparative way to show the common thread and evolve a synergy that links to our eventual submissions.

In the above connection, Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* shall be discussed along the paradigm of

narrative innovation. Specifically, the unique Bildungsroman features and the narrative path threaded in the two novels shall be analysed as key post-independence engagement devices. Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and Bina Ilagha's *Condolences*, shall be used to analyse the quest for justice as central to the desire to negotiate a saner public sphere for individuals and society as a whole. In relation to the emerging interconnection between literature and law in critical discourse, it is indubitably predicated on the fact that there is an interdisciplinary significance to the quest for justice and social order in African literary preoccupations. Whereas the satiric undercurrent of the two novels is obvious, there is a subliminal interdisciplinary aesthetics which makes law a worthy ally in the social reformation campaign. Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* share boundaries of representations of contemporary angst of quest for survival.

The deduction from the foregoing is that while the fact that the post-independence fictional productions remain faithful to ideals of social commitment, there is an emerging trend of dynamic engagements with the enabling milieu. This is a fall out of the social and economic realities and the progressions noticeable in the society. This thesis, therefore, seeks to interrogate the depth and dynamics associated with the engagements paradigms enunciated in the foregoing three identified platforms and strategies deployed by the selected writers, who are representatives of the present generation of Nigerian writers.

Envisioning a new socio-political order is, therefore, a task that the present crop of writers seems to be pursuing by opening new vistas of discourse and showcasing the capaciousness of the literary representations. It is to be noted that the prose fiction writers in the Nigerian experience largely conform to Soyinka's

(1967) observation that “the artist has always functioned in African societies as the record of mores and experiences of his society and as the vision in his time” (21). This is a pointer to the fact that the functional heritage handed down to African writers by the traditional oral artist continues to be relevant. (Ezeigbo, 2008). It should be stressed that the existence of preliterate art forms were particularly tied to specific functions and these ultimately assigned roles to the producers of the forms. In fact, “in Africa, the transmission of the complexity of experience has been largely rooted in the continent’s culture of oral artistry” (Hussein, 2004,2).

Hence, the indebtedness of African literature to the oral tradition is certainly not misplaced. As a matter of fact, the dual parentage of modern African letters to oral tradition and socio-historical realities stems from this contention. The community’s ownership of these forms such as proverbs, tales, legends, music, songs and poetry necessitates the tenets of functionality across the oral genres, since, “African oral tradition from time immemorial expresses a sense of shared phenomenal world, both ordinary and extraordinary, to which there has always been a communitarian claim” (Ogunsanwo 1995:46). In effect, African fiction therefore appropriates the oral forms and the distinct features of the precursor oral tradition, also evidently manifests in all ramifications. For the Nigerian novelist of the third generation therefore, remaining relevant certainly entails proper alignment with the oral aesthetic imperative. This seems to have prompted the observation of Krisnan (2010) that “the third generation of Nigerian writers has returned to the wider thematic of first generation literature” (2). As this study would show, the thematic concerns of post-independence Nigerian writers readily support this critical contention.

This thesis explores attempts by the third- generation of Nigerian novels as part of the quest of African literature to re-order the society, re-interpret its essence and re-engage its challenges. As Abiola Irele (2009) notes:

The formal end of colonialism has imprinted a striking new character on the thematic concerns of the African writer, commanded as these are at the present time by the dilemmas of the post independence situation. The overarching context of political culture has provoked a new discourse of dissidence in the African novel, aimed at uncovering the pathologies of governance that have contributed so massively to the tragic unfolding of the postcolonial condition in Africa (10).

Irele's position is amply reflected in the progression of African literature from the cultural romanticism of the Achebe generation through the fierce satirical works of the second generation writers. This implies that the movement is largely informed by the underlying processes of socio-historical evolution of the nation states of Africa, represented by Nigeria is this study.

Thus far, the foregoing clearly reveals that the craft of the African writer, the third generation Nigerian prose fiction writers, for our purpose here, is one of social, political and economic significance. Since the society which third-generation Nigerian writers mirror continues to face challenges of grave underdevelopment and inherent failings, the thematic direction of the literary productions must not only conform with these realities, but should , as a matter of necessity, position itself adequately for the arduous task for pragmatic socio-political engagement, since, according to Kehinde (2010), "socio-political commitment is not an aside, a parenthesis or a footnote in the creative consciousness of postcolonial Nigerian writers; they write not only to entertain and please , but to change their society in the process"(6)

The choice of selected works for this thesis are instructive for many reasons. First is the fact that the authors no doubt represent a new movement – basically they

are resurgence in the creative enterprise in the literary landscape. Having been active participants, either as “unfortunate children of fortunate parents” (Jeyifo, 2006), or “eagles in the age of unacknowledged muse” (Osofisan, 2004), there is no doubting the fact that these voices have come to stay. They are out with fresh literary impetus to make a difference. From their literary idiosyncrasies to the thematic and aesthetic movement under which they can be classified, new generation prose fiction Nigerian writers are re-ordering the literary and artistic firmament. They are not only engaging contemporary issues, they are also confronting and crossing boundaries and reshaping, as well as redefining commitment.

To illustrate, one can immediately dwell on the artistic and ideological leanings of these writers. Chimamanda Adichie, indubitably a leading figure of the generation seems to, through her novel *Purple Hibiscus*, engage and domesticate post- independence disillusionment. This is clearly evident in the thematic concern and the character portraits of the novel. As would be shown in the course of this work, Adichie’s novel is a bold attempt at socio-historical engagement, by being inward-looking and progressively pigeon-holing society with a view to positively engaging the social malaise confronting the self. As Oha (2007) rightly observes, “Adichie presents series of fictional surprises as she consciously romances between history and art. The need to expose the traumatic situation in Africa has often occupied the minds of modern day writers in Africa.” (200) This she evidently achieves in her deconstruction of the myth of the father figure in Eugene and the empowerment of hitherto invincible faces in the literary traditions before her; especially female characterisation in the Achebe generation, where, patriarchal subjection of women, to use the words of Fonchingong (2006), “is central to the plot construction and characterisation of African male writers is

the patriarchal subjection of women...and a woman's honour and dignity often consist in her strict adherence to idealized norms of wifhood and motherhood"(138) This is what Adichie's character portraiture of Kambili represents in a larger sense in the fusion of child innocence and potential feminine will. Hewett (2005) explains:

Adichie provides one answer in her portrayal of Kambili, who serves as a figure for the silenced woman writer. Kambili must challenge her father's Manichean monologue and claim her own voice. She must cast off the chains on her hands...In the struggle to free herself from her father's stranglehold; she finally comes to bear witness, through language, to her experience of the world. Only in escaping his grasp can she become the author of and witness to her own life; only in narrating her life story can she begin to heal the traumatic dismemberment between her voice and her consciousness; only in speaking out can she begin to exist as a whole person with a future as well as a past (88).

In other words, Kamibili represents a subtle challenge to the *status quo*, as far as her role as narrator and protagonist in the universe of the novel is concerned.

In a similar vein, Sefi Attah's thematic inclination addresses domestic issues of broken marriages and post-independence ills, and she uses the fall-out of same to address salient socio-political concerns. *Everything Good Will Come* canvasses affirmative action, while not ignoring the surrounding challenges that abound in the march towards self-realisation. Sefi Attah also exposes social ills like rape, marital infidelity and the same like. Sefi Attah's prose fiction possesses a firm roadmap which seeks to redress social and economic imbalance along gender as well as socio-political perspectives. Thus, *Everything Good Will Come* demonstrates the capacity of the self to engage meaningfully the challenges of existence by offering alternatives that guarantee the desired positive outcome.

Nigeria, the context of this study, is engulfed in ceaseless strife and has since independence struggled to evolve an economically and socially viable nation state. This has been evidently arduous owing to several militating factors. Although the country has been under democratic rule in the last decade, much need to be achieved as the quality of life of the average citizen has not recorded a verifiable lift. While the perennial issues of corruption, bad governance and collapse of social infrastructure, crime and insecurity have not abated, the list seems to be growing by the day. The new entrants include resource agitation, HIV/AIDS pandemic, epidemics, ethnic uprisings, politically motivated crimes/assassinations, kidnappings and ethnic conflicts.

The major issue of concern in the satiric engagement of Helon Habila's *Waiting for An Angel* is situated within the experience of Nigeria under military rule. The military experience in governance is one which leaves a sour taste in the mouth of the citizenry on all fronts. The implication of this bitter experience readily challenges the state of justice and the status of human rights. The anguish and travails of the characters in *Waiting for an Angel* is indicative of the frustrations of the Nigerian society under the despotic reigns of military rulers, most especially Abacha and the truncation of the principles enshrined in the rule of law which guarantees human dignity. This novel demonstrates that the challenge of repositioning Nigeria is largely dependent on the repositioning or rejuvenation of the justice system. Habila underscores the essence of a just system built on an effective justice system. The injustice of the military governance and the human rights violations are not only adequately mirrored, they become signposts of measuring the extent of socio-political advancement. The significance of Habila's literary treatise lies in its relevance to the quest for justice paradigm of engagement

in post-independence Nigerian situation. The brutalities of the Abacha government may have been the impetus.

Bina Ilagha's worldview also revolves around justice, which she positions is at the heart of human advancement. As a matter of fact, the human psychological disposition loathes injustice. *Condolences* narrates social injustice through psychological and subtle pathways and brings to the fore an avalanche of issues plaguing the Nigerian nation state. The untimely demise of the hero provides an opportunity to view his life and expose human hypocrisy. The condolence register thus becomes a metaphor that penetrates the human mind and the milieu. The point is that Bina Ilagha skillfully connects the discerning mind to the grave environmental hazards in the Niger Delta, exposes the insincerity of government as well as the complicity of self-aggrandising elites. This is amidst pressing issues of resource agitation prevalent in the oil producing region as a result of devastations in the society through oil exploration activities, over the years. As such, a classic example of man's injustice to fellow human is eminently projected. In a unique way, the novel narrates the gulf between social aspirations and the laxities of the justice system on the one hand, and the inherent capacity of law to rise to the challenge of human frustrations and angst on the other.

Development fiction, which is the use of fictional works to address developmental issues, is a paradigm that adequately manifests in Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance*. By mirroring a twenty-first century trend as instantiated in the sleaze of internet fraud, the writer demonstrates that the human self is capable of negative possibilities, in a society that dehumanizes the self. The fact that the Kingsley resorts to clandestine and damnable practice of internet fraud, as a mechanism for survival, indicates the plight of a hitherto

conscientious young man who is soon frustrated by the evils of unemployment and poverty. Internet fraud, a twenty-first century social vice as thematised provides an opportunity to interrogate the paradox of society's quest for development and the emerging global village. This relates to how the "negative asserting self" has misdirected the boom of information technology explosion to spell doom through various nefarious and dubious schemes. As a gauge of the crisis of development, Cash Daddy thus becomes the metaphor of an emerging class of pseudo-models, obviously thrown up by the ironies of change.

In Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*, the quest for self-assertion and the ravaging effects of the realities of a society under the yoke of underdevelopment are foregrounded. The novel stresses the fact that, for the self to triumph, the psychological disposition must embrace pragmatic engagement. This is another critique of development fiction which goes a long way to expose the inherent confusion of a society and the retrogressing direction the post-independence Nigerian society is facing. With ample illustration of phantom policies, half-hearted nationalisms and self-aggrandising motives, the novel challenges the tragedy of a nation's march to nationhood. The novelist instantiates that positive development is elusive because quality of leadership presently ruling the fictional Madian society. The confusion that pervades the polity is, therefore, an indication of the leadership gulf as well as the disconnect in policies formulated by the crop of leadership. Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*, therefore calls attention to the realities of underdevelopment in his fiction.

In sum, the point has been made that post-independence society seems to give rise to a pragmatic temper that can keep up with the pace of rapid changes in society. This readily manifests in the prose fictional representations of the period. It

also affirms the resilience and dynamism of the post-independence self as portrayed in the selected texts. The authors' commitment to social and political reengineering shall, therefore be critically examined to foreground the inherent strategies and paradigms through which the discourses are based. This further concretises the tradition of social commitment and engagement that African literature is widely and generally acknowledged for.

Statement of Research Problem.

Studies on third-generation Nigerian novels have focused mostly on twin issues of canonisation and the exilic consciousness of the novelists. There is however paucity of studies on the depth of social commitment in the writers' works. Actually, third-generation Nigerian novelists have not been really evaluated comparatively and isolating thematic and aesthetic unities prevalent in the corpus. This thesis attempts to fill this critical lacuna, by examining the depth of socio-economic commitment in the novels, and by also classifying the novelists along the paradigms of engagement common to them. This study therefore extends the discourse of socio-historical engagement in African literature. Given its close affinity to its product of the society's socio-historical experiences, this study examines the challenge posed to literature (Nigerian prose fiction for the purpose of this study) in the quest for socio-political advancement. This is particularly relevant in a society that is rapidly developing as evidenced in advancement in modern science and technology, explosion in information and communications technology and noticeable effects of globalisation. As a tool of social mimesis, this study recognises the very nature of African literature as functional and largely dystopian; it also demonstrates that the present crop of post-independence Nigerian

writers bears true allegiance to this critical probing. This thesis connects the thematic, ideological and aesthetic directions of the fact that the corpus of present generation of writers, especially of Nigerian descent in relation to their enabling environment.

The issue of self-reflexivity has become a unifying thesis among scholars and writers of African literature. The genre of prose fiction manifests the capacity to accommodate the peculiarities in the stages of socio-historical evolution as can be attested to in the literary productions in Nigeria, pre- and post-independence. Partaking of national discourse is thus a natural motivation for the novelists. However, it should be noted that the need to extend the scope of literary engagement has become pertinent given the realities of post-independence Nigeria in areas of political leadership and economic fortunes of the average citizen. In a society where neo-colonial forces are perpetrating social and economic oppressions in varying degrees in all area of existence, literature, and specifically, prose fiction, remains a potent vehicle of ventilating the effects and making definite statements.

This thesis, therefore, recognises the fact that third-generation Nigerian writers are duty bound to be partners and leaders of thought in the society through both reflective and, most importantly, refractive ways. Thus, the Nigerian novel of the twenty-first century has a responsibility of not only telling or thematising what is wrong, the enabling social milieu deserves to benefit from the insights and alternative perspectives towards a better society. It is in recognition of this fact that this study subjects the representative texts to critical analysis, using the paradigms of child-narration, development fiction and quest for justice. This is with a view to addressing the post-independence Nigerian novel from a multi-disciplinary point of view by deliberately marrying literary preoccupations with the vagaries of developmental

angst in the context. The issue in existing critical scholarship that this study confronts is the dynamics of engagement in post-independence Nigerian novels, through identified paradigms. This is necessitated by the realisation that the pace of development of the society is obviously at a rapid rate in all ramifications – vice and virtue alike.

Objectives of the Study

This study examines how third-generation Nigerian novels engage post-independence challenges. The objective is to show that the novels have evolved with the society that conditions them and underscore the relevance of the engagement paradigms to the themes and ideological strategies of selected post-independence fiction writers and how these align with teething developmental challenges of the twenty-first century. The study also examines the contribution of literature, through the selected texts, to developmental aspirations of the enabling Nigerian society.

In essence, if Nigerian literature, as widely acknowledged, is a corpus of socially committed art, there is need to probe how third-generation writers have discharged their roles in the scheme of things in the social milieu. This is another way of evaluating the faithful prosecution of the visions of founding figures of Nigerian literature which Irele (1968) explains:

... what is significant about this literature is not only that it provides in its own historical development and its preoccupations a record of the tensions and the contradictions in present day Africa, but also that its directions it is providing our writers ...our writers are groping implicitly through the imagination towards the creation of a new order in Africa (10).

In line with the above, this study addresses the demonstration of inherent engagement capacity of selected Nigerian third-generation prose fiction writers and their ability to artistically represent social realities; through identifiable strategies of child narration, development fiction and quest for justice. In this regard, the Nigerian state as exemplar of post-independence dissonance is critically engaged in the selected texts. This thesis therefore explores the dynamics of socio-historical engagement in third generation Nigerian prose fiction and takes the strategies of engagement into account.

Furthermore, the thematic concerns of the selected texts are situated within the ambits of Nigeria's quest for self-redefinition and socio-historical aspiration. In addition, an attempt is made to categorise the prose fiction writers as committed writers who take the task of socio-historical engagement as the motivating factor for their literary productions. The thesis also situates the ideological postulations of the texts within the prevailing social and political dictates. More importantly, this thesis identifies and analyses emerging paradigms through which post-independence Nigerian prose fiction writers actively participate in the discourse of nation-building as well as the numerous challenges confronting not only the society but also the writers.

In essence, this critical endeavour further delves into the continued relevance of the corpus of prose fiction in Nigeria to social and historical issues. The writers are thus evaluated on the basis of their explorations of the Sartrean commitment philosophy in literature as it applies to the twenty-first century Nigerian peculiarities and the intensity of engagement in the representative texts. This is done through a critical consideration of the discursive strategies utilised in

projecting the writers' perception of the public good and the depth of social commitment as well as engagement in their various works.

Scope of the Study

This thesis dwells on the dynamics of representations of post-independence engagement in third-generation Nigerian novels. The selected texts are Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*; Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come*; Helen Oyeyemi's *The Icarus Girl*; Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*; Bina Ilagha's *Condolences* and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance*. The novelists share several things in common. First is that they are all making their debut as writers. Also, the works have achieved popular acclaim and brought them fame and recognition. Next is their relationship with the western world. In fact, all, except Bina Ilagha, are based outside Nigeria, though in constant touch with the country. The selected texts are essentially written between/after 2000 and a period is synonymous with tremendous literary activities in Nigeria with the emergence of new voices across all the genres.

Actually, the period can be said to witness a vibrant renaissance of the prose fictional genre if one takes into consideration the number of titles and authors that appear on the literary landscape in and outside Nigeria. The texts, therefore, offer a representative corpus of the third-generation of Nigerian writers, while the works are significant in the annals of Nigeria's literary development. It is a period of literary reawakening and discovery which appeared immediately after the traumatic experiences of Nigeria during the period of prolonged military rule and the restoration of democratic governance in the country.

In the foregoing connection, even though the period under consideration is notable for impressive literary productions across genres, it focuses on the third-generation Nigerian novelists with a view to achieving a form of critical mapping. However, while the study acknowledges the presence of several novelists and their works in the emerging third generation, the reference texts are limited to six in the belief that they represent the concern of writers and their sensibilities in the Nigeria of the twenty-first century. The third-generation prose literary corpus in Nigeria, it must be stated parades such writers and works as Chris Abani (*Graceland*, 2004 and *Becoming Abigail*, 2007) ; Jude Dibia, (*Walking with Shadows*, 2005 and *Unbridled*, 2007); Maik Nwosu, (*Alpha Song*, 2001) ; Odili Ujubuonu, *Pregnancy of the Gods*,2006 and *Treasure in the Winds* ,2008) Kaine Agary (*Yellow-Yellow*, 2006); Helen Oyeyemi (*The Icarus Girl*) ,Emeka Uzoatu, Wale Okediran, (*Dreams Die at Twilight* and *Tenants of the House*); Toni Kan Onwordi (*Ballad of Rage* , 2004) ; Lola Shoneyin (*The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*) and other writers. Given the fact that the last ten years has witnessed such a prolific output, the study is constrained to purposively select texts that are believed to represent the ideologies and aesthetic directions of the generation.

It must also be noted that the selected texts for this study are written by authors who are in the same age bracket and who can be said to have common motivations and experiences. This explains why, for example, this study excludes older writers like Tanure Ojaide and Akachi-Ezeigbo, both of whom, for example have also been visible and productive in the twenty-first century. One is conscious of the similar motif that runs through the selected novels and their representative nature of the corpus of writers who are visible members of the third-generation of Nigerian novelists. The choice of the selected texts for this study also stems from

the variety of issues captured by the authors. Contemporary issues that are addressed in the selected texts eminently resonate with the concerns in post-independence Nigeria. The textual exemplifications evidently portray the contemporary prose fiction writing as capturing the mood, tensions and developments in the period of under consideration. This study is also mindful of Nigeria's demographic and psychographic sensibilities in order to capture the entire nation in the representations of the texts selected. This is why Helon Habila, who grew up in Jos, can be said to represent the North; Bina Ilagha for South South; Chimamanda Adichie for the East; Sefi Attah for the West (Lagos); Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani representing the youth population, otherwise called the e-generation, while Okey Ndibe represents voice of the home-seeking self who are partaking of the discourse of Nigeria's nationhood from the Diaspora and are writing the homeland. The gender distribution of the selections also attests to the fact that twenty-first century Nigerian literary productions have witnessed more female voices than in the previous generation, which suggests that the impact of gender consciousness on twenty-first century Nigerian literature.

The point is that the female voice has become stronger with the emergence of more female writers who have made marks across all genres. In the present study, Chimamanda Adichie, Sefi Attah, Bina Ilagha and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani are key female voices in the twentieth century corpus.

Theoretical Framework

This thesis is grounded on the theoretical frameworks of New Historicism and psychoanalysis. The choice of New Historicism as a theoretical platform lies in its significance to the interpretation of literature within the context of both the history

of the author and the history of the critic. This draws largely from the literary criticism of Stephen Greenblatt and influenced by the philosophy of Michel Foucault. This approach to the criticism of literature not only acknowledges the indebtedness of thematic concern of a work of art to the circumstances of its author's times and circumstances, but also stresses the fact that the critic's response should respect the peculiarities of extant factors as idiosyncrasies located within environments, beliefs, and prejudices.

In other words, a critical discourse from the new historicists' perspective examines literature in a wider historical context, showing both how the writer's times affect the work and how the work reflects the writer's times, in turn, recognising that current cultural contexts influence the critic's conclusions. This theoretical approach is, therefore, to critique the selected works by studying the enabling history which reveals more about the texts. This ultimately creates an intertwining understanding of the relationship between the texts and the enabling historical circumstances.

Furthermore, New Historicist approach underscores the fact that literature is directly influenced by the enabling culture and environment, makes the selected texts representations of the circumstances which produce them – in this case the Nigerian post-independence experience. The relevance of New Historicism therefore lies in its dynamic consideration of history and the text from the perspective of both the critic and the writer. Current literary criticism is affected by and reveals the beliefs of our times in the same way that literature reflects and is reflected by its own historical contexts. New Historicism acknowledges and embraces the idea that literature is dynamic and changes with the passage of time.

