THE TRANSNATIONAL *BILDUNGSROMAN*:

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON POSTCOLONIAL COMING OF AGE NARRATIVES

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This dissertation is a bouquet of flowers

Jasmine

To flavor Baba's tea

Forget-me-nots

For eternal remembrance of Yaaya

Roses

For Fatima's and Rokhaya's crowns

Amaryllis Bulbs

A gift for my blooming kids

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Moussa Thiao

THE TRANSNATIONAL *BILDUNGSROMAN*: NEW PERSPECTIVES

ON POSTCOLONIAL COMING OF AGE NARRATIVES

My argument in this dissertation is that exposure to multiple cultures through various media and social networks complicates identity formation as adolescents find new ways of socializing within and across borders. Such social connectedness contributes to the emergence of both a new sense of selfhood marked by multiple allegiances or lack thereof, and a new type of *Bildungsroman.* Questions that this dissertation seeks to elucidate include: in this interconnected and media-oriented world, how has the notion of *Bildung* changed? How does multicultural consciousness shape the young protagonist's sense of self, community and place? How is identity negotiated both at home and in a foreign setting? How does the thematization of this new configuration affect the form and the meaning of the *Bildungsroman*?

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Introduction

The question of identity can be unmistakably considered one of the oldest and most consistent in literature. From poetry to prose, from the ancient roman novel (e.g Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*), to the postcolonial novel, writers have always fictionalized the relationship between the outer world and the individual's inner world; the individual's curiosity and search for truth as he/she faces identity crisis. Thus, it can be argued that the quest of identity is a timeless and inexhaustible theme in literature. The fact that identity formation follows situational or contextual fluctuation, allows writers to reach out to larger existential issues, which makes the theme virtually omnipresent across literary genres throughout history.

However, this theme has been generally associated with the novel form in general and the *Bildungsroman* genre in particular. Since its inception in 18th century Europe, the *Bildungsroman* has also been one of the most discussed genres in literary criticism. Associated with names such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Thomas Mann, William Makepeace Thackeray, Thomas Hardy, Gustave Flaubert, Stendhal, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, etc., the western canon of the *Bildungsroman* has influenced literature throughout the world for nearly two centuries.

In addition, from the French Revolution to the Great Depression, from colonization to post-independence disillusionment, the *Bildungsroman* has always been – in its narrative – a site of political and ideological struggle, as well as an efficient didactic tool for a society "in search of landmarks." It is this adaptable nature of the *Bildungsroman* that has prompted this study, which looks at the most recent trend in the postcolonial variant of the genre. In other words, the study looks at how the

contemporary era, marked by technological development and intensive transnational movement impacts the genre at both formal and thematic levels.

I developed this interested in the *Bildungsroman* while going through my diachronic reading list for my qualifying exam. The important amount of criticism on the *Bildungsroman* raised my awareness of the richness, inclusiveness and adaptability of the genre to various social and historical contexts. First of all, the tendency of the traditional *Bildungsroman* to be conservative, as well as the tendency of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* to be countercultural and disruptive of the dominant social order fully caught my attention. I ultimately came to realize that the *Bildungsroman* engenders many sub-categories beside the classic form or western tradition. We note the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, the ethnic *Bildungsroman*, the female *Bildungsroman* and so on. In Africa and the Caribbean this genre can be divided in two subcategories: the post-independence *Bildungsroman* and what I loosely refer to as the new generation *Bildungsroman*.

Traditionally known as a symbolic form, the *Bildungsroman* is also presumed to be controversial and contradictory. One of the controversies surrounding it is related to the relevance of the notion of gender, and by extension, the appropriateness of the concept of female *Bildungsroman*. However, the exponential increase in number of female writers in the genre is giving a new twist to this debate. Ironically, while searching for core texts for this study in African and Caribbean literature, I came across more *Bildungsromane* by female writers than by male writers. Even though this is not enough evidence to make the case of the predominance of female writers in what I call the new *Bildungsroman*, the concept of female *Bildungsroman* can no longer be

overlooked. Thus, postcolonial and female *Bildungsromane* are increasingly gaining currency in academia.

Furthermore, with my focus on African and Caribbean literatures I came to discover how prominent the theme of transnational movement is in African and Caribbean narratives. Starting off with that observation, texts such as Eileen Julien's article "The Extroverted African Novel" (2006), rang a bell in the reflection that led to this dissertation. Julien's statement that "the extroverted novel" which "physically crosses borders and thematizes border crossings – is perhaps the most powerful literary form today in that it reaches more people beyond national boundaries" (690), finds its most powerful illustration in the new novel from Africa and the Caribbean. Therefore, it is no surprise that the theme of transnational migration takes pride of place in literary criticism of the postcolonial novel.

In contemporary postcolonial literary criticism in general, and that of francophone Africa in particular, as Ayo Coly observes, there is an emphasis on the theme of transnationalism, and its corollaries such as deterritorialization, uprootedness, hybridity and cosmopolitanism to the detriment of the theme of home and nation (Coly, xi). Her close reading of authors such as Ken Bugul, Calixthe Beyala, and Fatou Diome, challenges the truism that home is important and reinforces the idea that transnationalism has become central in postcolonial discourse. Moreover, Coly does an excellent job demonstrating the way in which gender significantly determines mobility and belonging.