New Historicism seeks to find meaning in a text by considering the work within the framework of the prevailing ideas and assumptions of its historical era. For the purpose of this study, the post-independence chaos and social disenchantment come into reckoning as major influences and factors which must be taken into account in the analyses of the texts. New Historicists concern themselves with the political function of literature and with the concept of power, the intricate means by which cultures produce and reproduce themselves. These critics focus on revealing the historically specific model of truth and authority (not a "truth" but a "cultural construct") reflected in a given work.

In other words, history here is not a mere chronicle of facts and events, but rather a complex description of human reality and evolution of preconceived notions. Literary works may or may not tell us about various factual aspects of the world from which they emerge, but they will tell us about prevailing ways of thinking at the time: ideas of social organisation, prejudices, taboos, and the like. This is the context in which New Historicism is appropriated in this thesis.

The second theory selected for this thesis is psychoanalysis following the works of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Psychoanalysis is the application of specific psychological principles to the study of literature which focuses on the writer's psyche, the study of the creative process, the study of psychological types and principles present within works of literature, or the effects of literature upon its readers (Wellek and Warren, 1956). In addition to Freud and Lacan, major figures include Shoshona Felman, Jane Gallop, Norman Holland, George Klein, Elizabeth Wright, Frederick Hoffman, and, Simon Lesser. The crux of psychoanalysis lies in the identification of the unconscious mental process of human beings as well as the

accompanying principles of resistance and repression. Psychoanalysts believe, as observed by Carter (2006), in:

...the existence of an extensive unconscious area of the mind which can, and does, wield strong influence over our conscious mind...knowledge of the unconscious was accessible through the analysis of dreams, symptomatic nervous behaviour and parapraxes...The conscious mind cannot cope with some of the unsavoury truths buried in the unconscious and, when they threaten to surface, represses them, attempting in practice to deny their reality. The area of psychoanalytic interest includes broader cultural and social phenomena, including primitive beliefs, superstition, religion...(71).

As observed in the above, the ability to respond to concrete situation is resident in human faculty at different stages of cognition. In other words, the relevance of this theory to the present study can be located in the characters' responses through the inherent dictates of the mind to the goings-on around them in the selected texts. Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* readily comes to mind in this regard when one recognises her psychological struggles in *Purple Hibiscus*. Furthermore, this thesis also identifies with the Lacanian 'reality principle' which defines the relationship of human beings, whether an adult or a child with the real world of existence.

It should, therefore, be stated that given the fact that the character is at the centre of the incongruities of the post-independence society, psychoanalysis is thus an appropriate theoretical lense in this discourse, given the fact that, psychoanalysis is mainly preoccupied with understanding the internal workings of the human mind at the different levels on consciousness, in relation to factors around which have direct or indirect influence on the individual. As a theory which also recognises narrative as an integral part of human life, psychoanalysis dwells on the unconscious to determine motives and motivations. These general principles apply to character portraits of

twenty-first century literature; individuals engage in battles both internally and in the prevailing environment. In other words, probing the novelistic worldviews through psychoanalysis is a veritable way of understanding human actions as they are formed; and the processes that are involved in generating responses. This implies that, in third-generation Nigerian novels, characters are in-depth psychological figures whose travails are better deciphered at the psychoanalytical levels. The protagonists of the selected texts clearly lend to this theoretical disposition.

Significance of the Study

This thesis owes its significance to the deliberate classification of selected third generation Nigerian novelists along identifiable paradigms of child narration, development fiction and quest for justice. Though critics have evaluated third generation Nigerian novelistic tradition in recent times, this thesis differs in classificatory paradigms. Critics have, for example, classified novels like Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come* as Bildungsromans since, in the view of Okuyade (2009) :

these novels eloquently dramatize the arduous journey from childhood to maturity and emphasize continuous negotiation of individual and national identity as a process without definite endpoint. This is realized through the writers' transformation and reappropriation of the *Bildungsroman* in order to incorporate in the African imagination the experiences of Africans.

The above indeed aptly suits the texts in question; this thesis sees the need to interrogate them differently. This is with a view to understanding how the narrative technique of child narration contributes to the thematic exploration of post-independence engagement. Third-generation Nigerian novels have also been studied as manifestations of the Diasporic fiction tradition given the fact that "there is a

common experience for migrants who move from third-world to first world and consequently dwell in both” (He: 1995, 10). Helon Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel*, Okey Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain*, Sefi Attah’s *Everything Good Will Come* and Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* exemplify this fact, given the novelists’ location in the Diaspora. Post-independence Nigerian novels have also been constructed as creations of socio-political exigencies of the Nigerian state in recent times and the realities of survival, evident in Helon Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel* described as deepening the first-generation of prison writing (Dunton, 2005) . There are also tendencies to analyse the novels, especially the ones by women as gender narratives, indicating a propensity for African feminist discourse (Eze, 2009; Fonchingong, 2006)

This study therefore draws its significance from the paradigmatic approach of analysis. The engagement paradigms of development fiction, child narration and quest for justice have not been focused on before now. Actually, critics have identified, for instance, the role of child narrators in recent Nigerian fiction; emphasis seems to have been on the character and not the mode (Olufunwa, 2008). By specifically identifying contemporary engagement strategies, this thesis differs from previous studies by explicating how the texts are definite statements on the state of developments in the enabling milieu, thus positioning the post-independence Nigerian novelists as active members and ideologues in the march towards a better society. This is demonstrated in the way the novelists portray how literature has been effectively deployed to engage emerging issues in post-independence Nigerian society. This study therefore explores the changing role of literature by analysing how the selected texts function as exemplars of an emerging canon devoted to pragmatic socio-historical engagement.

Methodology

This study is analytical and comparative. It involves a close-reading of six purposively selected texts: Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*; Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come*; Helen Oyeyemi's *The Icarus Girl*; Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*; Bina Ilagha's *Condolences* and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance*. The texts are paired and analysed along three paradigms of engagement, namely Child Narration, Development Fiction and Quest for Justice. Relevant secondary materials are consulted within the theoretical constructs of New Historicism and Psychoanalysis. This is with a view to establishing aesthetic and ideological unities in the textual references. The analysis underscores the notion of commitment in African literature as specifically addressed by the various writers and the respective enabling pretexts. To ensure effective contextualisation, the study is adequately acquainted to contemporary socio-economic challenges in Nigeria.

Organisation of the Study

This thesis is made up of five chapters. Chapter One, the introduction, consists of the background to the study, objectives, statement of the problem, significance of the study, methodology, theoretical framework, scope of the study and organisation of the study. This chapter also discusses, in detail, the nature and pattern of socio-historical commitment in Africa literature generally. It proceeds to identify the enabling pretexts to the emergence of third-generation Nigerian novels and identifies their common concerns for the future of a nation in dislocation. It also locates the thematic concern of the selected works within the heritage of commitment in African literature generally. The selected texts are also

introduced with a view to establishing thematic unity in relation to the subject matter of socio-historical engagement in African literature. The writers are categorised as sharing peculiar histories in the development of literature and its relevance to contemporary issues in Nigeria.

Chapter Two examines the previous critiques on the subject of commitment in African literature generally and Nigerian novels in particular. It goes on to reveal the alignment of critics and writers on the noble role and function of literary works that are targeted at the contemporary realities of their enabling milieu.

Chapter Three discusses the use of child narration as a key engagement device utilised by third-generation Nigerian novelists. This is exemplified in Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. This chapter explicates the fact that the use of child narration deepens the thematic directions of the texts, while also conferring unique narrative qualities which help to engage the socio-historical conditions in the universe of the works. Child narration thus becomes a veritable engagement paradigm through which the post-independence issues plaguing the Nigerian milieu are captured.

Chapter Four investigates the development fiction paradigm in Okey Ndiye's *Arrows of Rain* and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance*. The paradigm of analysis is development fiction. This approach focuses on the "potential contribution works of fiction can make to development" (Lewis, Rodgers and Woolcock, 2008,4). This centres on representation of issues of development around fictional productions. In the case of Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance*, the author addresses the plaguing issue of online scams prevalent amongst Nigeria youths and seizes the opportunity to lampoon the breakdown of the Nigerian economy as evident in unemployment, degeneration of

family values and the like. Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* paints a graphic detail of a society under siege and malfunctioning social order, and also lends itself to the critical probing of the development fiction paradigm. Through a conscious attempt at consistent thematisation of emerging developmental issues that are hydra-headed in the enabling milieu, the novelist demonstrates a clear dedication to literature as a vehicle for developmental aspirations.

The focus of Chapter Five is the paradigm of Quest for Justice as embodied in the relevance of literature and law interdisciplinarity in third-generation Nigerian prose fiction. This chapter shows that apart from its interdisciplinary significance, Quest for Justice as an engagement paradigm provides a new vista of appropriating the dynamics of a society in search of justice. To this end, Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and Bina Ilagha's *Condolences* are explicated to foreground the challenges and implications of denial of justice on the post-independence Nigerian society, on the one hand, and the devastating effects on the individual, on the other.

Chapter Six summarizes the thesis and brings out the three engagement paradigms analyzed in the selected texts. It emphasizes the relevance of these paradigms to the understanding and appreciation of third-generation Nigerian novelists. The concluding chapter also reiterates the fact that literature is always on hand to adequately represent socio-historical realities of its enabling milieu, as exemplified in the body of the thesis, with particular reference to the Nigerian situation.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews related literature on the subject of commitment in Nigerian literature as well the critical positioning of third-generation Nigerian prose fiction writers. The intention is to show the synergy in the aspirations of critics of post-independence Nigerian literature, who are products of the same socio-historical experience like the writers they critique. Ultimately, with the advancement in the society, critics have demonstrated clear understanding of the ideological bent of the writers. The chapter identifies the various trends and dimensions noticeable in the critical enterprise as far as the corpus of twenty-first century Nigerian literature is concerned. Specifically, the critical appreciation third-generation Nigerian novelist is also explicated.

African Literature and Social Realities

The denouncing of European literary tradition by earliest African writers was borne out of the need to show clearly the differences between the African context and that of the European. Chinua Achebe, a leading writer and critic devotes two of his essays—“The Novelist as Teacher” (1965) and “The Writer and His Community” (1984) — to charting an identity for literary creation in Africa. He extends the argument by defining an agenda for the creative writer in Africa, since, according to him, it is puzzling and inconceivable for a writer to work against the objectives of his enabling society. In fact, for Achebe, unlike the individualistic conception of art in European literary tradition, African literature co-exists with the socio-economic construct of the society. This definition and description of the writer and the context

of literary preoccupation dominate Achebe's concern in "The Writer and His Community," where he clearly describes the relationship between the writer and the community in Africa. The contentions of Achebe eminently fits into what has now been the hallmark of written African literature- as rooted in a preceding heritage of functional art, where art is the cultural agency that relates society's aspirations. The culture of collective and communal ownership of artistic and verbal activities in Africa lend credence to Achebe's informed position. Hence, the writer is merely an ambassador of sorts who is morally and ethically bound to deploy art "in the service of humanity" (Kehinde, 2010,4) . Therefore, what society expects of its writers as Achebe argues in "The Novelist as Teacher," is the exploration of the relationship between the duo. He also goes further in the second essay to specifically highlight the intersections among the writer, the society and the art of writing. In Achebe's view, there is the need for an organic relationship between the creative self and the process of artistic creation, on the one hand, and the enabling milieu, on the other. This would ensure that writers do not fall short of the expectations of their society. The point is that, using Achebe as a sounding board, African literature as a corpus, is responsible, responsive and functional. It should be emphasized that despite the seeming divergent opinions on the role of writers and the place of the creative enterprise, most writers acknowledge the socio-economic significance of literature, while also agreeing to the deployment of its resources, in a way that would benefit the society.

The foregoing is the tenet that third-generation Nigerian writers are upholding. Though there may be some misconceptions as to their style of artistic engagement, there is no doubt that they are strongly influenced to appreciate the

interconnection of literature and society, to the extent that, they produce politically and socially engaging works. One may assert that, in a way, these writers are evolving a dynamic pattern of representation of artistic engagement, where the artist is seen to be representing a collective angst, and where art is seen as a part of a larger web of resistance. Therefore, third-generation Nigerian writers can be said to be totally dedicated to the cause of the social function of African writers, and do not undermine it. One can safely reason that the third-generation writers continue to engage the same questions as the Achebes, Soyinkas and Osofisans; which relate to what roles for African writers. Over generations therefore, African literature continues to exude a social temperament or artistic functionality. Writers continue to harness several forces - historical, material, and ideological - to negotiate the contours of social reality. They continue to explore new ways of addressing pertinent issues plaguing the milieu of artistic production, especially categories propped up by post-independence monstrosities.

It must be acknowledged that there is a robust body of scholarship on the relationship between literature and social realities. In particular, African literary criticism is replete with discourses that relate to this subject matter. It has been variously argued that African literature and its milieu of productions are intertwined and are like Siamese twins. Furthermore, there is a symphony in the critique of the corpus of African literature that it represents the African condition. Closely related to these critical interventions is the role and responsibilities of African writers. Akachi Ezeigbo (2008) states that “literature can be a catalyst to revolutionary change: what is required is for an individual (a reader) or individuals (readers) to apply the knowledge, the information gathered from literature to bring about social change” (18).

While this may appear somewhat a tall claim in a practical sense because of the daunting challenges which exist between the real situation and the fictional situation on the other one hand and the composition of the African literate audience who one could expect to be spurred to action on the other, the reflective capacity of literature is certainly indubitable. One's position is that though literature may thematise change, the ability to cause change especially in the African situation, where literacy level is abysmal and also where reading culture is generally poor, remains elusive.

The point is that on the one hand, African literature is indebted to its society for thematic content and direction, and on the other, the African writer must discharge the role of the watchdog, reformer and conscience in the enabling milieu. According to Obiechina, (1980):

The relationship between literature and society has long been recognized but it has not always been fully appreciated how far a particular society both influences the themes and subject matter of its representative literary types and also profoundly affects their formal development (3).

As can be deduced from the foregoing, the bond between literature and society is age-long. As a matter of necessity, literature is a by-product of society. Even in preliterate cultures as pre-colonial African societies typify, literary and cultural productions derive from the affairs of the society. Actually, the much acclaimed commitment heritage in modern African written literature owes its peculiarities to the oral precursors of non-scribal traditions. In these cases, the oral performer thus becomes the contemporary clone of the writers in the successor written tradition. Obafemi (2010) clarifies this thus:

Oral literature is the forebear of Nigerian literature – griot, the masque motif and performance art; this is where our literature – from pre-literate times and deep into the

colonial hegemonic age-emerged. Oral tradition remains extant in all our modern literary genre. Oral literature, even oral performing arts provide the essential and salient communal fibre of our modern story, in its aesthetics, its ideological direction and its cognitive and its epistemy (2).

With the above in mind, socio-historical manifestations as creative raw materials and aesthetic sources are indeed imperatives in the African creative consciousness. For a society like Africa where art is functional and perfunctory, it becomes a natural transition for art to dovetail into social realities. African writers are therefore duty bound to ensure the reflection of the issues of concern in the society in their works.

Actually, to a very large extent, socio-historical reflection has continued to be the hallmark of African literature. This tendency for self-reflexivity defines the relationship African literature shares with its history. One notes that the seeming fusion of history and literature in the African literary landscape is one of both historical and artistic significance. This is understandable since oral traditions have always been sources of history as well as literary materials. Just as the historian of African society turns to oral tradition, the kernel of aesthetic direction in African literary imagination heavily derives from the intricate resources.

One's position is that African literature parades an excellent amalgam of oral tradition and socio-historical representations to evolve its brand of commitment literature. Being committed in the African creative consciousness is therefore a notion of both form and content; with mimesis being the overbearing tendency. This explains why African literature's mimetic identity inherently embeds oral tradition to portray a total experience of a people; hence, the literature/history relationship. In this connection, it is apt to reflect on John Lye's (2003) opinion:

Literature is mimetic, that is to say, represents reality, nature and the way things are .It portrays moral and other experiences in a compelling concrete immediately felt way

in its aesthetic devices and powers, yet allows as well for reflection, for theorizing or reconsiderations of the experiences evoked, as we are both experiencing the word 'evoked' and are separated from it (16).

The contention above can be well situated within the utilitarian function of African literature as a mirror of its society. Critics have expended worthwhile critical energy on discoursing the nature and directions of commitment as it affects the realities of the social milieu of literature. Existing arguments as to the dystopian nature of African literature should evidently justify the continued relevance of this mode of artistic engagement, given the fact that the enabling society parade issues that consistently require attention. In other words, the fact that both critics and writers of African literature recognize the need for a committed mode of artistic expression in Africa shows the alertness of the intelligentsia to the plight and condition of African societies generally. The point therefore is that African literature is dedicated to thematising issues bothering on its enabling society. Critics have long recognised that there is a utilitarian function for African literature, while the writer is seen as moralist and "righter of wrongs" (Osundare, 2007). In a similar vein, Elerus (2000) observes that "in apprehending observable reality and reflecting the findings in his literary creation, the African writer is not unaware of the real nature and objective of good literature which he sees as being largely determined by the needs of the society (195). This implies that though the African writer may be constrained to always channel the crux of thematic preoccupations within the realities of the environment, this is an additional element which ultimately contributes to the literary merit and qualities of the corpus.

Defining Commitment in African Literature

It is necessary to examine the notion of commitment in literature and the imperative for the writer. To begin with the concern of Jean Paul Sartre, acknowledged as the father of engagement literature or *littérature engagée* the philosophy of commitment shows that human beings should appropriate the value of literature as a social institution, not only because it possesses the ability to prescribe a future course of action, but the fact that it can help redefine what the future will be. In other words, literature can be a prescriptive agent for social direction. Sartre (1965) declares:

The doctrine I am presenting ... is precisely the opposite of this, since it declares that there is no reality except in action. It goes further indeed, and adds, 'Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realizes himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sums of his actions, nothing else but what his life is (14).

The above captures the enviable gap of the creative writer in bringing about the much expected change. What is clear from Sartre's position above is that the writer as conscience of the society cannot be divorced from the intricacies of the society. In effect, by engaging social realities, the writer, as represented by the hypothetical figure of "Man" by Sartre is interrogating a kind of self-realization. This self-evaluation, which can be viewed in terms of the literature of engagement, would have certainly taken into consideration the views of critics like Izevbaye's (1971). He hopes that:

As the literature becomes less preoccupied with social or national problems and more concerned with the problems of men as individuals in an African society, the considerations which influence critical judgment will be more human and literary than social ones (30).

To appreciate Izevbaye's concern is to actually realise that, literature is first and foremost an art form, which must seek a balance between form and content. However, the position of Izevbaye, expressed above, may have to contend with the realities of the African creative imagination *vis-à-vis* the role of literature. This is because, as Irele (2008) points out,

... Literature is an aesthetic form, but it is also a social and cultural object. The idea that African writers have a social role is based on the assumption that their writings can have real effects on the social environment. This social quality of literature, however, is dependent, among other things, on the human elements, material conditions, and history of the social space. (20).

What the foregoing implies is that, in Africa, literature has a definite role to discharge as the conscience of its enabling society. In his essay 'The Writer in a Modern African State' delivered in Stockholm in 1967, Soyinka states that "the time has come when the African writer must have the courage to determine what alone can be salvaged from the recurrent circle of human stupidity" (p.8) . One can reasonably assert that the African writers' beginning of course with Soyinka himself have continued to discharge this role. In fact, writers like Christopher Okigbo and Ken Saro Wiwa took physical steps in their direct participation in political struggles. This perhaps relates to the tradition of commitment where a writer's duty to the society is essentially to reflect and engender a legacy of functionalism. The writer is therefore expected to be conscious of his duty to society and must necessarily reflect them in his thematic and aesthetic directions. Balogun (1990) also supports this statement when he says "art is essentially committed to practical social realities. The artist is saddled with task of practically assessing the contemporary situation in society with the mind of identifying and proffering solutions to the different prevailing contradictions" (8). As practical as this onerous task may appear however, it is clear

that the issues affecting societies, especially in developing economies like Nigeria, have consistently defied solutions owing primarily to the quality of leadership and their insatiability for power and material interests. This will then sadly imply that the artists' attempt at creating an idyllic ethos is mere illusion.

It can be well understood that literature has always served socio- historical purposes especially in Africa. This is in realisation by writers in Africa of the fact that "Art in the dawn of humanity had little to do with 'beauty' and nothing at all to do with any aesthetic desire. It was a magic tool weapon of the human collective in its struggle for survival" (Fischer ,1963:16). An examination of the transformational stages of African society helps to shape the *raison d'être* of its literary output. For a continent birthed by the now denounced Berlin conference, it has been a long tortuous journey of self-assertion and identity quest. Following this forced marriage was the bitter experiences of colonialism which directly led to earlier works in African creative imagination addressing issues of identity and cultural affirmation. This development no doubt affected the hitherto thriving artistic tradition where ,for example ,in the case of Nigeria, all the nationalities that make up contemporary Nigeria had thriving traditions of literature before they come into contact with Arabic and European influences. (Darah, 1988). In essence, the motif of cultural renaissance in a classic like Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* attempts to alter the status quo.

It should be noted that Achebe's task of cultural education in this novel is a response to the challenge of negative images of Africa perpetrated by the Eurocentric writers on Africa. Two novels namely Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* are generally regarded as strategic intertexts for *Things Fall Apart*. Examining Conrad's descriptions of the "savages," Achebe (1977) shows that the novel, far from subverting imperialist constructions, falls victim to them.

Marlow, the story's narrator, describes the Africans as "not inhuman," and continues, "Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman." And yet the blacks in the novel are nameless and faceless, their language barely more than grunts; they are assumed to be cannibals. The only explanation for this, Achebe concludes, is "obvious racism." To further support Achebe, Kehinde (2003) remarks that:

As a writer, Chinua Achebe sees his primary role as that of a 'teacher' instructing the ignorant about the bewildering amalgam of African cultures. Therefore, his fiction established a firmly Afrocentric indigenous basis for African culture. Also, his initial texts were partly aimed at correcting some Eurocentric jaundiced stereotypes about Africa and Africans. (376)

The concept of commitment in African literature is related to the Mbari model which holds that there is a sort of alliance between the creative muse and the community. In fact, this is the foundation of social realism in African literature. Achebe's contention of the synergy between the artist and collective consciousness also point in this direction. In other words, art thus negotiates various angles and phases of history- anaphoric or cataphoric. Art is thus able to marshal the aspirations and angst of society given its inherent attribute of communion with a community's essence. The example thus can be said to transit from the traditional oral folktale narrator to the post-independence writer. Both discharge a duty to the society, which is actually a continuum. However, to achieve some objective perspective is to consider Eagleton's remarks about hermeneutic notions of history:

The unending 'dialogue' of human history is as often as not a monologue by the powerful to the powerless, or...if it is indeed a 'dialogue' then the partners—men and women Achebe (high culture) and the boy (popular culture)], for example - hardly occupy equal positions. (64).

In the above, Eagleton apostates for a more complex relationship in the socio-cultural perceptions of power. For the critic, the writer does not merely narrate, he/she it with some basic assumptions, that which positions him as an interlocutor whose word is sacred. It can be reasonably argued that there are several ways in which the role of the African writer is closely linked to the intertwining constitution of the formative processes of artistic resources and the mandate they eventually discharge. The writer is therefore part of a larger process of creation, interpretation and interventions.

Therefore, early African writing took off on a culturally aggressive note and this tendency bred vibrant nationalistic ethos both in critical and creative circles in solidarity with the essence of African identity. In essence, first generation, African writing comprises a strong reaction against negative stereotypes constructed during the colonial period. African writers had to dismantle myths of African inferiority and assert African cultures. Cultural activism therefore characterised first-generation Nigerian writing, a trend the second generation radically departs from. Osofisan (2005) further expatiates on the mission of this generation as follows:

... our focus was on the present state of our society, on unmasking the class forces at play within it, revealing the material sources of exploitation and injustices, demonstrating how the masses could liberate themselves [and] of greater pertinence now as the collective struggle, fought by the hero with a thousand faces, a thousand hands. (16).

The point to note is that critics have dwelt on the representations of neo-colonial decadence in African literature and specifically, the novel. It should be noted that across Africa, the story is similar. Following the jubilations that greeted attainment of independence by African countries, most African nations have not shown enough purposeful leadership. Corruption and bad governance dominate the public space. This has necessitated writers focusing attention on political themes while

offering alternatives to the rot. An example in this regard is Chinua Achebe's *A Man of The People* which ends on a prophetic note. The transition to political activism in this novel also asserts a shift in focus in the post-independence writing. The fact that Chinua Achebe sees a military coup looming in the horizon in the Nigerian political landscape further demonstrates a commitment to society's affairs. This affirms Okuyade (2009) statement on the Nigerian scenario that "...literature goes beyond exhuming a socio-political/historical past; it is not a personal expedition; it is a private statement about a collective existential angst, the angst of the Nigerian people..." (258). The import of this critical contention lies in the fact that, literature is a lived experience. The experience highlighted in literature emanates either from the individual perspective or could be shared communal experiences. In other words, the character of post-independence literature is a witness to the developmental carnage and social petrification. This ultimately means that, the attempt by individual writers to comment and lampoon society is a deliberate effort at negotiating a better humanity.

Osofisan (2005) further advocates the measurable role in bringing about change in African milieus. This goes beyond mere mirror of socio-historical realities. According to him:

The reflective images of literature are ordained by what I will simply describe as the pressure of the author's ideological perspective. Even as he chronicles the life of the people of that age, the writer does so critically, both to comment on it, and also project on that image, a picture of the society's imagined destiny. ..That is why art is called a *refraction* of reality, and why the act of writing is fundamentally an act of moral commitment (64).

This critical position must have been informed largely by the experiences of the critic, a leading voice in the second generation of Nigerian literature. In fact, in his 2005 University lecture at the University of Ibadan, Osofisan (2007) reflects on this dichotomy

between literary preoccupation and social-historical dysfunctional and justifies why his generation attempts to fill the missing link in their various works:

It was easy to decide what our mission should be- which was to devote our work to changing the society, to try and create better world not only for ourselves alone, but for all our people. As writers, we accepted that our predecessors had invented a tool for us, but our own vocation would be to seize this tool, and direct it to the work of social, political and cultural liberation (45).

The point in the above is that African literature generally continues to be confronted by the demand to align with socio-historical aspirations. Recurring challenges of underdevelopment and gaps in advancement of humanity continue to make this inevitable. This is in alignment with Abiola Irele's (1981) view that "it is this concern with historical and sociological reality that makes African literature a more accurate and comprehensive account of contemporary African reality than sociological or political documents" (12). This suggests that African literature can be alternative sources of African history. With the fiction mode gaining popularity in such works as Kole Omotosho's *Just Before Dawn*, Debo Kotun's *Abiku* and Frank Uche Mowah's *Eating By The Flesh*, the novelists from Nigeria, just like most post-independence African states, derive their artistic inspirations from the actual socio-political developments of their enabling societies, so much that a thin line now exists between African literature and its respective histories.

Third-Generation Nigerian Writing: A Critical Evaluation

Critical interventions on third-generation Nigerian literature have been on the increase. Even though the critical lens have been largely based on the relationship between the political climate and the renaissance it has generated in literary productions, it is indubitable that the emerging third-generation writers have been receiving critical attention on several fronts. Notable critical efforts in this regard

include Adesanmi and Dunton (2005, 2008); Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2009); Cooper (2008), as well as two issues of *African Literature Today* (Vols 25 and 27) are significant contributions in this regard. In Adesanmi and Dunton's (2008) words:

In Nigeria there has been a marked ebb and flow in the relative rates of production and of perceived prestige of English-medium poetry, fiction, and drama, through the 1980s and '90s and the early years of the twenty-first century. Most recently, the novel has been at the forefront, with the appearance of highly acclaimed works by such emerging novelists as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Helon Habila, Sefi Atta... (7).

The above captures the trend and tendencies in the three literature genres, and emphatically privileges the novel genre. This clearly suggests that the novel, as a genre in third-generation Nigerian literature, occupies a prominent space. Actually, critical efforts on the leading novelists of the age especially Chimamanda Adichie indicate that, by and large, there is a continuum between the present crop of writers and their first and second generation predecessors. It should be noted that despite the critical and popular euphoria that trailed the coming of age of third generation Nigerian writing, they have also been some measure of sceptical critical reception. Notable in this league of critics is Nnolim (2005) who derides the text as being between "debauchery and the kitchen" (3). This view is premised on what he considers as the pessimism of the generation and the lack of ideological grounding, owing, according to him, to the violence wrought on the generation by military rule. The critic has also come hard on the critics of the generation by describing them as "lazy". This is however in contradistinction to Andre Green's (2007) position that:

Whatever their faults, this new generation of Nigerian writers should be celebrated. They are just beginning to explore their literary powers, and their rendering of the ouroboros of globalization shows enormous promise. In a world where empathy and social responsibility require ad campaigns, and history is quickly forgotten or (in the case

of Westerners' knowledge of African history) never learned, these writers remind us that stories can be powerful cultural barometers, exposing the agony of hijacked souls and leading us to places where we might not merely recover our own humanity, but rediscover it in one another (32).

Clearly, the contention above comfortably dislodges Nnolim's critical vituperations which appear misplaced. This is because writers are conditioned by the realities of their age, and it may take a critic who shares the sentiments and aspirations of the age to appreciate their ideological and overall thematic directions. In an interview with Abdul Rasheed Na'Allah (2005), Abiola Irele proves more accommodating and would rather see this as the "changing role of literature":

One of the interesting things has been the way the role of the writer has changed... Literature cannot promote development directly ...what it can do is to mould consciousness, and that is a major function of literature...moral, something to do with a creating a frame of mind that enables society to see itself and take some kind of measures that are necessary for improvement(9).

One aligns with the above postulation but with an addendum that real issues must be addressed by literary engagements in order to remain relevant as expected. In an online survey of fifty African writers, *The African Writing Magazine*, explains these circumstances:

These are writers of a disillusioned Africanist enterprise, who are not naïve about international realities but have become more hesitant about blaming outsiders because they have experienced a lot of enemies within. They are often less ideological in their judgments than their predecessors (7).

It is thus clear that there is adequate and ongoing engagement by critics of the third-generation writers. Critics continue to share the confounding realities that writers of the generation encounter. As such, critics subtly identify with the post/neo-colonial

challenges of the Nigerian state. One, therefore, finds the suggestion of a national literature that has an immediacy of engagement by Joanna (2001), apt and relevant. This would mean an approach which focuses total attention of prevailing socio-psychological exigencies of enabling conditions of literary activity. This means that literary preoccupation would transcend aesthetic venture or ideological promotion or apostasy, rather it will create characters whom Ibitokun (1995) declares: “African literature prominently feature characters who, through their strength of will...look for liberty in change and dismantle the barrage of supremacist whiteness in its colonial, neo-colonial and apartheid structures” (164).

It can be deduced from the foregoing that post-independence Nigerian writers share the angst of their enabling societies in all ramifications and are therefore faced with the challenge of a discourse that accentuates the strategy of socio-historical engagement in their works. This is based on the realisation of the fact that “the colonial experience, the post independence era and the economic conditions of African states have bearing on the writers works...The writers are watchdogs of their societies whose values they often guard (Obi and Ojaide, 2002). This obviously would require a deliberate and conscious determination by writers to take on the challenge of nation-building, acting as the contemporary social and political satiric wit, reminiscent of English neo-classical literary tradition.

Theorising Third-General Nigerian Novels

The third-generation Nigerian novel as a tradition has been the subject of diverse critical interpretations. As a matter of fact, the corpus of emerging works can gradually boast of commensurate critical interventions. The critics have been dwelling on the emergence of this tradition at both individual authors and as a group.

In fact, Okonkwo in a paper titled “Talking and Te(x)tifying: Ndibe, Habila, and Adichie’s ‘Dialogic’ Narrativizations of Nigeria’s Post War Nadir: 1984-1998” suggests that three contemporary Nigerian novels Okey Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain*, Helon Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel*, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* can be “linked ‘dialogically’”. According to him:

All three texts “‘te(x) stify’ to the horrors of the nadir, thereby performing, recuperating and affirming the power and resiliency of that human and civil right of ‘voice’ which the army sought desperately to stifle and invalidate” ... These texts themselves “perform” and together “chart a liberation imperative and trajectory.” That is by retelling the history of Nigeria, the three novels are able to reinterpret and symbolically re-imagine in their texts the movement from “nihilism to hope, absence to presence, and from apathy to action”.

The above instantiates critical categorization of third-generation writing, given their ideological leanings. It is of course appropriate to share the above sentiments of since “It is difficult for a Nigerian writer, or any postcolonial writer, to either take a definite, Kantian art-for-art’s sake position” (Obafemi 2011,13) . This means that through ideological engagement, third-generation Nigerian writers continue to deepen the relationship between writer and the enabling society. The above indication is that third-generation Nigerian novelists are indeed entrenching a tradition, which is obviously deeply rooted in the political direction of the early Nigerian writers which achieved some radical bite by the succeeding generation.

Therefore, for the third-generation Nigerian novelist, the imperative of social commitment is natural and seemingly unavoidable. Okuyade (2009) explains that the growth and development of the novel genre in the twenty-first century have been particularly exponential. He further draws a link between the experiences of the earlier generations and the third, observing that, “only the political atmosphere

differs; the temper remains the same”(72). Okuyade explains further:

This cardinal thrust of African literature at large has been bi-focal; it is either geared towards assessing colonization or interrogating post-independence malice. This dual artistic drive continues to sustain the literature within its tear-soaked canvas. Yet the nation state in Africa continues to wobble in crisis. Misrule and corruption seem to be deeply entrenched in the psyche of the rulers, provoking widespread skepticism of an idyllic future. This in turn leaves the ruled mired in the economic sodden of the continent, where they are sustained in a supine state. Politics and history are no doubt the twin items the African novelist employs as literary oral artistic intensifiers. (72).

It is, therefore, an obvious position that critics are identifying the new directions and focus of writers, conditioned by the fresh challenges. The fact that third-generation writers are exhibiting the desires of the post-independence societies remains a propelling force for critics in their interventions. This is akin to what Emenyonu (1988) underscores when he opines that writers:

Should have a special allegiance to the downtrodden in the Nigerian society, to the socially handicapped, to the women, the children, the unemployed, the sick; all those who are not able to fight their own battles. The writer should put on his armour and charge into battle in defence of the defenceless. It is my view that the writer in Nigeria of today has to take his position against the oppression of the people, all forms of brutalities, and of unwarranted violence against the masses (4).

From the above, it is clearly evident that the issues thematised in third-generation Nigerian novels are germane to the enabling twenty-first century society. Just like the Achebe’s generation of writers who are representatives of their ages through the cultural cum socio-historical leanings of their works, the third generation writers are radiating elements of intertextuality which qualify them, as “Achebe’s grandchildren”. Actually, one notices deliberate attempts by the writers to associate

aesthetically with the Achebe tradition. For instance, *Purple Hibiscus* opens with “Things Began to fall apart ...” (Adichie) while there is a similar reference in *Waiting for an Angel*: “Things started falling apart...” (147). These examples show that third generation Nigerian writers, even though not strictly confined to the same experiences and passions, are similar in thematic concerns and principles. Describing this relationship as revisionism, he contends that:

Adichie revises Achebe’s novel in several ways. She takes one of his themes, the breakdown of family and community under the pressures of colonialism and religion, and recasts it in post-independent Nigeria, at a time when colonialism’s heirs—corruption, political strife, and religious dogmatism—strain family and community.

In clearer terms, there is an ideological continuity that runs through the corpus of African literature. This link, simply put, is commitment to socio-historical issues as critics have established over time especially as Mutisso (1974) notes “politics in literature is a healthy phenomenon because good literatures in the present Africa aim to, extrapolate the major social and political concepts that will be used for the socialization of present and future generations” (244). This implies that the political temperament of African literature is a direct response to the enabling socio-historical realities, as writers, especially novelists cannot afford to look way from the daunting realities prevalent in the African milieu.

In effect, the critical reception of third-generation Nigerian writing acknowledges the dynamic spirit and resilience of the writers. In fact, the fact that the writers possess the capacity to reflect and engage the realities of their time, given the circumstances of their maturation is indubitable. As Hewett (2005) asserts:

The emerging account of this generation is one of triumph over adversity, a story of courageous individuals refusing to be silenced and the greater community supporting them.

It is a remarkable story, one that is still being written by critics and the writers themselves (74).

In fact, there seems to be a unity of voices across on either side the Atlantic in this regard. This is because the crop of emerging third-generation writers are in constant dialogue with the western world either as members of the “brain train” (Elugbe) or as representatives of the generations permanently resident outside the shores of the country. Ben Okri, Chris Abani and Uzodimma Iweala fall into this category. This interaction has not only nurtured a vibrant tradition, it continues to enrich the thematic and stylistic directions of the literary productions. It also forges a thread of globalization of themes and ideas as the writers either resident in Nigeria or based outside or constantly moving in and out are exposed to similar realities which enable them emerge as archetypes of the third generation. This is in the light of the submission of Bonnici (2004) that:

The notion of place is the interactive convergence of language, history, spatiality and environment in the experience of colonized peoples. Colonization disrupts the colonized subject’s sense of place. On the one hand, for the colonial, enslaved and diaspora subject, it is impossible to leave “home” while it is almost impossible to remain untouched by the new “home”. Further, in most cases, identity and an actual place have been totally severed and all attempts to identify oneself with the original location have generally resulted in frustration and more displacement. (31).

It should be stated that while the third-generation Nigerian novelists have been critiqued as a group, individual authors have also been receiving critical appraisals from several stand points. It must be stated that, from the textual references for this study for example, Chimamanda Adichie, Helon Habila and Sefi Attah appear to be the most visible while Okey Ndibe, Bina Ilagha and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani are not as prominent as the previous three. This is however understandable given the fact that the

first trio are more decorated as recipients of literary prizes and the fact that they have published more than a novel each , in comparison to the trio of Ndibe, Ilagha and Nwaubani , each of whom are debutants novelists. A few examples on author specific critiques is necessary at this juncture.

In a commentary on Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come*, Ojaide (2006) creates a kind of fusion between individual and communal aspiration. He sees the individual as the microcosm or measure of the society's advancement. For him, the domestic and the public are not parallels but allies. Exploits and disappointments are, therefore, unifying forces for both individuals and the society as a whole. In his words:

The individual's will or self-assertion, especially when applied by a woman in a patriarchal society, can break the jinx of infertility/barrenness, inaction, submissiveness, subjugation, and low self-esteem, among other problems. This, Atta suggests, has implications not only for the individual but also for the society at large and the entire nation in the various struggles. There are clear parallels in the novel between the way women are treated in a patriarchy--raped as Sheri was, cheated as Enitan was by Mike, dominated as the women by men, and robbed--and the successive military governments' oppression, tyranny, violence, mistreatment, and dashing of the hopes of civilians (2).

The critical opinion above underscores the essential thrusts of Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come* and indicates the novel's attempt at subtle gender consciousness is not lost on the critic. It is noteworthy that inhumanity in different colourations permeates the universe of the novel. The protagonist of *Everything Good Will Come*, Enitan , is therefore positioned as a messenger of hope whose character foil, Sheri, seems to spur to action. Their relationship affirms the principle of female solidarity which Hudson-Weems (2008) appraises:

There has always been bonding among African women that cannot be broken—genuine sisterhood. This sisterly bond is a reciprocal one, one in which each gives and receives equally. In this community of women, all reach out in support of each other, demonstrating a tremendous sense of responsibility for each other by looking out for one another. They are joined emotionally, as they embody emphatic understanding of each other's shared experiences. Everything is given out of love, criticism included, and in the end, the sharing of the common and individual experiences and ideas yields rewards (65).

From the above submission, the bias of third-generation Nigerian novelists towards gender theorizing is foregrounded. By demonstrating the strength that the female characters draw from one another, the critic seems to suggest that Sefi Attah's feminist temper, however subtle it may appear, supports female solidarity as a means of addressing issues of gender exploitation. This aligns with Eze's (2008) submission. According to her:

Enitan Taiwo and Sheri Bakare are friends brought up in different family setups... While one learns to avoid the strictures of tradition, the other confronts them headlong with the belief that her situation, that of women and the nation in general can never get better unless these issues are confronted, and the system fixed. That would, however, demand sacrifices. Enitan, the narrator, is well aware of that, and she is dead determined to go ahead with a Nietzschean conviction that freedom is not just 'freedom from' but 'freedom to,' freedom to assume responsibility. With this, Sefi Atta sets abroad canvas upon which she, produces a strong narrative that is particular in its detailed Nigerian experience and universal in the ethical issues that inform it (117-118).

Therefore, Attah's *Everything Good will Come* pursues gender empowerment as a larger aspect of post-independence engagement. Meanwhile, the same gender consciousness in Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come* is evident in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. The novel, has, however not enjoyed much attention in this regard. It is very clear though that the characterisation of Amaka represents a

gender message that there is a viability of self-realisation through this characters positive assertion of will. This is what Sotunsa (2009) captures thus:

The unfavorable portrayal of women by African male writers ignited a literary outburst which culminated in female writers attempt to counter the impaired picture of African womanhood by reversing the roles of women in African fiction written by men. African female writers began to present female protagonists who are pitted against all odds, yet emerge liberated and determined to exist with or without the man (174).

The point is that Attah manifests gender consciousness in *Everything Good Will Come* just as other third-generation novelists, especially Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. For example, Amaka exemplifies female empowerment while Adichie fuses this with Kambili's innocence to demonstrate the essence of feminine expression in a way that makes the novel, according to Dawes (2005), "a subtle narrative of deeply painful conflicts with loyalty and fear" (1). Dawes elaborates further:

Adichie's prose is confident and charged with a certain emotional intelligence that draws us so fully into her story that we barely notice the craft: the literary sophistication of her use of symbols and metaphors, of her engagement with deeply political and ideological issues. In other words, we are never allowed to think that her work is anything but a fascinating story about how a family deals with its own demons. We would be mistaken, however, not to recognize in this work the larger ideological issues that remain central to the best writing from Africa (1).

The larger issues the above excerpt refers to are certainly related to the general situation in the enabling milieu of the novel. This also presupposes that, notwithstanding the immediate concern of third generation novels, the writers are ever faithful to the larger calling as the voice and conscience of the society, in a way that confirms the fact that "Nigeria has been blessed with writers who have demonstrated not just very commendable creative talents, but also commensurate

commitment and patriotism in making their art relevant to their immediate society by way of capturing its experiences” (Onukaogu and Onyerionwu,2009,57).

Critics have also read Helon Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel*, as a work which amounts to the established a revitalisation of the tradition of prison writing on the one hand, and the dramatization of the Freudian psychoanalytical theory of the unconscious in relation to the pursuit of a wider political agenda, on the other. As a prison memoir, *Waiting for an Angel* brilliantly revisits the genre which works like Wole Soyinka’s *The Man Died* and Ken Saro Wiwa’s *A Month and A Day* exemplify. The emphasis on the role of the central character, Lomba, as the focus of action and meaning shows that the third-generation Nigerian novelist preoccupies self with the status of the self within the society. In fact, Egoro’s (2008) appraisal of Helon Habila’s in *Waiting for an Angel* as a work that “does not take the social function of the writer and the public performance of intellectual life for granted but instead makes the social” (37) , goes a long way to show that, third-generation Nigerian novelists are mindful of “life of the [creative] mind” as a major critical concern (Said, 16).

In other words, Habila interjects this by showing “how ideological constraints and material conditions construct the creative mind and define the nature of its functions and relationship to the collective” (Egoro, 2008, 37). This clearly implies that, the self in the twenty-first century is not only tasked in terms of quality of life, the intellect is also the subject of intense reflections, in search of solutions to the crisis of survival. Lomba as the character who also doubles as the narrator, represents the creative tribe in *Waiting for an Angel* who should mobilize the society towards mass action successfully. This is to say that, the redemption of Poverty Street, may not be in sight and the “waiting” is likely to continue until the

collective spirit is harnessed. In other words, conscious of the Achebean mandate of the the role of the writer, Helon Habila concerns himself with showing the challenges and potentials of the creative mind, and how these limitations affect the relationship between the individual and the society at large.

Moreover, critics have also situated Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* within the larger discourse of the place of intellectuals in the clamour for an idyllic Africa. Olaniyan, (1995) and Quayson (2005) have similar positions on the above. The summary of these positions can be seen in Quayson's new agenda for the literature that would transcend the present state, since according to him, literature:

has vigorously to avoid the dominant forms with which political discourse itself attempts to constitute such a reality ... [which have] operated mainly in a quasi-metaphysical language of Good v. Evil, of Chaos v. Order, and that in the hands of politicians this has served as a necessary simplification that obscures the real complexities of what takes place in the political domain." (94)

Quite significant to the present study is Quayson's suggestion that literature must change "the existing shape of dominant political discursive paradigms" (97) to enact a "*liberatory politics*" (115). Habila is therefore a game-changer in respect of the strategy of the third generation Nigerian novelists. This is in alignment with the observation of Chirman (2010) on the tenet of post-colonial literature:

The defining path of post-colonial literature in Nigeria is clearly imbued with despair and disillusionment. The works of the new generation of writers in Nigeria, like Sefi Atta, Chris Abani, Ahmed Yerima, Promise Ugochukwu, among others, all dramatise and measure the rigors of commitment and responsibility. The conclusion therefore is that Nigerian literature, history and society are all working in complementarities to address modern issues of common concern within the polity (64).

In a similar vein, Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* has been applauded as a faithful representation of social consciousness and political activism that run through

the third-generation of Nigerian novelists. Clearly, *Arrows of Rain*'s "overt subscription to social concerns" (Akingbe,2010,1) is an attribute which evidently runs through the themes of third-generation Nigerian writers, in their bid "to confront the social realities considered responsible for the failure of the country to live up to its widely-acknowledged potential"(2) In other words, Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* therefore is a satiric effort which underscores the role of literature, and the task of the writer, especially in Africa. After all, as Kehinde (2009) points out, "post-independence Nigerian writers, in their individual rights, are skillful artists who project their political messages without vitiating their arts" (335). Cognisance must also be taken of the fact that, the writers, notwithstanding their political temperaments, continue to strive at maintaining a "nice balance between matters and manners, and they are political artists who are, first of all, artists". The point therefore is that, third-generation Nigerian novelists are clearly not bereft of stylistic architechnics, which ordinarily may suffer as a result of their socio-historical thematic inclinations.

One contends that from the foregoing consideration of critical perceptions of third-generation Nigerian novel that there is a robust potential for the emerging corpus. Given the fact that most of the writers are for example, products of similar social dislocation, the theorising of the works have been generally mindful of the realities of the circumstances of the Nigerian milieu. Even though Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I do Not Come To You By Chance* and Bina Ilgaha's *Condolences* are relatively, when compared to the rest, fresh literary harvests, they indubitably lend themselves to the critical probing highlighted in this chapter. In essence, third-generation writers are dynamic in their approaches of literary mimesis but certainly united in their desire to use their works to change the Nigerian milieu of production.

Unlike the writers of the earlier generation, they are certainly strategically positioned as transnational agents to also champion the cause of a global order that would re-define the essence of the African self.

Post-independence African novels generally allow a broad perspective of the bizarre metamorphosis in the continents polity as manifested in the political landscape. Generally, in third-generation Nigerian novels, the authors attempt to illuminate the pain infested on the country's landscape by its defective brand of political governance thereby conditioning the novelists to evolve reasoning parameters towards pragmatic alternatives. This is in consonance with the realities underscored by Dipoko(1969) that:

For the masses, happiness was, as it still is, a prospective dream. Better conditions of living, higher purchasing power, personal feeding, a share of all good things of modern like, from industrial products to learning: in short, a longing for better days to come (63

In other words, the novelists aspire to bail out the populace from the conundrum of underdevelopment .Hence, the dystopian fictions of the third generation Nigerian literary historiography would as a matter of necessity and ideological inclination, would reflect the prevailing chaos in the polity. This is validated in the contention of Kortenaar (2000) that, "Third world texts are national allegories where there is no room for private dramas' (228). Although this may sound rather generalising, it nonetheless affirms the natural demand for social responsibility on the Third World novelist. In other words, the literary productions evidence a commitment to this responsibility.

CHAPTER THREE

CHILD NARRATION IN CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE'S *PURPLE HIBISCUS* AND SEFI ATTAH'S *EVERYTHING GOOD WILL COME*.

This chapter focuses on child narration as a device deployed by Chimamanda Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* and Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come*. It is observed that the two novelists employ the device of child narration to convey the thematic messages with a view to demonstrating the drama of underdevelopment and post-independence pains prevalent in their enabling society. To fully situate the emergence of child narration as a vehicle for transmitting the post-independence angst in the enabling milieu of third-generation Nigerian fiction, there is a need to examine the evolution of the trope of childhood in African fiction.

Re-Engaging Childhood in African Literature

Childhood as a trope in African literary discourse is not a strange phenomenon. As a matter of fact, concerns of childhood, especially within the precincts of the family, have been a motif in African fictional narratives. This implies that childhood as a concept has developed over generations of writings. This attendant dynamism is why childhood in twenty-first century literary imagination is also a peculiar manifestation which begs to critical reason. Given the interrelationship of childhood to the overall subject of identity, it becomes a challenge to properly isolate the same within the ambit of colonial effect that has characterised the progression of knowledge production. The point is, to borrow Mudimbe's term, "the idea of Africa" (1994,16), childhood has assumed a central place in the discourse of African post-colonial identity construction.

African literature necessarily demarcates, from the outset, the representation of childhood, unarguably with the use of child hero in Camara Laye's *The African Child* (1959). One agrees with Okolie (1988, 29) that the Negritude movement prevalent in African critical and creative enterprise during the 1950s and 1960 may be largely responsible for this. Of course, the attempt by Francophone African writers to renegotiate the black identity, as a fall-out of subtle resentment of the Assimilation policy, necessarily encouraged rethinking the symbolism of the black essence through a collective unconscious of repositioning of the self. Through this conscious decolonisation, a work like Laye's *The African Child*, just like Ferdinand Oyono's *Houseboy* (1966) exemplifies a Negritudist conception of childhood. Other examples are Mongo Beti's *Mission to Kala* (1971) and *The Poor Christ of Bomba* (1971). This latter category presents a version that introduces a gender dimension to the discourse and acknowledges the reality of dual cultures as represented in the downplayed indigenous essence of the African identities, on the one hand, and the foisted Francophone burden, on the other.

In essence, to align with the words of Okolie (1988, 30), childhood thus evokes "a psychogenic impulse of self-assertion and self-search," within the context of the larger African society. Representations of the child thus become a matter of cultural and historical dialectic, which centres on a recurring tension in the cultural milieu. This explains why, for instance, Laye's *The African Child*, depicts innocence and purity through the child protagonist who undergoes an acculturation process courtesy of colonial education. This leaves the family in despair and devastation over the thought of sending their ward to school. In other words, the concept of childhood in African fiction presents the dilemma which confronts the child, and the difficult path of navigation between tradition and modernity.

In essence, childhood is adequately represented in early Francophone African literature and reveals the manifestations of the contrast of innocence and conflict, with cultural retrieval as a dominant motivation. Hence, childhood as a trope is a direct response to the Negritude's consciousness of a racial African identity. Thus, childhood symbolizes a collective angst by virtue of it being a means of retrieving a collective pastoral psyche that was believed to be "African". In effect, innocence, cultural consciousness and primitivistic nostalgia resplendent in Francophone African literature make the concept of childhood, and the portraiture of child heroes, harbingers of positive identity.

A critical examination of the childhood trope exploits the paradox of innocence, and shows that; the child is a complex being, in fact, as Desai (1981,45) , notes "often more complex than the adult, subjected to an unpredictable process of growth". Examining the "theme of childhood in commonwealth fiction", Desai further argues that the African child in these narratives is in fact "no romantic angel" but "a bundle of impulses [...] is trying to piece together his fragmentary experiences". One certainly agrees with the fact that, childhood is a complex phenomenon that enables literary imagination negotiate a variety of contestations, for example the deconstruction of masculinity or father figures, among other things. Thus, cultural plurality within a postcolonial world is activated through the childhood trope.

To focus on the Nigerian literary antecedents of childhood as a central trope in African literature, is to immediately recognize that the depiction of family scenario in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Okonkwo's family evinces diversities in representations of childhood of the members of the household. This is adequately represented in Ikemefuna, Ezinma and Nwoye. Specifically, to use Wright's

(2004,) definition of the black diaspora, exemplifies as “Other-from-within, Ezinma occupying both a terrestrial and extra-terrestrial world and Nwoye childhood contested by Okonkwo using the social construct of gender”(8). These descriptions are apt for the three childhoods and confirm Hallos (1996) words, that, they are marked by an “internal diaspora,” an “other-from-within”. In another vein, childhood as a site of experimentation is explored in Achebe’s *Arrow of God* through for Ezeulu’s attempt at using his child to interact with the missionaries. Childhood therefore occupies a space in tradition and change imperative. This seems to suggest that, a child figure as *tabula rasa* provides a canvass for the dynamics of the fictional world. To extend the metaphor of mask dancing in *Arrow of God* one can relate the same to the phenomena of change and transition. “Mask dancing” obviously is patriarchal and highly gendered, since it is exclusive to only titled men. What is important is the significance it has to a child/ren. Ezeulu’s perception that understanding life is akin to mask dancing to establish a rapport and the necessary network underscore the importance of childhood in the novel. The point is that Achebe’s early works construct multiple cultural views that accommodate varying and diverse identities. The image of children is a significant metaphor for transition, change, cultural mobility, experimentations and the like.

Representations of childhood in Nigerian fiction is also prevalent in the works of feminist writers like notably Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa, Zaynab Alkali, among others. With a gendered perspective, these writers negotiate the concept through the fate of the girl-child. Critics like Ikonne (1992), Agbasiere, (1992), Okereke, (1992) Uwakeh, (1998), Alabi,(1998) Nnaemeka, (1997) have however punctured these feminist child portraiture as being concerned with motherhood. In essence, the feminist inclination carpets the full exploration of childhood in the

corpus of African feminist writing. The criticisms do not foreground childhood but subsumes it within the context of the female/feminine figure who are mostly full-grown adults. Therefore, motherhood takes a centre stage with the political bite of gender discourse. It also provides an entry point to what Oakley (1994) calls “malestream” literature. In essence, African feminist discourse does not promote childhood, but motherhood, which bellies the gender temperaments.

Consequently, the feminine temperament that overshadows the portraiture of the child has resulted in a peripheral position for childhood in African critical discourse. Hence, motherhood takes a centre-stage in the critical contestations. However, it can be reasonably argued that motherhood as a social construct has brought attention to the evolution of teenage age brackets, which is something more of “girlhood” in contradistinction to childhood, which ordinarily may make the concept homogenous in societies. The point from all these is that feminist criticism of childhood in Nigerian fiction is hinged on gendered dimensions, a phenomenon that has assumed a strategic location in imaginative literary expressions and scholarship in several contexts – including of course, the diaspora.

Although there are several attempts by scholars in critical discourse examining childhood in African literary criticism, they are mainly related examinations which are not really sustained all the way. This explains why, for the present, childhood from the perspective of narrative voice would certainly be a worthy critical intervention. This would also complement scholars like Agbasiere whose discussion examines childhood in the works of Buchi Emecheta. The critic underscores the need for social integration since a child is “important in the continuity of the group [...] and is also, “the link between the past, the present and the future” (127). This further complements Okereke’s analysis which looks at children in light of motherhood,

echoing the idea of a “mask dancing”, mentioned earlier. In essence, the figure of the child as occupying a transitional phase between several cultural worlds is greatly foregrounded in African literary studies generally.

Perhaps, the most defining moment for the depiction of childhood in Nigerian literature is indubitably the years of military governance. With the future of the Nigerian state obviously challenged, childhoods as a reference to the gulf between the present and future aspirations becomes a visible image in literary expressions. The images take the forms of innocence, essence of struggle, questions of the status quo as well as the future of the polity. This is why, for instance, the re-invention of the *abiku/ogbanje* (spirit-child) is instructive. Symbolizing the inconsistency of the Nigerian state, the *abiku* motif succinctly relates to its essence as an extended metaphor that dwells not as an alternative discourse, but as a signpost of social responsibility, since the period of military governance is synonymous with disillusionment.

In effect, through the *abiku* motif in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, childhood definitely assumes a symbol beyond cultural icon or transition it hitherto represented. By defying his spiritual companions, Azaro, the *abiku* child in Okri's work represents a force of historical dialectic. Okri therefore exploits this motif to probe the dichotomy of bi-cultural existence as represented in postulations of city/country, colonial/anti-colonial, innocence/conflict worlds. With Okri as path-breaker therefore, the prevalence of children and youth protagonists, or to put it in another way, the ubiquity of the Bildungsroman, is an understandable bloom. The list of these child voices are seemingly endless: For example: Kambili, Jaja, Ugwu, and Baby in Adichie's works, Enitan in Sefi Atta's work, Elvis in Abani's and Jessamy in Oyeyemi's works are all protagonists in childhood and youthful stages. They

represent an array of worldviews at different stages of their lives, thus confirming that, the fiction coming out of Nigeria in the 21st century is characterised by the use of children and youthful protagonists. It therefore becomes pertinent to trace the ubiquity of the trend, hence the task of this chapter. It shall be necessary to interrogate the conversational interaction with previous texts, and ultimately, the resultant provocation of new critical paradigms as child narration typifies. Interestingly, third-generation Nigerian writing features the idea of children who have “come of age”. The child, thus, symbolically represents an icon of both formal and generational value. As characters and narrators, the child heroes project the scenarios of abyss as pungent as possible and portray a society in ceaseless strife and perpetual debacle. However, it is indubitable that there are obvious limitations and inhibiting factors with a view to fulfilling their engagement.

Modernist literature foregrounds the individual in making choices and reshaping his/her fate. Literary outputs, too, need to break from the mould or at best, develop new methods and evolve new strategies. The novel, as a genre, is however privileged to engage this debacle more than other genres. This informs the point made by McCarthy (1961):

The distinctive mark of the novel as compared to other forms of fiction] is its concern with the actual world, the world of fact, of the verifiable, of figures, even, and statistics. If I point to Jane Austen...Eliot...Tolstoy...Faulkner, it will be admitted...different as they are...they have one thing in common: a deep love of fact, of the empiric element in experience. The staple ingredient present in all novels in various mixtures and proportions but always in fairly heavy dosage is fact.

From the above, the novel as a genre is thus seen as a strategic form to convey the aspirations of the modern world, given the liberty it enjoys over the other genres. The narrative advantage of the novel is thus an advantage that is adequately positioned for

the onerous task of socio-historical expositions. In other words, the form of the novel creates atmosphere for intense thematic and stylistic dissipations. Therefore, birthing child narration as a device within the purview of narrative fiction is a way of proving the resourcefulness of narrative tempo.

At this juncture, the exploitation of child narrators in the corpus of African fiction requires a re-examination. As a voice in the first-person omniscient narrator, the use of child narrator in African creative imagination is not a strange phenomenon. From the *abiku* protagonist of Wole Soyinka's poem, "Abiku" to a more recent example, Azaro, in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, it can well be reasoned that the image of the child has always loomed large in African literature. In other words, the child narrators in earlier writers have handed a potent path to the third-generation Nigerian novelists in the pursuit of their thematic and stylistic agenda.

The question that agitates the mind is who a child narrator is? Of what significance is the use of a child narrator as a narrative technique in African literature, especially the novel? Does the use of a child narrator confer additional value on a work of fiction? In the words of Borgomano (2002):

Today, childhood is changing very rapidly and very radically throughout the world, even in the richest countries that call themselves the most developed, where these changes often appear as tragic "news items" and become the stakes in power struggles. However, it is in the poorest and most politically unstable regions, such as many African countries, that they take their most spectacular forms and seem to be symptoms of real social change. Disrupted and displaced, unstable and highly ambivalent, the representations of childhood are becoming the blurred signs of a worrying world (2).

Situating the above contention within the African socio-historical experiences, one can infer that child narration as a device is certainly of additional value. The reason stems from the obvious state of the child figure in Africa's underdeveloped societies.

Children as helpless victims of dehumanising state policies, casualties of war and epidemics, products of socio-economic dislocations, are vulnerable and directly affected in orgy of oddities in the society. In the Nigerian context, using child narration to capture the disaster of poverty, low quality of life, lack of access to adequate healthcare, environmental violation and the like succinctly paint a total and factual picture of post-independence decadence.

In the light of the foregoing, child narrators who are 'presumed innocent' naturally evoke the right tones in narration, even from a general sense. Closely linked to this is the domestic experience of asking a child to relay an event. The child is likely to supply all details to the chagrin of adults. Using this simple analogy, it is apt to suggest that child narration in fiction confers a form of authenticity on the thematic thrusts of the novels concerned. Added to this is the fact that, as first hand victims whose formative years are devastated by the vicissitudes of survival, children are strategic narrative vehicles. This supports the position of Seraphinoff (2007) that:

A child narrator can, among other things, create a degree of distance between the adult author and his or her message that serves to lessen hostility to that message. Readers tend to be more accepting of a child rather than an adult who gives voice to certain uncomfortable or controversial truths (2).

It should be stated that the child in African cultural sensibility is not necessarily an infant. In fact, childhood in Africa extends to the late teens. The configuration of a child in African culture, and specifically, Nigeria, the immediate setting of the novel, relates generally to a degree of dependency; or as someone who is still under the protective custody of parents. This is represented in a saying among the Yoruba, that '*omo ki i dagba loju obi re*' (a child would always remain a child to the parents). Hence, the child narrators in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and

Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come* are typically children even as teenagers. In strict economic consideration, a child is actually a dependant ward. Child narration shall be examined not as mere narrative technique but as an emerging device in contemporary Nigerian fiction.

Children as Voices of Reason

There is a strong relationship between a story and who tells it. In other words, narrative techniques give a work of fiction the necessary bite to function and deepens thematic agenda, since, in Yousaf's (2003) words: 'narrative techniques form an important aspect of the novel as they play a vital role in making the novel interesting and coherent' (1). Critical attention has been devoted to the concept of child in contemporary fiction. Much of these studies however focus on the child as hero (Nwokora, 2003; Olufunwa, 2008; Serapinnoff, 2007). Olufunwa (2008) contends:

The young person is, more often than not, the character chosen by Nigerian novelists to portray the loneliness, rebellion and alienation that are attendant upon social change. This cannot but be so. Young people occupy a very special place in African society and no literary depiction of society or the processes, manifestations and effects of social change can be considered complete without reference to them (81).

The critical contention above can well be justified by the fact that, as a fall-out of post-independence crisis in the Nigerian nation state, the crisis have a direct consequence on the children and youth, given the understanding vulnerability. In terms of poverty, low standard of living and low quality of life, children are obvious victims of a society that unleashes terror and pain. This makes the position of Nwokora (2003) on the use of the child hero that, 'the unreasoning attitude of the child, with whom the author often identifies himself, helps to rub off the sharp edge of the cruel

experiences narrated in the book' (21) quite apt. Child narration adopted in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Everything Good Will Come* apart from clearly positioning them as Bildungsmans, also contributes to the enduring brilliance of the novels. It should be noted that the pungency of narrative techniques in the two novels has a bearing on the thematic progression. The themes in the texts come across readily as views from credible sources. As stated by Seraphinoff (2007) the significance of child narrators lies in its 'special usefulness, particularly for the way it evokes sympathy for the suffering of the innocent' (3). The critic observes further:

But his five year old narrator evokes a different response from readers, tapping universal wells of sympathy for the child-like and innocent. This crafting of a sympathetic child as main character begins on the opening page of the book. At the same time, readers get a taste of the factual, documentary account of a village caught up in the tragic events of the civil war. Discerning readers will understand that the five year old narrator is a figure of literary invention, that his narration is the literary product of the adult researcher, organizer and arranger of this story, masterfully crafted so that readers will fall under the spell of the stream of consciousness immediacy of the five year old boy's narration (*ibid*).

The above critical position is very true of the textual references of this study. This is because the novelists' craft is evidently foregrounded in the leveraging of child narration technique. Enitan in *Everything Good Will Come* and Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* are therefore the archetypes of the child narrator captured above. Romano, Meaney, Rohr, & Sullivan, (1999) in their analysis of Sandra Cisneros's *The House on the Mango*, however, explore both the advantages and disadvantages of the use of child narrators. The critics elaborate on the advantages:

The pro's of using a child narrator are plentiful. One such pro is a "cuteness" quality... uses this aspect to appeal to her audience and make the understanding of the novel a little easier. Not only does the reader remain interested in

the story, but the details help in clear visualization. (Romano *et al*, 17)

Also, (*the narrators'*) innocence plays a large role in her interpretation of the events in her life. The fact that she is so young and innocent cannot reveal to us what the reality of the situation is.

Having a child narrator adds a sense of immediacy to the novel. With the narrator being a child it puts us right into the story. This perspective of narration sets the mood for the book. As we read, we tend to feel the same as (the narrator) does during a given situation. For example if she feels confused because of something that happens because of her lack of writing skills and ability to write as an adult we may not understand what is going on either which would confuse us, as well as her. (Romano *et al*, 19)

Their expatiation on the disadvantages is instructive:

Having a child narrator, however, is not completely beneficial. The way Cisneros skips around from story to story can confuse the reader or make the novel seem disjointed. It is hard to keep track of all the people she describes because one gets the feeling that there is a new one every chapter. As a young child she gets excited and rambles on about whatever is on her mind, so something may be mentioned, but she may neglect to ever mention it again. Another disadvantage of the child narrator is that she comes off as naïve and non-comprehending. (Romano *et al*, 22)

From the viewpoint above, it is doubtful if Enitan and Kambili in *Everything Good Will Come* and *Purple Hibiscus*, respectively can be stereotyped with Esperanza, the child narrator in Sandra Cisneros's *The House on the Mango*. This is however a sound critical caveat, as characters, as literary representation of human beings, could occasionally be prone to excesses. In contemporary Nigerian fiction, Azaro, the liminal child narrator in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* stands clearly as a precursor in the deployment of child narration technique. Understandably, this aspect of Okri's has not enjoyed much focus like the magical realism aesthetics. (Moses, 2003), and intertextuality (Ogunsanwo, 1995) .In effect, exploring child narration as a device for

thematic projection is in itself as attempt at marrying the elements of characterization and narrative technique.

Similar character traits in Enitan and Kambili in *Everything Good Will Come* and *Purple Hibiscus*, respectively, show the psychological state of the child heroes. Actually, the children are still forming their personalities especially in Freudian id and ego consideration analysis. Robert Mollinger (1981) rightly reveals that, 'there is a search for patterns of behaviour, unconscious motivations and in general the typical way the person relates to himself and others' (12). Also, the realism in the two novels is a further credence to the heritage of African literature, which is essentially functional and committed. (Ojaide and Obi, 2004). This is what Kahari (1982) probably tries to convey in his depiction of realism as an artistic mode that the mode of narrative is very important. The critic believes that "this generalization of reality assumes a universality which is immediately governed by two polarized impulses, the aesthetic and the intellectual; that is, the desire for formal organization and the desire for verisimilitude." (3) Kahari's contention is relevant and points to the heavy reliance of fiction in African imagination on the context of production as well as the manipulation of same. This is in alignment with Sembene Ousmane (1964) who believes in the task of the writer to put reality into words "as it is". In his words:

The African writer must stand in the midst of society and at the same time observe this reality from the outside. . . I participate in the developments of society and note these. I am a fighter, I know what I want to change in society and this facilitates my work as a writer. (1)

Therefore, in the bid to engage history and actively participate in the historicizing processes, African literature evolves specific strategies aimed at facilitating the execution of these tasks. Such is child narration as a device in

narrating the realities of post-independence Nigerian society, which Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come* exemplify.

Dislocation as Catalyst of Self-Affirmation

At the heart of socialization for the child, the home plays an important role. In fact, the way a child is brought up determines how the child turns out. Hence, the home front is the first port of call when there is need to assess social degeneration and collapse of values. In addition, a child bears the true semblance of the home. The way a child sees the world depends on the experience at home. Enitan, in the opening lines of *Everything Good Will Come*, attests: "from the beginning I believed whatever I was told, downright lies even, about how best to behave, although I had my own inclinations" (Attah, 11). This ultimately challenges the assumption that the child is not mindful of what is going on around her.

The dislocation of family values as well the obvious disenchantment in the worldview of the two novels not only bears true allegiance to the postcolonial realities, but it is also reinforced by the narrative mode. In this respect, Enitan grows up to see a family lacking in love and cohesion as evident in the incessant altercations between her parents. Here is a union where the husband and wife operate on parallel principles, divided in faith, and non-aligned on most issues. The scenario breeds a confused child, who relies on outer-consolation based on 'warped epistemology', courtesy of Sheri. As Enitan steps out into the world, confusion and lack of direction take over her world. Similarly, the terror unleashed on the household by Eugene in *Purple Hibiscus*, in the name of principles and religious high-handedness, produce wards that never enjoy the bliss of the home. For the children – Jaja and Kambili, home is no better than a detention camp, ruled by a Eugene, the high-handed

hypocritical father. Instances of domestic violence and wife battery are proved in this regard. As such, deviance and protest become the hallmark of the children's disposition from childhood. In fact, Kambili's psyche is relegated to perpetual silence, and she hardly expresses herself. This is why she could hardly cope with the strength of will of Amaka, on their visit to Enugu. This goes a long way to show that the child-narrative strategy employed by Adichie affords an opportunity of a panoramic view of the disconnect in Eugene's family.

From the above, it is appropriate to draw a link between the child-narrative technique of the two novels in relation to the thematic concerns on the one hand, and the literary vision of the novelists on the other. This is with a view to making definite statements on the contribution of the child narrators to the overall pursuit of the novelists' ideological leanings. What Enitan and Kambili seem to share as affinities from the outset is domestic suppression. These are two young girls who yearn for exposure and benefit the readers of an opportunity to appreciate their environment from the point of view of an all-seeing omniscient observer. Apart from the fact that they are both girls, they are also protected and shielded from socio-historical realities around them. However, they wriggle out of the stereotyping to be the voice of commitment. It should be stressed that the contemporary African novelist is preoccupied with an unrelenting passion for socio-political reengineering. This becomes particularly imperative in view of the disappointments of the ruling class, following independence.

Therefore, it has become an imperative for contemporary African, and indeed Nigerian fiction, to carry the burden of refraction, rather than reflection, of socio-economic woes. This becomes pertinently foregrounded given the fresh challenges of third-world societies, which continue to ravage the lots of the people. As Kehinde

(2005) explains: “a study of any writer may tend to be defective if an attempt is not made to locate his/her major thematic concerns within the totality of the history of his society. This is more pertinent when a discussion of an African writer is embarked upon.” (224). In this regard, the larger socio-political issues addressed by Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and Sefi Attah’s *Everything Good Will Come*, ensure the novelists are true to their calling as committed African writers. Actually, the domestic strain in the two novels is merely a statement that the home, being the smallest unit of the society, is under threat of extinction, just as the larger society contends with issues of post-independence decadence.

The decline of values and infrastructural decay replete in the enabling society require succinct and pungent thematic explorations to pass the messages. Hama Tuma (2002) states that “Today, Africa is in a deeper mess. Deprived of its sovereignty, ruled by kleptocrats who have mortgaged its future to the World Bank and the IMF, ravaged by maladies ranging from malaria to AIDS humiliated and plundered, Africa is in a dire state.” (1). This simply implies that, in thematising these realities, writers must create a connection in their works with the state of affairs. One clear way of doing this is through narrative techniques which convey the situation as emotive as possible. Using child narration is clearly a brilliant way of using a child’s testimonial to show the extent of the rot. In fact, just like in actual war or conflict situations, the vulnerable population of women and children are usually confounding. Here is where the literary dexterity of Chimamanda Adichie and Sefi Attah is most glaring – Kambili and Enitan in *Purple Hibiscus* and *Everything Good Will Come*, respectively are both gender and demographic figures through whom the socio-economic woes of the society are visibly shown.

In essence, the home-front provides a platform for launching into the dissonance of the outside world. Enitan and Kambili as the omniscient child narrators in *Everything Good Will Come* and *Purple Hibiscus* respectively captivate the mind, with the accounts of their domestic circumstances. The situation suggests that rather than growing up amidst love and parental pampering, the child heroes encounter suppression and dehumanization. The family thus becomes a negative setting where the children suffer untold psychological trauma. They are actually made to suffer in silence. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili intones: ‘I wanted to tell the girl that it was all my hair, that there were no attachments, but the words would not come (141). Jaja and Kambili are like outcasts, and this clearly manifests when they visit Nsukka and where the duo could not fit in into the midst of others. As Andree Greene (2007) rightly observes:

Throughout the novel, Adichie creates a mood of surveillance, repression, silence, and swallowed voices at every societal level. The only respite is at the house of Kambili’s paternal aunt, Ifeoma, where Kambili begins to learn to voice her opinions and desires, and question, first privately and then openly, the values she’s been raised with.(1)

The point being made is that by deploying the characters whose experiences are being thematised as narrators, the novelists constructs the setting of the home as the agent of social dislocation. This also goes to show that the post-independence decadence is not an issue which manifests in the society as a whole, but one which is deeply rooted is the disintegration of the family. Adichie and Attah therefore deploy their artistry to effectively engage the apparent realities of post-independence disillusionment and socio-historical fragmentation, which Kehinde (2005) refers to as the theme of “postcolonial betrayal” that has become “a common motif affirms as a “common motif in contemporary African literature”. In his words:

The writers imaginatively chronicle numerous abuses to which the African masses have been subjected. To a great extent, the postcolonial African writers prioritize dystopian fiction. They depict their continent as a society characterized by human misery, such as squalor, oppression, diseases and overcrowding. In fact, the writers have a sensitive perception of a world of desolation, alienation, hopelessness, insecurity and the like. This is a worthwhile venture because creative writing can serve as a form of therapy against the frustration of living in our troubled neo-colonial societies (226).

One may infer from the above that in projecting the misery and frustrations of the self, especially in postcolonial settings like Nigeria, Sefi Attah and Chimamanda Adichie elicit sympathy with their choice of narrative techniques. In other words, child narration in the two novels becomes a device of engaging post-colonial angst, deeper than the conventional use of narrative technique as a literary device.

Paradox of Being in *Purple Hibiscus*

The socio-political temperament in *Purple Hibiscus* has an ironic dimension. The novel's treatment of satire and social lampoon, evinces the hypocritical posturing of human beings. As Eugene, Kambili's father instantiates, it is inconceivable how a man can expect to thrive as a dual personality. This is in a sense the way Adichie casts the character of Eugene. For a man whose conduct at home is tyrannical to be a self-confessed democrat leaves much to be desired. This is because if indeed he believes in the ideals of freedom and human rights, his home naturally ought to be a model of such. As the one sole financier of *The Standard* and the fiery journalist, Ade Coker, it is inconceivable that he will descend so low to domestic violence, as represented in wife battery as well as child suppression. In other words, Eugene's domestic oppression beclouds his pro-democracy posturing in the larger society.

More pertinently, Eugene's hypocrisy is clearly demonstrated through Adichie's child narration. One feels the pain of Kambili as she and Jaja struggle through existence, under Eugene's high-handedness. The point is that Kambili's voice is piercing and revealing. She provides a platform for appreciating the agony of domestic violence. She assumes the voice of the voiceless, ably represented by her mother, and Papa Unuku, the grandfather. It follows therefore that the child narrative technique is a vista of thematic exploration. One contends that, the crisis in *Purple Hibiscus* is adequately orchestrated through the child narrative mode adopted.

To put the argument in perspective, one is of the opinion that the various thematic preoccupations of *Purple Hibiscus* are firmly rooted in the child narrator's ability to capture the experiences effectively. For example, in describing the infrastructural decay at the University quarters where Aunty Ifeoma lives, Kambili's words evoke a string of ironic comparisons which subtly capture the low quality of life in the University community, "we came to a tall bland building with peeling blue paint" (112). The crux of the description lies in the words 'bland' and 'peeling' which indicate neglect. Also, in describing the interior of Aunty Ifeoma's house, Kambili reveals:

...as we entered the sitting room, I noticed the ceiling first, how low it was. I felt I could reach out and touch it; it was unlike home, where the high ceilings gave our rooms an airy stillness... the seams of the cushions were frayed and slipping apart (Adichie, 114).

The description above clearly suggests poverty and abandonment, and it is a subtle commentary on the state of education and public institutions in the country. As shown below, Kambili depicts anti-press policies, freedom, a litany of press victimization and corruption in high places:

I imagined Ade Coker being pulled out of his car, being squashed into another car, perhaps a black station wagon

filled with soldiers, their guns hanging out of the windows. I imagine his hands quivering with fear, a wet patch spreading on his trousers. I knew his arrest was because of the big cover story in the last Standard, a story about how the head of state and his wife had paid people to transport heroin abroad, a story that questioned the recent execution of three men and who the real drug barons were (Adichie, 38).

One can see in the novel's first-person narrator, Kambili, the child heroine who is also the narrative voice, a deliberate self-asserting ethos. Her name, Kambili, which means "Let me be" or "Let me choose my life" therefore becomes the centripetal force through which she navigates the quest of autonomy and self-direction, not only for herself, but also for a family and a country as a whole. This is an optimistic statement for her challenging and devastating location in Nigeria's troubled society. The novel therefore reinforces the postcolonial literary tradition by attempting to dismantle the patriarchal order represented in the lingering cultural struggles with colonial values. It is also obvious that the characters of that tradition, represented by Eugene are often transformed or destroyed by the recognition of their colonized consciousness.

Therefore, the use of child narration assists the novelist in Adichie to explore the postcolonial challenge through her thematising of violence in the family of Eugene Achike. Eugene as a fictional archetype thus represents, from his Catholic middle-class vantage point, the remnants of the old-school colonial education, and s Western ideas that consistently devalue traditional Igbo culture and experience. The high-handed Eugene furthers patriarchy through the physical and psychological terrorism he unleashes on his family members. Notwithstanding this, he deploys his resources to promote the struggle in the larger community. This is one clear way of exposing humanistic hypocrisy and pretensions in *Purple Hibiscus*. This

clearly reveals the factors that thwart the desire for self-actualisation by Kambili. Adichie therefore delineates the forces which influence her characters and the choices they are conditioned to make. Though the characters are representations of the social hierarchy, they are unable to blossom.

Chimamanda Adichie therefore deploys child-narration to enact moods of repression, silence, and suppressed voices in her novelistic milieu. With Ifeoma as the only visible respite, and her home in Nsukka a get-away, Kambili's voice in the physically is gradually discovered, while the child narration becomes piercing and affirmative. The character soon discovers her innate qualities and rights to liberty, identity and emotions. The temporary hope through Ifeoma, a progressive university Professor, however does not last. She was forced to immigrate to the United States as a result of larger issues in the country. However, she leaves Kambili with ideals of feminism and a consciousness of the realities of post-independence Nigerian society, where intellectuals, artists, writers, and other progressive figures are forced out in a bid to escape political persecution.

Travails and Triumphs of a Wandering Soul in *Everything Good Will Come*

Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come* is a bildungsroman that follows the development of two girls Enitan and Sheri. Just like in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, where "things fall apart" on a particular day, on "the third Sunday of September . . . everything changed" (12). The meeting between Enitan and Sheri, which was later to result in a chain of events, culminating of course in Sheri's rape in the park ; and which later metamorphosed into full blown relationship as both girls advance to womanhood. Sheri, infertile as a result of self-aborting the pregnancy that ensued, equates to the childless woman of earlier women's fiction. But where this has

hitherto been seen as a tragic loss recuperable only by the woman dedicating herself to a powerful goddess (*Efuru*), or persuading her husband to have tests (*Behind the Clouds*), here it is not only irrevocable but incontrovertibly the fault of male perpetrators. While Enitan struggles to realise herself within marriage, Sheri unashamedly becomes the mistress of a powerful man who doesn't require her to have children. Both find the strength to change their condition, though not before Enitan had asked herself some hard questions and articulated her conclusions:

I'd seen the metamorphosis of women, how age slowed their walks, stilled their expressions, softened their voices, distorted what came out of their mouths. They hid their discontent so that other women wouldn't deprive them of it. By the time they came of age, millions of personalities were channeled into about three prototypes: strong and silent, chatterbox but cheerful, weak and kindhearted. All the rest were known as horrible women. I wanted to tell everyone, 'I! Am! Not! Satisfied with these options! (200)

In spite of discontent and disillusion, the tone of the novel is upbeat and joyful, so energized as to be infectious. Atta's dialogue is witty and plangent, the narrative pace quick, inner and outer worlds interwoven through the sheer juxtaposition of events, told through a series of aphorisms—proverbial wisdom as smart-ass storytelling. The novel ends with a reversal that fundamentally rewrites the script of Nigerian pessimism, the lament for the “*abiku* country.” Enitan, rejoicing at her father's release from detention, dances at the side of the road, attracting the attention of a *danfo* driver. When he reprimands her: “Nothing good will come to you!” she turns the pidgin curse back on him: “Tell him, *a da*. It will be good. Everything good will come to me” (335). To appreciate how much this is a statement of faith and a refusal of despair, we have to keep step with Enitan as she traverses Nigeria's post-Independence history in its entirety. Born at Independence, she is seven at the outbreak of the Civil War, and all subsequent events in her personal life are

shadowed by the disruptions and upheavals in the body politic, so that her experiences are throughout a jumping off point for pithy comments on the state of the nation. The Civil War, however, though a foundational crisis, remains shadowy and tangential, and though Enitan is aware of its importance, she also confesses to ignorance. Though her father talks about his friend, Uncle Alex, “how he’d known beforehand there would be a civil war; how he’d joined the Biafrans and died fighting for them even though he hated guns” (10), it is only much later, when she had an Igbo lover, that Enitan acknowledges the gap in her understanding:

It was terrible that we’d had different experiences of the Civil War. In university, I finally acknowledged the holocaust that was Biafra, through memoirs and history books, and pictures of limbless people; children with their stomachs bloated from kwashiorkor and their rib cages as thin as leaf veins [. . .] atrocities of the human spirit that only a civil war could generate, while in Lagos we had carried on as though it were happening in a different country (86).

In Sefi Attah’s *Everything Good Will Come*, Enitan, her child narrator, seems to share her boredom and frustrations with the reader. She opens up:

It wasn’t that I had big dreams of catching fish. They wriggled too much and I couldn’t imagine watching another living being suffocate. But my parents had occupied everywhere else with their fallings out; their trespasses unforgivable. Walls could not save me from the shouting. A pillow, if I stuffed my head under it, could not save me ... (Attah, 12).

Such is the state of mind of Enitan as she journeys through life to face more bitterness and stronger hostilities. In this psychological state, Enitan becomes the searchlight to engage societal ills and human bestiality:

... road blocks had been set up, as they always were after a military coup. Cars slowed as they approached them and pedestrians moved quietly...The soldiers jeered and lashed at cars with horsewhips...A driver pulled over too late.

Half the soldiers jumped down from the truck and dragged him out of his car. They started slapping him. The driver's hands went on to plead for mercy. They flogged him with horsewhips (Attah, 71- 72).

Enitan becomes a recluse as a result of the state of her home. She narrates, with bite, issues ranging from breakdown of family, adultery, rape and peer pressure. Finding her voice becomes a necessity: "Then I watched the beating feeling some assurance that our world was uniformly terrible" (72). She acts in consonance with Zoe Norridge's (2005) contention that "African literature is suffused with pain narratives. From depictions of the horrors of colonial occupation to accounts of ongoing poverty and health inequalities, both mental and physical suffering remains a constant theme." (1). This is directly related to the dehumanizing experience of the characters in Sefi Attah's novel. Throughout the novels, the ravaging effect of human frustration is depicted especially in the life of Enitan's mother whose experience in marriage contributes to her untimely demise. In fact, this is also depicted in the distresses of Enitan as a result of cycle of failed relationships.

Transcending Post-Independence Disillusionment

It could be seen therefore that child narration reveals the frustrations of Enitan and Kambili in their respective novelistic universe. Frustration and depression certainly unite the characters who are obviously victims of domestic negative realities as pronounced in their dislocated and unfriendly family settings. As beings who seek positive self assertion, they are compelled to fashion out an escape. In fact, in *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie draws attention to this fact in a graphic way by illustrating the actual circumstances of the enabling society, where Greene (2007) observes "Again, hope collides with the facts of contemporary African life, and intellectuals,

artists, writers, and dissidents leave their countries to earn a living or avoid political persecution” (1) . In this scenario, the options available for victims are not many as the society frustrates attempts at positive self-assertion. This is the case with Aunt Ifeoma, who is eventually forced to emigrate to the United States.

The reality of existence above is visible in *Everything Good Will Come*. For Enitan, the option is daring and somewhat confounding .The decision to walk away from her marriage and home to become an advocate of women prisoners is a bold move. Enitan damns the consequences:

When people speak of turning points in their lives, it makes me wonder...Before this, I had opportunities to take action, only to end up behaving in ways I was accustomed ,courting the same old frustrations because I was sure I would feel: wronged, helpless...(Attah,323).

This moment of liberation in *Everything Good Will Come* marks a turning-point for Enitan. One shares her pain and approves of the need for her to make a bold move to halt the anomaly. With her mother dead and father incarcerated, she decides to assert her will baring all odds:

Here it is: changes came after I made them, each one small. I walked up a stair. Easy. I took off a headtie. Very easy. I packed a suitcase, carried it downstairs, put it in my car...My husband asked why I was leaving him. I have to, I replied. (Attah, 323).

From a cultural standpoint, abdicating her marriage may signpost a negative development as Enitan’s action is antithetical to the expectations of the society. Her action is justified given what she has passed through from childhood. As is made evident in the narrative voice, the travails have indeed become unbearable with the character reaching her wits’ end. If Enitan in *Everything Good Will Come* sacrifices her home and marriage to achieve her desire to be free and pursue her passion of

social crusade, the situation in *Purple Hibiscus* seems scary. It certainly may not be a feminist strategy to commit murder. The fact that Beatrice, Eugene's wife, could resort to the dastardly act of murder of her own husband raises vital questions on Adichie's feminist ideology, reminiscent of Nawal el Saadawi's *The Woman at Point Zero*. Like Enitan in *Everything Good Will Come*, there is a compelling reason for challenging patriarchy and gaining true liberation, but it is unlikely that violence, which the murder of Eugene symbolizes, is a viable option. It is doubtful if murder is the solution to Eugene's domestic tyranny. This is because the poisoning of Eugene eventually shatters the home. It leaves, Eugene dead, Jaja behind bars and Beatrice a psychological wreck. However, the action merely shows that the self has the capacity to be decisive and must not be undermined. Violence eventually becomes, at both domestic and public levels, the only path to social change and liberation. This is what the action of Kambili's mother secretly poisoning her father and a newspaper colleague is murdered, both typify. However, one hardly finds this as hope, but rather, the challenge is how not to inspire social and domestic disintegration through violence. One suspects that this resolution by Adichie, is another deliberate attempt at foregrounding the limitation of the child narration. Beatrice's victory appears pyrrhic, and in fact, to agree with Tunca (2009,14), that " If Kambili has indisputably developed a form of resistance against Eugene, her quest for independence nevertheless remains an ambiguous one."

This chapter draws a link between the child narration technique deployed in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Sefi Attah *Everything Good Will Come*, and how this serves as a device used to engage post-independence disenchantment in the universe of the novels. This lends credence to the view of Dawes (2005) on

Purple Hibiscus, which is also true to a very large extent of *Everything Good Will Come*, that:

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's voice in her debut novel, *Purple Hibiscus*, is a quiet one. She tells her story with something akin to the psychological disinterest of a deeply traumatized person who has cultivated the skill to seem calm as a way of holding back the emotional collapse that appears on the verge of consuming her. This, of course, is no accident. The narrator, Kambili, is a teenage Nigerian girl... (3).

This chapter further reinstates the dynamic capacity of the contemporary Nigerian writer of the third-generation as clearly manifested in the continued evolution of techniques and strategies that combine to engage the divergent subject matter of the enabling milieu, as instantiated in the use of child narration in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come*. It is, therefore, contended that the empathy generated through the use of child narration is a unique contribution of the two novels to third-generation Nigerian fiction.

CHAPTER FOUR

NARRATING (UNDER) DEVELOPMENT IN OKEY NDIBE'S *ARROWS OF RAIN* AND ADAOBI TRICIA NWAUBANI'S *I DO NOT COME TO YOU BY CHANCE*.

This chapter examines the strategy of post-independence engagement deployed in Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* and Adobi Tricia's Nwaunabi's *I Do Not Come To You By Chance*. This is with a view to situating the thematic and ideological concerns of the two novels within the development fiction paradigm as advocated by Lewis (2008) in *The Fiction of Development: Literary Representation as a Source of Authoritative Knowledge*. According to him, development fiction concerns "the potential contribution that works of literary fiction can make to development". (3) This more or less mean the search for an alternative platform for development discourse. It also derives from the relationship between the social sciences and humanities, which is concerned primarily with development and literary representations, which mirror society. In other words, development fiction as a paradigm of engagement seeks a common ground between the humanities and social sciences. Put differently, development fiction hybridises between empirical disciplines and the liberal arts. In fact, Barbara Czarniawska-Joerges (1992) sees the relationship as relative and complimentary. In her words:

... that one is fiction and the other is non-fiction: the basis for telling the story is different. However, this is relative. There are many writers who use factual events for their novels and many social scientists who use fictitious reality to illustrate their theses... The second is that social scientists are obliged to be systematic, that is, to demonstrate a method, which is also relative. Writers often have a very systematic method...(218).

In the above connection, the selected novels serve as canvass for relating the concept of development fiction as a paradigm of socio-historical engagement. The

essence of this is to show that not only is African literature a dynamic site for expression and representation, it is also a willing agent of globalisation and its inherent dynamics. Before dwelling further on the subject matter of development fiction as explicated in the textual references, there is need to put the African creative enterprise in proper perspective. As rightly noted by Bonnici (2004):

Post-colonial African writing comprises a strong reaction against negative stereotypes constructed during the colonial period. African writers had to dismantle myths of African inferiority, assert African cultures, combat the apartheid regime in South Africa and criticize corruption in Kenya and Nigeria. The Nigerians Amos Tutuola, Cyprian Ekwensi, Chinua Achebe, Ben Okri and Wole Soyinka, Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Zimbabwean Tsitsi Dangarembga are extremely popular and have gained international recognition.(1)

Essentially, post-independence Nigerian fiction is taken to represent the corpus of African literature in this chapter. The reason for this seeming critical domestication stems from the similarity of the social-historical experiences of African nations generally. By this, one means, most African countries share affinities in their march towards nationhood. Specifically, most African nations have passed through phases of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories. These periods are also adequately reflected in the literature produced across the countries. Using Nigeria for example, the first generation of writing dominated by writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark was a period of cultural nationalism and quest for self-assertion. This was largely because of the erroneous images of colonial societies featured in western literatures especially Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Joyce Carys' *Mister Johnson*. The point is that the early African writing was a response to the misrepresentation of the self propagated by the writings that hitherto dominated the literary landscape.

The character of literary preoccupation of the independent African states exudes ego and optimism. This is a product of self-delusion of imagined grandeur following independence. Most African writers however woke from this false *Eldorado* in the wake of independence. Hence, the transition from the precolonial to neo-colonial. Instead of white masters, African societies became victims of neo-colonial agents who took over from the colonialists and rather than offer succor and hope, shattered the hopes and aspirations of independence, leaving their societies in perpetual despair and underdevelopment. This post-colonial woe naturally becomes the thematic preoccupations of writers across the continent. Notable works like Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*, Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Weep Not Child*, Wole Soyinka's *The Man Died* in Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria respectively. Interestingly, the succeeding generation responded more vehemently to this challenge of social engagement and politically-motivated writings with writers actively offering revolutionary alternatives while also pursuing the agenda for change on several fronts- activism, literary journalism and creative writing. Examples from the second generation include Femi Osofisan, Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Kole Omotosho and Odia Ofeimun.

The point from the foregoing is that writing and writers in Africa have been conditioned from inception by the socio-historical realities of the enabling milieu. This is what Kehinde probably means by the statement: "African writers have an enduring propensity for social and political commitment. (2004, 1) .One agrees with the reason the critic adduces for this tendency by African writers. He explains that:

Their texts mostly reflect and refract the socio-political events in their societies. Initially, African literature was a tool for celebrating the heroic grandeur of the African past; later it was used for anti-colonial struggle. Presently, it is being employed as a veritable weapon for depicting the postcolonial disillusionment in African nations. Therefore,

African literature is always chained to the experiences of the peoples of the continent.

The poser from the above is therefore thus: how have post-independence Nigerian prose fiction writers responded to the challenges of development in the face of contemporary realities. How is this critical engagement exemplified in the thematic directions of Okey Ndibe's *Arrow's of Rain* and Adaobi Tricia Nwaobani's *I Do Not Come To You By Chance*. D Williams (1996) underscores the essence of underdevelopment in his submission that:

The crisis of governance and democratization in Africa has left a profound mark on its literature...African writers have played a crucial role in the political evolution of the continent, particularly in influencing the turbulent trajectory of the post-colonial state in Africa (349).

Repositioning Fiction for Development in The Twenty-first Century

African writers and critics actually share a common passion of commitment while at the same time foregrounding the writer as an agent of change through politically motivated writing. (Soyinka, 1967; Ezeigbo, 2002). Arguments for and against the mode of literature –utopian or dystopian literature, seem to have been tactically settled in favour of the former. The reason is not far-fetched- the heritage of African literature privileges functionalism whereby the oral artist is at the service of the society. Therefore, as worthy successors to the oral tradition, African writers continue to deepen the tradition of commitment in two major ways- fusing the elements of oral tradition in their works and using the oral aesthetics to narrate and eventually engage the realities of the milieu. The indubitable fact is that African writers have been involved in the process of political evolution, as a matter of

absolute necessity. Osundare (2007) observes:

So the writer by virtue of his ability to transcend quotidian reality, has a duty to relate not only how things are, but how they could or should be. He must not only lead the people to the top of the mountain and point out the Promised Land; he must also show them how to get there.

In fact, in the case of Nigerian literature, there is a resurgence of engagement as a motivation for the creative representations of the attendant woes of “post-military” realities in the Nigerian state. (Osofisan, 2004)

It must be stressed that the corpus of fictional representations of the Nigerian experience, especially in the wake of the twenty-first century, have been a total dedication to the issues of development and the consequences which have trailed same. To begin, of course with Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991), it is indubitable that through the creation of characters and scenarios, the writers are pragmatically focusing and satirizing the internal wrangling of the enabling Nigerian society. The point, therefore, is that literary representations have been faithful to socio-historical engagement by being essentially mindful to fresh challenges of development. Azaro, Dad (Black Tyger) and Madam Koto in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, are therefore characters who are products of a ravaged psychology occasioned by socio-historical denigration and dislocation of values in the society.

As a precursor and leading light of fictional literary representations of twentieth century Nigerian literature, Ben Okri refreshes, with mythopoetic bite, the social engagement agenda for writers who were to come after him. Okey Ndibe and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani are therefore writers who deepen the “Okrian” philosophy of mythic engagement through a conscious strategy of development fiction. They are

visible members of a new literary movement who combine a tradition with a vehemence of engagement and are mindful of development issues in their novels.

In *Arrows of Rain*, Okey Ndibe probes the vicissitudes of existence by playing up the travails of his characters. Through the use of multiple omniscient narrators, the novelist exposes the ills of the contemporary Nigerian society by touching on all facets of the society. The question of identity, as a vital and fundamental issue, is woven to interrogate the overall thematic agenda of social lampoon. However, Ndibe does not exonerate his characters from the rot as the characters are held responsible for their (mis)deeds. This holistic approach is clearly evident in the travails of Bukuru, the central character, who admits:

Whatever the complicated facts of biology might, I should have been that boy's father that day. I should have tried to save him – you – as a father would. Or any decent human being. But I didn't. I was too afraid of involvement in others' intimate pain. (247)

I know I am a man who ran away from duty and love...
(248)

Bukuru's confession and admission of guilt, above is significant as he externalize the fact that, leadership failure in the larger society has gone on for so long without people entrusted with positions taking responsibility. In effect, as an individual, Bukuru pays for his (in) actions; he is the character through which the rot of the Madian Nigerian society and the developmental lapses are adequately mirrored. Issues like dislocation of social mores, prostitution, corruption as well as decay of humanistic ethos are adequately foregrounded. Through the literary devices like flashback and occasional stream of consciousness, both of which are deliberately used as narrative interjections, for example, Ndibe uses the experiences Dr. Jaja to lampoon the hypocrisy of globalization through western education and how the pursuit of knowledge has been counterproductive:

I thought the truth lay in what the ancestors of Europe had to say. I searched for the matrix of Marx, the delusions of Descartes, the cant of Kant. I was drawn to Hegel's heresies, to the fraudulences of Freud. I dismissed my own patrimony as naïve, atavistic and inconsequential. I imagined all true wisdom existed in the tomes of Europe. I read them voraciously. Through them, I found eyes, but the key to seeing still eluded me. Yes, I harvested knowledge from Europe's soil but I found little wisdom in it (137).

Ndibe carpets the futility of epistemological advancement that is neither relevant to the domestic circumstances nor of any value in solving society's myriad of challenges. In fact, the paradox of globalization and the ensuing process of knowledge production in the contemporary society are vigorously criticised. The novelist seems to advocate that the relevance of the intelligentsia lies in the ability to properly distil tenets of globalization with a view to charting a positive path for the good of humanity. The point deducible is of what use is knowledge and technological boom when doom pervades the horizon? In other words, for the society to achieve the much sought and desired development, a new radical orientation that recognises the individuating capacities of constituent units is essential. This will then mean, for example, that the question of Madian's political structure can take a cue from a character who is paradoxically a beneficiary of the corruption of the Madian society. This is what Pa Mathew Ileka Ata, father of Reuben, the corrupt Madian minister offers: The sage pontificates:

'Can anything be done?' I asked. He sighed. Yes. First, we must ask ourselves, what is the identity of this space called Madia? Why does our present bear no marks of our past? What is the meaning of our history? These questions can only lead us to one truth, namely that we live in a bastard nation. Then we must decide what to do with this illegitimate offspring. The first step is to turn it into a

completely different nation. Not by means of violence but symbolically through our constitution (123).

The above admonition appears to be the novelist recipe for political reconstruction in the Nigerian milieu. The novelist offers an alternative to national dialogue with the foregoing. Clearly, the fictitious Madia is shown as a country without direction and total confusion.

The replacement of “Niger” with “Mad”, the word ‘mad’ connotes and evokes the writer’s negative perception about the essence of the Nigerian federation. The point is that Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain* participates in the socio-political discourse by offering a recipe for socio-political re-engineering. As such, this tendency to isolate specific issues of socio-economic development underscores the relevance of the novel as a fiction of development.

In addressing as well as engaging development issues in *Arrows of Rain*, Ndibe touches on every facet of the society. In a wider sense, the novel exemplifies the dynamic of fiction in the twenty-first century to not only represent literary enterprise, but also to show the close affinity third-generation Nigerian writers share with the problems of underdevelopment in their society. This fact adequately positions *Arrows* at the centre of developmental aspiration on all fronts. For illustration, the novelist humorously touches on the scourge of AIDS and other health challenges prevalent in the contemporary society. Femi Adero relates an experience in a public bus:

Then a rowdy contest for the passengers’ attention developed between a traveling medicine salesman and an itinerant preacher. The salesman’s wares included an antibiotic dubbed ‘No more sufferhead’ made by ‘Indian Medical wizards’ able to cure ‘bad spirit and witchcraft, eczema, crawcraw, gonorrhoea, syphilis, AIDS, watery sperm and dead penis. It sold briskly (14).

The simple sentence in the above excerpt: ‘it sold briskly’, clearly underscores the prevalence of the type of salesmen, the proliferation/infiltration of the ‘Indian Medical wizards’ and the kind of patronage enjoyed. This seems to point at the varieties of issues plaguing the society and the near absence of a viable solution which conditions people resorting to the obvious pseudo-medical solution painted above for both health and perceived metaphysical challenges. It clearly shows two major developmental gaps – the decay of public health infrastructure even in urban centres and the total absence of same in rural communities. Also, the scenario is indicative of the literacy level of the population who are hoodwinked into patronizing products that promise to solve all ailments. Of course, such claims defy medical logic.

Arrows of Rain therefore narrates the pain of existence experienced by people in the lowest rung of the Madia society. This further positions the novelist as voice and conscience of his society. Interestingly, the main thrust of the paradigm of development fiction actually takes into account the fact that works of fiction that address development issues deploy insight and comparative lens in isolating the critical areas of society begging for attention. In other words, Development Fiction as a paradigm enables a robust and creative approach to the issues raised. This aligns with the view expressed by Lewis (2008) that:

Many of the fictional accounts of development-related issues which exist reveal different sides to the experience of development to more formal literature, and may sometimes actually do a ‘better’ job in conveying complex understandings of development in certain respects. While fiction may not always be ‘reliable’ data in the sense of constituting a set of replicable or stable research findings, it may nevertheless be ‘valid’ knowledge in that it may be seen ‘to reflect an external reality’ (11)

In *Arrows of Rain*, Ndibe participates actively in gender discourse, second only to the satire on corruption and economic downturn of the Madian society. The plight of women in the novel eminently positions the novel as a treatise of development. This is seen in how the novelist exposes the prevalence of the issues of corruption and prostitution for which the ruling class which Isa Bello represents are criminally culpable. The paradox of this for developmental engagement lies in the fact that the people saddled with the responsibility of social reform are the very ones who are neck-deep in its continuous perpetration. Ndibe not only draws attention to this, he also laments the culture of silence by rape victims. *Arrows* extensively delves into rape and prostitution. For both anti-social issues, Bukuru laments: “my point is to show that women hardly report rapes cases to the police. The police cover up assaults on women. *I know.*” (38).

To further demonstrate that the issue of rape is a common occurrence begging for immediate attention, the novelist draws attention to the incessant rape experiences of Emilia (Iyese) in the hands of her “benefactor”, Isa Bello. The rapist in Isa Bello is also bestial and murderous, which accounts to his dehumanising treatment of the victim at each encounter before the Emilia’s eventual murder. The victim narrates:

He came with three men. They had daggers...The men pinned me to the bed. Then Isa stabbed my vagina with a dagger. I started bleeding. That’s when he entered me with his penis... It was like the stab of the knife, but more painful. As soon as I opened the door one of them grabbed me and covered my mouth. They pushed me down on the bed and forced apart my legs. Isa brought out his dagger and said he wanted to teach my vagina a lesson (166).

What is instructive and thought provoking is the way the above scenario elicits pity by the portraiture of Isa’s damnable and heinous act. What is more worrisome is the defeatism in the victims who refuse “to cry or beg” but who “silently begged death to

come and take me away”. The reality of this is that not only does rape exist in the Madian society; it is perpetrated by the high and mighty, under whatever guise.

Unfortunately, despite the centrality of the developmental issues of rape and prostitution in the novel, the characters seem overwhelmed and are obviously cold at stamping out the ill. In fact, the novelist confounds the mind further that: “There is a diplomatic dimension to the parties... ‘The ambassadors you see here will never send home a negative report about Madia. I made sure of that by giving them the most beautiful girls.’” (117). To appreciate the above point, though it is an indictment of the diplomatic corps, but also as a subtle admittance of the complicated nature of the issue at stake which is beyond borders and transcends nationalities. As a matter of fact, that Bukuru “used to think prostitution helped tourism, and that many tourists actively seek a bit of exotic native sex” (35), clearly indicates the fact that the act of prostitution and its patronage is a matter of transnational concern. It follows, therefore, that the novel acknowledges prostitution as a key negative development of the society. The novelist offers a way out through the admonition of Odogua’s grandmother:

You must always remember that you come from a line of speakers. Your grandfather was the town crier for all of Amawbia. Your own father could have succeeded him, but he grew up in the age of the Whiteman’s rule. So he went to the Whiteman’s country and learned to become a new kind of voice, one that was heard beyond Amawbia. Now you, a child of yesterday, have joined the line. You have begun to do what your father did and his father before him. What you scratch on paper can go and give a headache to a big man. You make powerful men stay awake at night.

Don’t fear any man, but fear lying. Remember this: a story that must be told never forgives silence. Speech is the mouth’s debt to a story (97).

It can be reasonably argued that Okey Ndibe's *Arrows* represents a critical statement on the relevance of fiction to development. In fact, the novel not only explicates the issues of development, it also offers viable insights for possible solution. This reinforces the fact that the twenty-first century Nigerian novel exudes transformational agenda within the purview of development, from where it draws thematic direction. Furthermore, through the construction of the plots as well as character portraiture, the novelist locates the experience of the ordinary citizen, in weaving his story. This implies that the satirical reverberations in the novel moves well beyond aestheticism to practical articulation that fits into developmental discourse.

New Generation, New Challenges in Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come To You By Chance*

In Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come To You By Chance*, development fiction as a paradigm of engagement assumes another dimension. In fact, *Arrows of Rain* finds a worthy ally in *I Do not Come To You By Chance*, the differentiating element being the strength of will of the central character of the latter, compared to the former. In fact, it can be argued that what Odogwu lacks in confidence and will, Kingsley possess in abundance. It is, therefore, apt to say that, while Ndibe's characterisation seems weak, given the fact the helplessness of the victims, Nwaubani's characters seem imbued with the creative drive and motivation to be assertive over their despicable situation.

It must be noted that Nwaubani's thematic direction tilts in the direction of transnational pursuits which seek to foreground the contemporary ill of internet fraud. The novelist chooses to emphasize a single subject matter with a view to manifesting

the consequences of a negative self-assertion of will. In allowing Kingsley to succumb to the irresistible offer of joining Cash Daddy's ring of fraudsters, Nwaubani actually confers some form of legitimacy on his decision. This is because apart from his deflated male ego which Ola's jilting instantiates, Kingsley suffers multiple frustrations. Caught in the web of unemployment even after graduating with flying colours, Kingsley, as Igbo tradition demands, fails as *opara* when he is unable to fend for his siblings and offer the much awaited succour to the family. The fact that his father falls ill further complicates Kingsley's predicament. and eventual illness and hospitalization. As a victim of socio-economic breakdown, Kingsley symbolizes unutilised potential and frustrated self. The psychoanalytical significance lies in the fact that the self appears toughened and conditioned for negative self-assertion. Afterall, the society pushes its citizens to religious defeatism and fanaticism. Kingsley witnesses a typical prayer session:

Brethren, let us pray for our government, that God will guide our leaders to make the right decisions...That every demon of corruption will be uprooted and we will have people in authority who will favour the cause of righteousness in Nigeria (50).

As can be seen in the above, the novelist acknowledges the fact that Nigeria lacks the right leadership and the society continues to groan under the yoke of corruption. However, this merely showcases the frustration of a people, many of whom are like Kingsley at their wits end. The religious scenario also reveals the trend of proliferation of churches and other religious organisation in Nigeria:

There must have been at least twenty different churches all holding services on the same street on this Sunday morning. Some were in garages, some were in flats, some were under tents erected at the side of buildings (49).

This in itself is a signpost of defeatism and self-delusion, as Kingsley himself would soon realize: “This was clearly the place where my problem would be solved” (57), he declares. Kingsley prefers to take his destiny in his hands since he believes “but these were dire times, Dire times require drastic measures” (49). This humours religious escapism, especially when Kingsley is compared to another character:

Somebody invited her to a church where she was assured that all her enemies would flee and all her troubles would cease. Believe it or not, my very own Aunty Dimma- the height of elegance and the essence of vanity had actually succumbed. Today, she was a bona-fide Bible quoting, hallelujah chanting, tongue talking Pentecostal Christian (49).

However, Kingsley chooses to exercise his will as an existentialist hero. He asserts his will, negatively to make meaning out of the void and restore, even temporarily, his human dignity. The novelist seems to be suggesting that sometimes a wrong foot may guarantee motion. It follows therefore that Nwaubani’s handling of transnational dimensions of underdevelopment in *I Do Not* can be located within the engagement strategy adopted by the central character. Notwithstanding this negative self-assertion of will by the central character, Kingsley and his alter ego, Boniface, the novelist is certainly not legitimising crime. Rather, in projecting a realistic picture of contemporary Nigerian society, she has chosen to be more factual than fiction. This is probably responsible for the direct use of real and identifiable names of Nigerian cities like Lagos, Owerri and Aba as well as countries elsewhere in the world. To comprehend and put this in context, the words of Kopt (2007) copiously echoing Chinua Achebe (1988), readily comes to mind:

Beyond this evaluation of the factual truth there is the dimension of what... Chinua Achebe analyzes as “the truth of fiction”. Achebe defines art as “man’s constant effort to create for himself a different order of reality from that which is given to him; an aspiration to provide himself

with a second handle on existence *through his imagination.*” Imagination, Achebe writes, is not opposed to the quest for historical truth but in fact constitutes a powerful tool for it. However, just like any tool it can be used in different ways. The crucial difference, he declares, is that “beneficent fiction” never pretends to be true but on the contrary remains conscious of being an act of mimesis. Thus it makes use of imagination as a form of empathy and a means of experience.

It can therefore be stated that Nwaubani’s stretches imagination to achieve the Achebean ‘truth of fiction’ discussed by Kopt above. Futhermore, the satiric tone of the novel bellies the development fiction agenda. By satirising the Nigerian society especially in the areas of infrastructural decay and moral degeneration, Nwaubani draws attention to the issues of underdevelopment. In fact, salient issues like the plight of pensioners who are denied access to a decent living after retirement in the society, as a result of poor policy making and weakness of the system which they served. Most of the pensioners can be categorized like Kingsley’s father. Kingsley laments:

My father had given the very best of his life to serving his people in the civil service. Today, retired and wasted, he had nothing to show for it. Except our rented, two bedroom ground-floor bungalow in Umuahia town. And the four – bedroom uncompleted bungalow in the village...But that dream of owning a home in the village had been relegated to the realms of ancient history when I gained admission to university (68).

The above also addresses the issues of dearth of housing and lack of access to education, especially to bright indigent student. In effect, Nwaubani uses characters’ plight in *I Do Not Come To You By Chance* to depict Nigeria’s several areas of backwardness. For instance, the novelist offers some insights to the unending traffic of Lagos, Nigeria’s commercial capital. The causes of the problem, the novelist imagines, include, “population explosion, insufficient mass transit, tokunbo vehicles going kaput, potholes in the roads, undisciplined drivers, random police checkpoints

and fuel queues (260)". The point is that the novelists uses literary lens to provide insights into the possible causes and solutions to the problem of traffic congestion in Lagos. These are clearly insights that development strategists, government and policy makers would find useful if, for instance, they are interested in tackling the traffic nightmare in Lagos metropolis. The point from the foregoing is that characters' experiences are deployed as canvass of inscription of development fiction paradigm in Nwaubani's novel. This finds justification in the postulation of Rukszo (1997:151) that:

The social narrative produces meaning by appealing to its subject though its representations. The narrative is both a participant in and a product of historical and social relations. It allows individuals to see themselves in stories about their social/historical context.

Hence, as a fiction of development, *I Do Not Come To You By Chance* addresses issues of pertinent social and economic significance. Further example is evident in the issue of migration and the clamour for greener pastures abroad by desperate Nigerian citizens. The novelist ridicules this as shadow chasing and meaningless utopia quest. Through a book titled *From Morocco to Spain in 80 Days* on the subject matter, the society's attention is drawn to the futility of fleeing abroad and the frustrations inherent in such ventures:

I had heard of several Nigerians ready to risk wind and limb by making this treacherous journey across the desert in search of greener pastures. Some died or were arrested along the way; some were captured and kept in detention camps the moment they arrived. (297)

The writer's position on this is very clear. All it takes for Nigeria to be a better place is the political will and selflessness on the part of the leadership. Another instance which portrays the socio-historical milieu as an active member of the global community is the assassination of Boniface Mbamalu. The swiftness with which the

Metropolitan Police were invited into the investigation is a pointer of this fact. The novelist deliberately contrasts this with what obtains in the Nigerian security system. This is obvious in the sarcastic remark:” Not because our police officers are not capable of handling, but right now, we lack the required forensic facilities for the successful investigation of these assassination cases”(325).

The point has been made that the development minded writer in *I Do Not Come To You By Chance* adequately contributes to narrating contemporary ills that have transnational dimensions. The impression the novelist has created in redeeming Kingsley Ibe is certainly worrisome. This is because, under whatever guise, deprivation and poverty cannot be excuses for crime. Otherwise, the whole intention of satire and socio-historical lampoon would be laughable. Nevertheless however, the novelist by and large succeeds in creating awareness and raising consciousness about internet fraud, a form of counter-culture that seems to be negating the innumerable advantages of the internet revolution as well as the information age.

The capacity of fiction as a vehicle for development fiction has been discussed in this chapter. It has been shown that development fiction deepens the tradition of socio-historical commitment in African literature. This provides a viable pathway for using literature to drive change. It has been stated that the issue of development is central to the thematic directions of twenty-first century Nigerian fiction. As shown in Okey Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain* and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani’s *I Do Not Come To You By Chance*, contemporary literary representation is an essential ally to highlight and narrate issues of under/development.

As a means of furthering the developmental concerns, especially in the globalised world, this chapter has analysed the manifestation of development fiction as a paradigm of engagement in Okey Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain* and Adaobi Tricia

Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come To You By Chance*. Since literary representations are global assets that could be replicated in different climes, it has been suggested that there is an inherent binding force which connects development fiction as a paradigm for addressing issues affecting human societies. The overall impression from this chapter can be located in the contention of the proponents of fiction as a paradigm for development. Lewis (2008) contends that:

Indeed, fiction is arguably to a large extent frequently about the very issues that at a basic level are the subject matter of development studies: the promises and perils of encounters between different peoples; the tragic mix of courage, desperation, humour, and deprivation characterizing the lives of the downtrodden; and the complex assortment of means, motives, and opportunities surrounding efforts by outsiders to 'help' them. (5)

The fiction of the twenty-first century is one of socio-historical exploration. Third-generation Nigerian writers discussed in this chapter identify with the peculiarities of the age and participate actively in developmental discourse. By so doing, they further enrich the corpus of African literature as one committed to social ends. It is clear and indubitable that the milieu of artistic and literary consciousness has engendered a corpus that is devoted and dedicated to its upliftment.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PARADIGM OF QUEST FOR JUSTICE IN BINA ILAGHA'S *CONDOLENCES* AND HELON HABILA'S *WAITING FOR AN ANGEL*

This chapter interrogates the quest for justice as a post-independence engagement paradigm, using Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and Bina Ilagha's *Condolences* as textual references. Located mainly in the interdisciplinary discourse of law and literature, it is argued that, the quest for justice is motivated by a desire for exposing the ills and contradictions of the socio-historical realities in third-generation novels. The quest for justice paradigm therefore positions the interdisciplinary aesthetics of law and literature, with a view to exposing the injustice and breakdown of law and other in the society. The chapter is premised on the mission statement of the Law and Literature program at the University of Toronto, Canada. (available at http://www.law.utoronto.ca/visitors_content.asp):

Law is a part of culture. There are deep connections between legal procedures for resolving disputes, the kinds of harms that a court will recognize and the remedies it will provide, and the rules that govern the admission and evaluation of evidence, for example, and the ways that a culture imagines the forms of life it includes and the techniques for representing them. Law and literature have much in common, too, as rhetorical activities based on narrative. Both attempt to shape reality by using language to persuade the reader or listener.

Using the above conception on the interconnection of law and culture, literature being an integral part of culture, this chapter interrogates how Bina Ilagha's *Condolences* provides a thematic example of manifestation of domestic justice and its consciousness in a post-independence setting within the Nigerian state, on the one hand, and the extent to which Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* highlights the public dimension of justice - its violations and the absence of rule of law under the Abacha dictatorship

in Nigeria, on the other. The two novels come across as literary expressions that aptly fit in the description of law-and-literature scholarship.

One notes that there has been an increasing interest among scholars on the law and literature interface. Arguments vary as to whether law can advance the course of literature given the ultimate aim of the former to ensure justice which the latter addresses in several themes, on the one hand, and , the rhetorical qualities of literature has also attracted interest as an essential component of legal scholarship. (Balkin & Levinson, 2006; Schneck, 2007). It is however becoming clearer to scholars that law and literature can form a symbiotic relationship towards advancing the cause of justice, which seems to be at the heart of the two disciplines. (Blumenthal, 2007, Biet,2008). This is against the initial doubts expressed by scholars like Duong (2005) in “Law is Law and Art is Art and Shall the Two Ever Meet? Law and Literature: the comparative creative processes”. According to him:

notwithstanding overlaps and similarities, the two disciplines, Law and Art, remain divergent and incompatible in three core aspects: (i) the mental process of creation and the utilization of facilities, (ii) the work product or output, and (iii) the raison d'etre of law versus art. In fact, the rationality and logic properties of law – the objective of rendering certainty to uncertain future outcomes so as to achieve and maintain order – will interfere with, and can even destroy, the creation of art.

It should be noted however that law and literature have formed an interesting combination in critical discourse and have proved worthwhile in areas like equity, notions of justice, and the question of human rights as well as the dispensation of justice. (Porsdam,2009). Arguments in this regard favour the emerging interdisciplinary focus of engagement given the fact that the advancement of humanity is essential to the two disciplines. As a matter of fact, it is interesting to note that if literature is appreciated as a cultural production, just like what generally

obtains in pre-literate African societies, then law would then be a sister discipline to literature as both are culturally distillates. By this, one refers to an understanding of how the foundation of modern juristic thought legal is a derivate of an epistemological continuum which naturally derives from interrogations of culture. Interestingly, in the African pre-literate society, culture is taken as an embodiment of worldview, philosophy and religion of the people, from which the ethical foundation of modern law derives. (Makinde, 1988). The point therefore is that law and literature as a paradigm of engagement is a strategic path for literary preoccupation since both are concerned with the edification of humanity, especially as it concerns justice and rights of the individual in both domestic and public spaces.

To this end, this chapter analyses the quest justice in Bina Ilagha's *Condolences* and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*. The essence is to dimensionalise the concepts of justice and situate same within the aesthetics of law and literature paradigm accentuates the thematic objectives of the novelists. This is because, for Bina Ilagha's *Condolences*, the widow of Pere Alazibo, is a study in modern equity and trusts, as well as human rights/women rights while *Waiting for An Angel* provides insights into human rights, the rule of law and the judicial system as a whole. Quest for justice is therefore enunciated at the level of the individual and the society in the respective texts.

Domesticating Justice in Bina Ilagha's *Condolences*

Set in Nigeria's Niger Delta region, Bina Ilagha's *Condolences* is the story of a self-made man, Pere Alazibo, who defies all odds to succeed in life. Ilagha uses the untimely death of the late business mogul to draw attention to social injustice and ignorance of modern legal requirements even by elites. While this study does not

intend to harp on the inherent issue of injustice of oil exploitation that the novelist carefully weaves into her story, it is certainly difficult to totally overlook same. The reasons are not unconnected with the elaborate description of the novel of the environment where the plot of the story germinates from. In fact, Alazibo's untimely death has links with the pervading issue of social injustice and infrastructural breakdown, evidenced in the bad road on which the protagonist had an accident "having somersaulted over the corrugated bridge between Kaiama and Sagbama"(1). By drawing attention to the state of infrastructure in the Niger Delta region in the novel as early as the opening page, the novelist betrays her inclination for a socially responsive narrative, especially as a narrative which is dominated by the quest for justice, especially the plight of a people whose oil wealth is paradoxically used to run the Nigerian nation. A sympathizer at Pere's residence laments:

His anger fermented against a government to which common maintenance culture was alien. How else could Pere's death be explained? If the East West road built some decades ago had been regularly and properly maintained, his friend would still be alive. (Ilagha, 53).

Condolences probes deeper than social injustice, or rather, one can assert that Ilagha's approach at contextualizing injustice flows from the individual to the larger society. Here lies the significance of her narration of injustice from the domestic perspective. The novelist realises that awareness of the law is a *sine de qua non* to the overall quest to assert human rights. She dwells on the domestic especially the legality of marriage and the right of the parties in a peculiar way. In fact, she protects Pere's widow by affirming her right as the husband's next of kin, this is notwithstanding Pere's extra-marital affairs. Bina Ilagha's position on the issue can be seen in her narration of the extent to which Pere goes to consummate the marriage to Atari-Joy:

But from the very day he set eyes on Atari Joy, he knew he had found the woman he could proudly call his wife. The supernatural force which propelled him towards her kept him going through the storm of family objections and threats to boycott the marriage ceremonies. With the traditional ceremony safely behind them, he went further by taking Atari-Joy to the registry...And that was how to the consternation of relatives, ex-lovers, friends and well wishers, Atari-Joy became his legal wife.(Ilagha,43).

Twice lucky, having benefited earlier from adoption at the Motherless Home, Atari-Joy becomes a full beneficiary of a legal consciousness pursued to the letter by her late husband. The author deliberately uses this to position and empower the feminine will in Atari-Joy to confront what looms. Even though the issues of widowhood which is a cultural practice appears unresolved throughout the novel, there is no doubt that Ilagha already gives a hint as to the direction it would eventually go. This is given the fact with Zebullon, the lawyer, by her side; they are able to get round knotty issues of creditors and debtors of Pere. One suspects that the author deliberates tries to illustrate that law as an instrument is the answer to dehumanisation and injustice.

Another manifestation of aesthetics of law in *Condolences* is the areas of contractual agreements. It is bewildering that despite the level of sophistication of the hero, Pere engages in undocumented agreements in his life lifetime. This shows that despite the presence of a legal system, several citizens hardly subscribe to same, relying unfortunately on informal agreements and delicate agelong trust and beliefs in human integrity. This explains the debacle of ex-Senator Ogbayefa whom Pere had assisted to transact some business:

He began with a dozen apologies. Then with great difficulty, he told her the business Pere had helped him secure and how he was waiting for her husband to arrive with a cheque of \$1.5 million on that ill fated trip. He shed tears as he told his story ...He pleaded with her to have mercy on him and see if he could get the cheque which was in Pere's business name (Ilagha, 164)

If Ogbayefa's claim is shown as legitimate, someone like Tayo Omagbemi clearly instantiates a case of betrayal of trust. Although Pere grants him a loan on trust and on the basis of their friendship, Tayo sees no reason in honouring a gentleman's agreement by paying back what he owed the deceased. Rather, he chooses not to redeem his pledge since he thinks his creditor is no more:

Tayo had borrowed the sum of one million naira from Pere. He had always promised to pay back, but now, he wouldn't have to. He had only come to conform Pere's death, so he could declare himself debt free...

He didn't want to take chances. It was better that he could not be traced, even if there were papers in Pere's possession to prove his indebtedness, than to foolishly wait and get caught. And, if matters came to a head, he was ready to swear that the sum had been paid back. Heck! (Ilagha, 50, 51)

Ilagha uses the above scenario to underscore the seeming unreliability of human beings and the role law plays to compel responsibility. This is because had there been a record of the transactions above, there would have been no hiding place for defaulters. As shown above, this does not augur well for Pere, either as a creditor or even as a debtor, for verifying claims becomes an arduous task.

Literature as a tool for advancing the cause of justice is prominently showcased in Bina Ilagha's novel. The novelist laments the Nigerian Land Use Act

of 1978, which as she shows has contributed to the neglect of the oil producing region. Ilagha explains:

The matter has become a very complex one .There are laws which undermine our authority over what rightly belongs to us...The federal government has claimed all the land that belonged to our forefathers. Even the very ground on which your hut now stands could be taken from you if they find oil in it...

The laws of the country say that everything below the ground belongs to the federal government (Ilagha 155,156).

Ilagha's argument here is of both legal and logical significance. Why would government that has legislated by fiat on natural resources not go the whole circle by taking responsibility of the aftermath of oil exploration? What is seen is the abdication of same as shown in the remark that "the erosion menace which doesn't seem to belong to government" (156). Ilagha's *Condolences* therefore draws attention to this constitutional illegality while at the same time carpeting the British Amalgamation of 1914, which she likens interestingly to marriage partnership, with the Federal Government the obvious culprit. Ilagha's speaks for Nigeria's ethnic nationalities and endorses an intellectual agitation:

He cursed the British who had inadvertently married them to a greedy and insensitive spouse without their consent. He was bitter against a selfish partner who would gladly cart away the wealth of the land but complain about the difficult terrain when required the partners need on the same land. (Ilagha, 157)

The point from the above is that Ilagha's refractive temper as a writer favours a comprehensive legal and constitutional reform of the nation's federalism. This is with a view to addressing the tension of ethnic nationalism and militarism which continues

to manifest in more volatile dimensions in the Nigerian body polity. This implies that through literature's powerful lenses, the narrative of justice enables a practical way out of a socio-political malaise. To agree with West (1988) that:

The centrality of texts to the form and substance of a community's moral and social life suggests that the role of legal texts in our community must be fundamentally reconceived. We ought to think and read legal texts, not as political or positive commands, but as texts which both constitute and constrain the community's moral commitments. (23).

In essence, *Condolences* partakes of advocating for social justice in this regard by contextualising the issues in its thematic development. Bina Ilagha also attempts an interrogation of the nation's labour law, *vis-à-vis* job security of people in private employment. Even though this could be seen as an indirect commentary on the state of society and the scary statistics of unemployment, she nonetheless shares the agony of individuals who, though employed, are not covered by the existing labour laws which seem to be more concerned with people in public sector. Ilagha shares in the agony of Pere's employees through the introspection of Adams Kadi:

He bit his lower lip until it bled. His heart ached within him. What was he going to do about his wife and children? His wife had told him on the very first day of interview for employment at Pere's company that she did not like the idea of working for an individual...She had told him there was no job security or any hope of a pension scheme in a one-man business outfit, and she was right. (Ilagha, 109)

While Ilagha may not necessarily imagine all citizens can be employed by the government, she nevertheless advocates a social welfare scheme that takes care of both in both public and private organizations. Interestingly, this is one the key objectives of Pension Reform Act (2004) in Nigeria which is still basically in its learning stage, as ensuring compliance especially by private sector employers remains

a seeming intractable challenge. This is however achievable, as Ilagha indirectly suggests, once there is the political will to see to the full implementation of the provisions of the Act. Therefore, Ilagha's narrative as a law and literature text engages labour matters and the plight of workers, suggesting these deserve attention by policy makers and society at large.

Furthermore, the novel raises the question of human rights consciousness. This is skillfully achieved through the issues of widowhood, quality of life and the welfare of citizens in the setting of *Condolences*. As a metaphor or purgatory essence, the condolence register as such offers an opportunity to probe the plight of the people and the unresponsiveness of government. This is well instantiated in the story of Kabo, whose ambition to become a medical doctor in Bulgaria, is truncated when his scholarship funds are not forthcoming. Swallowing his pride, he offers to return home and was subsequently deported after spending three sessions in medicine. He subsequently becomes a psychological wreck:

The frustrations of this highly intelligent man were drowned in liquor whenever he laid hands on some money. His few sober moments were full of tears and curses on the Federal Government. He knew that some of his fellow students lived well, their monies regularly paid to them...And, to his chagrin, he was discriminated against right at the embassy where he had hoped to receive some sympathy (71).

The above is significant for a reading of *Condolences* as a legal narrative lies in two ways. First is the issue of violation of a voluntary contract which makes the Nigerian government liable for breach of contract as regards the scholarship programme. What Ilagha points attention to is the fact that by breaching the agreement with Kabo, the government is liable of damages and this can be enforced in a court of law. This however largely bothers greatly on the level of awareness or

consciousness of the right of parties concerned to the provisions of the law. The point, therefore is that with law properly exploited, citizens have a lot to benefit, and society is bound to be less inhuman.

Another legal challenge that *Condolences* poses as a narrative using Kabo experience is the seeming insensitivity of Nigerian diplomatic missions. This transcends moral suasion but is a legal issue which bothers on the provisions of international law. The novel draws attention to the improprieties experienced by Nigeria citizens and questions the relevance of such moribund offices. This is because; embassies are seen as micro-governments in international legal reasoning. As such, the failure of the embassy to provide succor for Kabo, constitutes a denial of his rights even away from home, is a subject of constitutional and international legal conventions.

Reading Bina Ilagha's novel as an exemplar of the quest for justice paradigm within the law and literature concern exposes one to the realities of legal consciousness in the milieu of the work. The novel underscores the various dimensions of law inherent in the enabling society which are thematised. The impression one gets from Ilagha's ideology as a novelist, is that a consciousness of the law is key towards asserting one's rights in all facets of human existence in post-independence Nigeria. Also, the novel clearly demonstrates the relationship between a proper appropriation of the law and its recognition with a view to re-ordering society. The essence is to demonstrate that from the domestic arena, the law has no limitation in being a worthy partner in making literary representations agents of social and economic advancement.

In other words, Bina Ilagha's attempt at contextualising justice has both negative and positive connotations. On the one hand, the alliance between Zebullon

and Atari-Joy demonstrates the essence of not only being legally conscious, but the role of law in upholding justice. In the novel, the survival of the estate of Pere Alazibo is shown to largely depend on exploitation of the legal essence of equity and trusts; the empowerment of the widow seems to largely derive from her status as a legal wife of the deceased. This gives her the *locus standi* as the rightful next of kin. On the other hand, Bina Ilagha also contextualises the injustice of the enabling milieu in her vivid depiction of the paradox of oil wealth and the economic status of the citizens. The fact that the country remains underdeveloped shows that despite the existing legal provisions which guarantee same. Ilagha therefore positions law as still being the most viable alternative to bring about change in conjunction with pathways like literary preoccupations and other forms of artistic productions.

Bina Ilagha shares the same temperament with Helon Habila in *Waiting for An Angel*. As a matter fact, both texts complement each other as narratives which deploy the law and literature paradigm. For Ilagha, the focus flows from the domestic through the larger society, while Helon Habila takes on the larger society headlong. In other words, the contextualisation of justice in Habila appears to represent a continuation of Ilagha's agenda. Both texts therefore illuminate the challenge of narrating justice as well as representing socio-historical injustice. It is this other arm of contextualization that Habila is visibly grounded; in contradistinction to the subtle domestication Ilagha portrays as discussed earlier. This necessitates the focus of the ensuing paragraphs.

Questing for Justice in The Public Domain: Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*

In Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, the novelist contends with issues of collective agency as well as subject-hood which define the search for idiosyncratic affirmation of the self in writing and the limits imposed in the quest for transcendentalism. As such, the self encounters a limit in the process of navigating complex and somewhat confounding cultural imaginations and representations. This paves way for a subjective interrogation of the relationship between a people and the epistemological expressions generated in cultural activities. Hence, an individual is made aware of the limitations of his/her intellectual predilections and is eventually conditioned to be aware of the socially diverse consciousness. This is to say the collective draws strength from the individual self-acclamation while the individual is a sub-set in the equation. The point is that Habila attempts to reverse the concept of self, the function of writing and redefines the imperatives of political engagement in the new generation of writers. African literary tradition thus seems re-emboldened to cope with emerging diverse social tensions in the milieu.

In essence, there is ample evidence to demonstrate that Helon Habila, in *Waiting for an Angel*, re-affirms and reclaims the writer as a public intellectual whose social function is a given. In fact, in trying to unify the creative mind and the intellectual, Habila suggests that there is need for an engaging intellectual process in creative performance aimed at socio-historical reconstruction. This is like making that social "life of the [creative] mind" a major critical concern (Said, 16). This is achieved in a fusion of both the material and the ideological to energize the creative muse with a view to repositioning the functionality of the creative enterprise in relation to its milieu of production. To clarify a little is to immediately note that Habila does not downplay the creative writer or the intellectual; but seems to champion a model for

literary intellectualism which ultimately becomes a pivot for literary engagement. Habila therefore clearly acknowledges the role of the African writer as a major actor in social commitment aesthetics, while writing, as a tool, becomes a weapon for mobilizing the collective consciousness against forces of socio-economic and political annihilation. This is a reaffirmation of the tradition already championed by the forest generation of Achebe and Soyinka, but with a slight variation in the sense of exploration of Sartrean *historical particularity* which proclaims the writer as at the centre of ideological and subjective imagination in the larger picture. The implication is the evolution of new creative self, who battles the inherent contradictions of the public rot, and aligns with the people.

In *Waiting for an Angel*, the literary intellectual in Habila navigates a trying period in Nigeria political history. Nigeria was under the maximum rulership of a despot, Sani Abacha whose reign inflicted unquantifiable pains and the country was totally terrorized, which is the overall pervading mood in the novel. Nigerians watched helplessly as their country degenerated to a pariah nation heading for collapse and extinction. Coming at the wake of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections that was aborted, the hope and optimism in the country was buried and replaced with total despair. The transition to Abacha's repressive tribe was almost bewildering experience with Nigeria gradually becoming isolated in the committee of nations. At the height of international hostility, Abacha's summary execution of Ken Saro Wiwa, a writer and environmental activist, earned the regime several sanctions from the international community. The population, especially the youths, became enervated and disillusioned. To use Tejumola Olaniyan words, Nigeria became the "the postcolonial incredible" (2). Hence, depicting Nigeria under the grip of Abacha by third-generation writers was as a result of its singular implications for literary

creativity. In fact, the regime was anti-intellectual and anti-creativity. Writers, just like the political class and organised civil society, were all victims of state persecution. Writers thus resorted to exile, silence or sycophancy while several earned imprisonments.

The above period is what Habila attempts to reconstruct in *Waiting for an Angel* and situates his mandate of social engagement within this context. The novelist's craft at representing chaos and social dysfunctionality that were Nigeria's hallmark in the 90s, eminently demonstrates the intensity of the social relevance of the writer. The writer in Habila, conscious of his duty and responsibility to public life, engages the social strife prevalent in the milieu. This brings to the fore the intellectual scholarship model mentioned earlier and how same applies to scenarios that require contestations to stifled public truth, desire to deliver a message of emancipation and the need to carry along the collective. In projecting the self, therefore, Habila satisfies the mandate of the traditional African literary intellectual by adequately functioning as a social visionary within a socio-historical circumstance, thereby persistently championing for social justice.

The discourse of literature as a satirical catalyst is said to be quintessential to African literature owing to its circumstances of cultural and political realities. Helon Habila represents a defining moment in this tradition. As a significant work produced in the twenty-first century, *Waiting for An Angel* occupies a symbolic place, either as a prison narrative or even as a member of the larger corpus of works of political activism. Starting from the setting of the novel in a prison through the psychic cum neurotic significance of the narrator as an inmate, the novel instantly draws attention to its essence as a legal narrative "In the middle of his second year in prison, Lomba got access to pencil and paper" (p.1) . This sentence invites one's

consciousness to the metaphorical import of a pen and paper, as well as the setting which connotes deprivation. The novelist continues:

Today I begin a diary, to say all the things I want to say, to express myself because here in prison there is no one to listen...Prison chains not so much your hands and feet as it does your voice (p.1).

Habila opens his narrative in this manner for a number of reasons. The most significant is to highlight the decay and state of the prison system, especially in a period he describes in his "Afterword" as "a terrible time to be alive" (223). The prison is therefore given prominence to dramatize the legal import in the novel. Central to this revelation is the question of human rights, even for inmates. Bamgbose (2010), quoting in part Wechsler (1999), posits:

Prisoners have rights. Although they are incarcerated and some of their rights such as the right to freedom are suspended during the period of incarceration, other rights such as right to dignity must be respected...The prison culture has always been dominated by aggression, running counter to the values of humanness, softness, openness, and anti-oppression.

If the above paints the ideal situation, what obtains in the post-independence African society is certainly a negation of the above. As Dunton (2005) observes about prison writings generally,

Prison writing is very often produced under severe constraints, such as censorship and the denial of writing materials. Further, the authors of detention diaries and similar autobiographical accounts are confronted with some problematic choices regarding the scope and mode of documentation. (120)

Dunton's revelation above captures the mood and setting of prison writing tradition, with previous works from writers like Wole Soyinka in *The Man Died* and Ngugu wa Thiongo in *Detained*. However, as texts with legal aesthetics, the writings can be useful in criticising the prison system, an integral part of a country's judicial

administration. Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* pursues this conscientiously in his novel. While not downplaying the symbolism of deprivation to the human mental faculty, the novelist also demonstrates that in a law and literature context, *Waiting for an Angel* is an opportunity for agitation for prison reforms and a total overhaul of the Nigerian judicial system. Since Lomba is a victim who experiences the harsh and inhuman conditions meted by Nigeria's despotic ruler, Sanni Abacha, he is positioned eminently as an informed critic of the entire system.

The first aspect of the judicial system which *Waiting for an Angel* engages is the fate of Awaiting Trial Persons. It is instructive to note that the entire prison system seems overwhelmed by awaiting trial cases. This has been identified as the major cause of congestion in prisons. Bangbose (2010) laments:

Awaiting Trial Persons continue to suffer. In the prison system, they can be referred to as the forgotten ones...Statistics show that ATP form about 65% of the prison population in Nigeria. This has greatly contributed to the problem of overcrowding facing prisons everywhere (52, 53).

The crowded and debased prison life depicted above is the setting of Lomba's narrative: "I have been forgotten. I am not allowed a lawyer, or visitors. I have been awaiting trial for two years" (Habila, 15). The point, therefore is that, prison reforms can only be achieved if the issue of Awaiting Trial Persons is resolved. This would ultimately mean that the mechanisms of justice would be overhauled and persons in the chain of judicial administration would discharge their roles effectively. Interestingly, though Lomba's circumstance is under the military government, known for flagrant abuse of human rights and illegal detentions, the situation has not witnessed a significant improvement more than a decade after Nigeria's return to democratic rule. This may then suggest that Habila's thematising of the prison

condition in Nigeria is a commentary on the system of judicial administration. His vivid account of the welfare of prisoners and the deprivation of inmates is an indication of the relevance of his novel to the law - and - literature paradigm. Hence, literature at the service of the society draws attention to the deficiencies of the prison system.

Furthermore, Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* also psychoanalyses characters within the prison system. Language, for example, becomes an indicator of the literacy level of the prison personnel. The poor level of education of the superintendent is exposed in the manner the official constructs disjointed sentences:

So. You wont't. Talk.You think you are. Tough, 'he shouted. You are. Wrong. Twenty years! That is how long I have been dealing with miserable bastards like you. Let this be an example to all of you. Dont think you can deceive me. We have our sources of information. You can't. This insect will be taken to solitary and he will be properly dealt with. Until. He is willing to talk (Habila, 9)

For someone with the state of mind above, all is certainly not well .It becomes difficult for the official to behave well given the fact, the inbalance in his psychology may ultimately prevent his proper reasoning, and affect his disposition to Lomba. The reality of dehumanisation stares the hero of the novel in the face. Habila's picture of dehumanisation shows lack of respect for the fundamental human rights of the inmates. It, in fact, highlights a gross violation of the humanity and deny of the right to fear hearing. It is as if to say the accused is presumed guilty, against accepted legal norms which presumed an accused person innocent until proven guilty in a court of competent jurisdiction .Therefore, Habila calls attention to the inadequacies of the nations legal system through the travails of the characters. It is in this light that the relevance of the novel as a textual representation of faulty legal processes is well pronounced.

In pursuit of the law-and-literature interconnection, Habila preoccupies himself with an agenda for reformation. This seems predicated on the belief that the repositioning and total overhaul of the justice system will eventually guarantee human dignity. By drawing copiously from Nigeria's political experiences, Helon Habila demonstrates an abiding faith in the fact that the African writer and its enabling pretext are mutually exclusive. Consider, for instance, the direct references to the June 12, 1993 political imbroglio in Nigeria, a presidential election adjudged free by local and international observers, but which the military government of Babangida truncated. The fate of the symbol of the struggle, late Chief M.K.O Abioala, and the military usurper, Sani Abacha, attracts the novelist's commentary: "A lot of these political prisoners died in detention, although only the prominent ones made the headline. People like Moshood Abiola and General Yaradua" (Habila,32)

The above represents the historical relevance of the text as well as its subtle indictment of a faulty judicial system during the military era. It also highlights the instances of violation of the law, given the preponderance of illegal arrests and detention without trial, under the dictatorial regime of Abacha. The novel however comes out as a worthy literary intervention for both a reflective and refractive agenda. As noted by Chirman (2010):

Habila takes "representation" as the primary target of analysis and makes an elegant evocation of the truth and commitment in art... The final triumph of his pen to state the horrendous events of an era is the point in focus. The novel is a success story of an act of defiance and the struggle to create truth in a dystopia and to assert in the process the fundamental right to express the only truth. (65).

The inference from the above is that Habila deploys imagination in constructing reality, since he believes that "every oppressor knows that wherever one word is joined to another to form a sentence, there will be revolt" (Habila,195). He, therefore, unites

especially individual freedom with communal liberation. Therefore, in championing social change, the delimiting factors, ably represented in *Waiting for an Angel* by the prison metaphor, the writer appropriates the positive force of imagination to envision the ideal and points the attention of the society in this direction.

Furthermore, Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* derives its grounding as a legal narrative as a result of the peculiarity of its setting. The aberration of military rule is first and foremost, an issue that concerns constitutional rule. Also, the immediacy of prison as a trope shows that freedom is an imperative for social development. In other words, literature ever-recurring role as a tool for socio-political engineering is largely dependent on the thematisation of the laxities in the instruments of state. This is because the germination of the ethos of freedom, equity and fairness is intertwined in the enablement the environment provides. Habila points to the fact that, military rule is akin to lawlessness. Also, *Waiting for an Angel* demonstrates that law and order thrive most under constitutional rule. Habila illustrates:

Can't you see what is happening? The military has turned the country into one huge barracks, into a prison. Every street out there is crawling with them; the people lock their doors, scared, scared to come out. (Habila, 50)

Waiting for An Angel therefore instantiates that police brutalities, breakdown of law and order, jungle justice as well as various illegalities derive from the pervading atmosphere of unconstitutional rule. For instance, the civil police refuse to be "civil" in Bola's case as he is dehumanized:

We flinched as our eyes fell on his bare torso: every inch was covered with thick, punctured weals. He had been systematically beaten from face down to his legs. One arm was fractured – it lay by his side in a thick plaster. And he didn't recognize us. (Habila, 75)

This clearly shows the elusiveness of justice in the context. In clearer terms, the quest for justice is a factor in the thematic preoccupation of Habila novel. The implication of this lies in the fact that once a system does not guarantee justice and equity, the society is bound to be retrogressive. Through Habila's skillful construction of this story of injustice, the search for justice as such a motivating factor for the narrative. It is as if to say literature in *Waiting for an Angel* joins forces to enthrone justice. This can be further understood given the enormous role that great literature can play in the understanding and creation of the intricacies of human existence. This is grounded in the full realisation of the enormous pedagogical potentials of literature. Literature thus helps in reinforcing society's laws and also promoting the embedded values that unite humanistic cultures.

The point is that *Waiting for an Angel* stimulates the readers' ideas and feelings about the necessity of justice. Equally important is the concretisation of the desire to pursue justice, or put differently, the possibility for detecting justice. In other words, there is a discerning capacity which Habila's fictive universe radiates for a distinction between justice and injustice. According to Ruthann Robson, a famous law-and-literature theorist, on her web page, (<http://www.ruthannrobson.com/law-literature>):

Law and literature can seem oppositional, but they are two different methods of accomplishing social change. Law is an important technique that can be used to promote progressive justice. Literature offers a similar opportunity because people are changed by what they read and by what they write, as they can be by all creative arts. Of course, both law and literature can be instruments to preserve the status quo or to promote repression. (1)

Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* fits into the description above in its deployment of the Quest for Justice engagement paradigm. The above also finds expression in Lomba's remark that "while I was there I realised why it is important to agitate

against injustice, no matter the consequence” (Habila, 165). In other words, the concern for thematising injustice is eminently grounded in *Waiting for an Angel*, which is a testimony to Achebe’s observation, as quoted by Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2009) that:

A new situation has thus risen. One of the writer’s major functions has always been to expose and attack injustice. Should we keep at the old theme of injustice (sore as it still is) when new injustices have sprouted all around us. I think not (63).

The import of the above statement in the context of this thesis is that the theme of injustice has been a recurring motif in the African creative imagination. Literature is, therefore, in good standing to contextualise injustice and advocate paths to socio-historical reengineering.

One can therefore safely assert that the aesthetics of law- and- literature as a paradigm permeates Habila’s *Waiting for an Angel*. This positions the text as viable for projecting the quest for justice paradigm in third-generation Nigerian fiction and provokes an interdisciplinary dialogue founded on a strategy of positive engagement of the realities confronting the self in a society in constant change. This is in total agreement with the observation of Akhuemokhan, (2008) that:

The search for justice is archetypal, a timeless all-encompassing human urge which finds expression in creative literature. Consequently, it is of no surprise to find justice a major preoccupation in the novels of black Africa. From the earliest communal works of Chinua Achebe, to current works written by Chika Unigwe and other African authors living in the metropolises of Europe, the archetype has been explored in relation to locale, age, gender, religion, class and race (71).

It is deducible from the above contention that quest for justice as a paradigm of engagement underscores the convergence of literature and law in third-generation Nigerian novels. This is further shown to be a tradition modified over time. This

runs from the earliest writers, represented by Achebe, to the twenty-first century writers, which Unugue ably represents in the above excerpt. The implication is that the contextualisation of justice and injustice, as the case may be, is an imperative for the third-generation Nigerian novelist. What unites law and literature is the edification of the human essence through quest for justice and this finds adequate voice in the emerging generation. Bina Ilagha's *Condolences* and Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* therefore engage issues bothering on injustice. The quest for justice paradigm therefore is a call to action. This is demonstrated through raising of consciousness to the vital aspects of law that have been bastardized to positioning literature as a tool for restoring lost hope and accessing justice.

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CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This thesis has situated third-generation Nigerian novelists within an emerging canon that deepens commitment and engagement of the enabling milieu. Armed with the twenty-first century tools and suited appropriately because of transnational experiences, these writers are showcased in this study as representing the dynamic sensibilities of their age. Also, this study has emphasised the fact that rather than depart from the heritage of a functional aesthetics, the writers have proven that, more than ever before, the situation of the post-independence Nigerian society requires strategic engagement. It is the mode and scope of this strategic engagement that has been examined in this thesis.

The study first identifies the technique of child-narration in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Sefi Attah's *Everything Good Will Come*. It is established that by empowering their child narrators, the novelists are not merely entrenching a Bildungsroman aesthetics, rather they are consciously displaying awareness of the circumstances of the child in contemporary Nigeria. This is because the Nigerian society of today reveals an unfortunate scenario of dismal care for the welfare of the child, while the attendant crises in the society produce children with the wrong perception of reality. Therefore child narration as a technique allows the novelist the freedom of expression by hiding behind the innocence of the child heroines- Kambili and Sheri, respectively. This, in turn, creates an advantage for engaging the ills of the society through the experience of the child narrators.

Chapter Four uses the paradigm of development fiction to redefine the role of literature in national development. The chapter demonstrates the inherent capacity of literature to not only thematise issues of development, but also to serve as an

alternative platform for development discourse. Specifically, Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You By Chance* are used as textual exemplification of the varying degrees of nagging and pressing development concerns. The chapter demonstrates that the root cause of developmental lacuna is clearly the failure of the leadership of the society to care for its citizenry. Also, the location of twenty-first century issues, especially internet crime, establishes the fact that, the society is guilty of raising pseudo-heroes who are projected by the materialistic aspirations of the individuals. The fact that hard work is not dignified while crime takes the place of diligence shows that the path to proper development lies in the restoration of values which hitherto were celebrated and emulated. The refusal of Kingsley mother to be carried away by the allure of ill-gotten wealth is a pointer in this direction. In other words, the two novels champion an alternative towards the evolution of a better society.

Chapter Five focuses on quest for justice as a paradigm of engagement which also manifests interdisciplinary relevance of law and literature in third-generation Nigerian novels. It establishes the fact that since justice is a common aspiration of both law and literature, there is a need to forge a complimentary alliance in order to evolve a society where the dignity of humanity would be enhanced. Using Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* and Bina Ilagha's *Condolences*, knowledge of the law is shown as a liberating force in personal and individual redemption. This is to say that deficiency in the understanding of legal principles results in social and economic exploitation. Therefore, as a tool of empowerment, law finds a worthy ally in literature of engagement.

Literature is a vehicle of expression of human aspirations. It provides an opportunity for capturing the individual challenges as well as what concerns society

generally. The fact that literature guarantees human expression and its manifestations continues to attract human civilisation. Whether from the functionalist perspective or aesthetic, otherwise called the arts-for-art's sake movement, literature is an agent of articulation and representation of values. In an age of globalisation and the information technology, literature continues to play a role in defining human ethos and championing the enthronement of a viable socio-political order. Writers as human elements of this tool are also worthwhile partners in the edification of humanistic ethos. These imperatives, more often than not, are not without challenges. Writers are expected to break barriers and surmount difficulties in order to be heard and make impacts. These motivations appear in different ways to different writers across human civilisations.

The African writer appears motivated, more than any other writer in other races, by his/her enabling society. Africa has peculiar challenges; although strife is not peculiar to the African continent, the society of Africa, in its colonial, pre-colonial, postcolonial/neocolonial phases, has challenges that are certainly bewildering. This bewilderment arises from the state of the African state as well as the tragedies of the age. There is no denying the fact that Africa is in a parlous state, while her citizens continually groan under poverty and man-made difficulties. As captured by Tshikuku (2001):

Africa is a broken-down continent, economically and socially. The humanitarian dimension of Africa's problems is becoming increasingly disturbing... conflicts of identity and wars have broken out, adding their ravages to those of the aids pandemic. Poverty, insecurity, mortality and debility have become more intense and more widespread, while the continent has incurred debts beyond its means and experienced a drop in its share of trade and investment in the world. With a few exceptions, the destiny of the whole continent is shaky and despair is setting in.(2)

The issue in Africa's historiography essentially is leadership as several political crises across the continent has shown. Even in the twenty-first century, Africa still parades a league of political leaders who are standing in the way of nationalist aspiration of their countries. In fact, Kehinde (2008) underscores this challenge of leadership as it confronts literature:

The literary search for social and political changes that can transform Nigerian life has revealed that the citizens must determine not only to achieve victory over imperialism but also to triumph over hunger, diseases, despair and misgovernance. What the country requires therefore is a leadership that recognizes the problems at the roots of the national life, a leadership which decides to risk its will and reputation in solving the myriads of problems bedeviling the country (357).

Given the foregoing scenario, the pertinent question is to examine the position and responsibility of the writer in Africa. Stewart (2002) believes this can be addressed redefinition of commitment in African poetics: He explains:

Today's social situation obligates the writer to examine his position in the world and his responsibility to other men. I believe it obligates the writer to approach his work in a committed way. To resist the temptation of compromise and conformity the writer must be devoted to the autonomy of literature. The honest writer must stand inside society - not in the shadows of the periphery - and he must tell the truth. One will note that commitment and involvement are closely linked; however, though involvement is inevitable for the writer, his commitment does not come about automatically. Not all writers are even conscious of their involvement; but the committed writer is aware of the world around him and his literature is the result of his attitude toward it (1).

This study has been concerned with how the selected African novelists have been relating and adjusting to this mandate. The fact is that the novel as a genre of literature is strategic in the African creative imagination. It has been demonstrated that the third-generation Nigerian novelist has emerged with a zeal which adequately equips them for the task of engendering hope in the twenty-first century. As

Ogunrotimi (2009) points out, “ The literary artist’s unique sense of social, political and moral commitment that informs African literature is a corollary of a tradition that emphasizes the social and political association of literature, more at the expense of the aesthetic value”(154)

Essentially, this study has basically analysed the textual references along three paradigms to show that the novelists are not only committed and reflecting their socio-historical realities, they are also engaging these realities in creative and strategic ways. These paradigms enable the novelists to address and illuminate the peculiar issues identified in their enabling societies. It should be noted that the paradigms of engagement child-narration, development fiction and quest for justice identified in this study are interconnected. In fact, the six novels analyzed are also thematically and stylistically related. Apart from belonging to the third- generation of Nigerian writing, they are also novels which possess the realities of the present age of globalisation. The point is that the paradigms of engagement deployed by the novelists are the basis of intertextual relationships among the novelists.

To summarise the concern of the present study, it has been shown that child narration, development fiction and quest for justice as paradigms of engagement are the basis through which the novelists deepen their craft. Also, the thesis has illustrated that Chimamanda Adichie, Sefi Attah, Helon Habila, Okey Ndibe ,Bina Ilagha and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani as representatives of the generation, thematize issues that bother on the realities of the present age. These novelists are united in their renewed bid by entrenching the tradition of commitment in African literature.

Furthermore, what distinguishes this generation of writers from their predecessors is ironically what unites them as a generation. They are products of an age characterised by incessant strifes and the collapse of the state in contemporary

Africa. The writers, however radiate hope and demonstrate the capacity of the self to adequately assert a positive ethos since “the predicament of our self-definition then becomes even more monumental as we are confronted in these modern times by the collapse of familiar categories and the consequent physiological and psychological problems of a fast developing borderless globalization” (Ladele , 2009) . Self-inscription and survival instincts become the watchwords.

One also notes that, the representative novels in this study clearly demonstrates the intellectual depth of the third-generation of writers in Nigeria. The novelists’ wealth of experience and robustness of artistic vision is a further testimony of the inherent vibrancy of the twenty-first century society. In a fast developing world where access to information has been crystalised by the advances in information technology, especially the internet revolution, the novelists have therefore brought this to bear on the thematic outlooks of their works. This further shows that, indeed, the twenty-first century guarantees enrichment for literary creativity. Writers clearly showcase their experiences in their works while clearly affirming their individual literary idioms. This is the hall mark of literature in the twenty-first century.

This study canvasses interdisciplinary scholarship in order to bridge the knowledge gap. In fact, a key learning from quest for justice paradigm, an integral aspect of the law-and-literature movement, is the prospect of an interdisciplinary approach which ultimately benefits the knowledge industry as well as bridging the gap between theory and practice. In a recent review of West African writing, Newell (2009) acknowledges third-generation writers for their resourcefulness and the courage to break free from the discursive restrictions of the earlier generation. She sees these restrictions as a pseudo attempt at formulating a supposed African aesthetic which characterises African cultural nationalist project. For her, the current

generation has proven to possess a potential for stylistic and thematic experimentation, transcultural/transnational consciousness, and celebration of inter-subjectivity, hybridity and the dissolution of fixed identity, which can help in creating “unbounded imaginative space” (Newell,2009: 187). This is an acclamation of the dexterity of the creative spirit of the third-generation Nigerian writing.

It is necessary to admit that, notwithstanding the blossoming of the creative imagination in the age, there is a bigger challenge which militates against the ambition of third-generation Nigerian novelists to lead the vanguard, especially through unique paradigms, as shown in this study. There is a sense in which the expansion of the global market through information technology and the transnational exchanges impedes the advancement of the literary industry. The contemporary society battles with a monster, which is apathy, by the reading public and the imminent collapse of the educational system. This also has an immediate ally in the quality of instruction in the school hierarchy. It should be stressed that though third-generation writers continue to demonstrate deep understanding and fascination with the society; their efforts have not really translated into concrete shift in the general appreciation and appropriation of the forms. Osofisan (2001) stresses this point:

I am saying that, in a way that what the report of the journalist cannot do, or often fail to do, literature, **if only we will read it**, can offer us a comprehensive picture of our countries and our peoples, which is capable of arming us against despondency, and our feeling of helplessness (14) (*emphasis added*).

The point captured in the above relates to what could be termed the failure of literature. More than any generation, the third-generation is faced with the realities of a society that has lost direction especially the terrible lack of interest in the time-tested values of the germination of intellectualism and the supremacy of

ideas. This is also directly linked with the problem of impact. The contemporary society has witnessed a stupendous burst in new media which makes the task of third generation writers more daunting. There is therefore the need to expand the frontiers of knowledge by appropriating the internet opportunities in reaching a generation whose values have shifted.

The overall impression from this thesis is that third-generation Nigerian novelists are resourceful and industrious in engaging the realities of the age. They have shown in the texts analysed that they are not only representing the aspirations of their enabling society, they are also positively displaying the required tact in their craft to negotiate meaning. In an age where the effects of globalization portend both negative and positive implications, the self is therefore eminently positioned to relate in a dynamic way to the challenges surrounding humanistic existence. In alignment with Adesanmi (2010) who says that “the trajectory of knowledge production in the specific field of modern African literatures is a good indication of the resilience of certain modes of engaging literary texts since the inception of the field in the first half of the 20th century” (3), it is the contention of this study that, as exemplified in the texts analysed, literature continues to be a relevant site for self-realisation and communal re-orientation.

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