Having subscribed to the idea that migration and transnationalism have become the hot topic in postcolonial literature, I found it original and beneficial to investigate, beyond the question of identity formation, the interplay between transnationalism and the

development of the *Bildungsroman* as a literary form. And one study that has set the tone for my project is Lene Arnett Jensen's article: "Coming of Age in a Multicultural World: Globalization and Adolescent Cultural Identity Formation" (2003). In this article, Jensen argues that adolescents increasingly form multicultural identities because they grow up knowing diverse cultural beliefs and behaviors. This statement straightforwardly prompted the idea of revisiting the *Bildungsroman* as a whole in the comtemporary era.

To some extent, Jensen's vision can be tied up with the perpspective that reads recent African novels against the backdrop of globalization at large. Studies in this vein include Dominic Thomas's *Black France* (2007) and *Africa and France: Postcolonial Cultures, Migration, and Racism* (2013); Odile Cazenave's *Afrique sur Seine: A New Generation of African Writers in Paris* (2005), as well as Adama Coulibaly and Yao Louis Konan's *Les écrits migrantes: De l'exil à la migrance littéraire dans le roman francophone* (2015). However, Jensen's contribution that mainly highlights the role of migration, worldwide media and multinational corporations in youth identity formation today, resonates most with my reflection that conflates globalization and the *Bildungsroman*. Jensen argues:

> Due to the process of globalization, adolescents increasingly have knowledge of and interactions with people from diverse cultures. The flow across cultures of ideas, goods, and people is not new, but the current extent and speed of globalization are unprecedented. With increasing migrations, worldwide media disseminations, multinational corporations, tourism travel, and so forth, diverse people interact with one another more than ever. (189)[1]

[1] Jensen paraphrases Friedman, 2000; Giddens, 2000; Hermans & Kempen, 1998.

Jensen's perspective that emcompasses the relationship between media, migration and identity formation, lays the foundation of my investigation about recent coming of age narratives in the postcolonial world.

Yet, despite extensive discussion about transnationalism in the postcolonial novel and the broad interest in coming of age stories, to my knowledge, no book length work that investigates the impact of transnationalism on the *Bildungsroman* as a literary form has been published yet. Consequently, focusing on what I have come to call the transnational *Bildungsroman*, this study seeks to fill such a gap in literary criticism. This type of novel that has fully emerged in the late 20th century and in the first decade of the 21st century makes a harmonious mix of the transnational and the coming of age narratives.

The juxtaposition, transnational *Bildungsroman*, suggests transgression and transformation at both thematic and formal levels as the genre "crosses borders and thematizes border crossing" (Julien, 2006). With a focus on transnationalism and identity construction, this study is in practical terms, cross-fertilization between various academic fields, ranging from postcolonialism, diaspora studies, and gender studies, to literary genre theories. As such, its conceptual framework runs the gamut from Homi Bhabha's concept of ambivalence and hybridity, Julia Kristeva's concept of "sujet en procès,"[2] Marie Louise Pratt's idea of "Contact Zone," Arjun Appadurai's notion of "new condition of neighborliness,"[3] to various perspectives on the *Bildungsroman*. Along with

[2] The Subject in Process is a concept that Julia Kristeva develops in her book *Polylogue* (1977). It refers to the evolution of the subject who is by nature in motion, challenging the erroneous notion of the monolithic nature of language. (Johanne Prud'homme and Lyne Légaré)
[3] New Condition of Neighborliness, "in which persons, money, commodities, and information circulate in uneven flows of power."

those concepts pertaining to identity formation and transculturation, definitions of the *Bildungsroman* by Jerome H. Buckley, Franco Moretti, and Mikhail Bakhtin, as well as Frederick Jameson's theory of "national allegory," represent the backbone of my analysis. Looking at it closely, most of these concepts can be accommodated under the umbrella of postcolonial theories, which basically represent an interdisciplinary set of lenses that allow multiple perspectives on the texts selected for this study.

Despite a great deal of controversy, many critics define the postcolonial as the attention brought to the interaction between the West and the non-West. Thus, as Tejumola Olaniyan puts it, postcolonial criticism becomes a search through the history of the "Empire – before, during, and after – from the perspective of the victims" (744). In more political terms, it represents a position against any form of racism, Eurocentrism and imperialism including subjugation through capitalism and globalization. Even if these old paradigms are still valid, the New Millennium witnesses a strong emphasis on new exigencies resulting from recent economic, technological and geopolitical changes throughout the world.

Therefore, some notions, which were not so long ago central to the postcolonial debate, are being challenged and questioned today. Taking the center-periphery paradigm as an example, it can be argued that it is waning along with nation-state borders, nationalism and national cultures in this era of technological advances, and the advent of "a global market economy." Hence, the fluid circulation of people, capital and information with their impact on society, politics and culture, becomes one of the main preoccupations of postcolonial theory and literature of the early 21st century.

As a matter of fact, this study looks at ways in which the neoliberal order suggests new perspectives on the postcolonial novel in general and the *Bildungsroman* in particular. Focusing on novels by African and Caribbean writers it attempts to illustrate how the West/Rest divide is being addressed with more open-mindedness by authors who seem to celebrate deracination, cosmopolitanism and hybridity. These novels portray protagonists who, rather than being attached to any specific place, occupy liminal or sometimes virtual spaces.

Therefore, as many critics have observed, cosmopolitanism, diaspora, multiculturalism, and hybridity are gaining more and more currency in postcolonial discourse and theory. Scholars such as Janet Wilson[4] and Rumina Sethi[5] share the belief that with neoliberalism people are finding new ways to express their concerns. They note a gradual shift from the culturalist thrust to a more and more materialist one, which implies gradual erosion of national, parochial or collective identities. In literature for instance, the idea of nation which used to be the sole reality in early postcolonial literature is being challenged by the recurring themes of dislocation and multiple attachments in more recent literary production.

It is against this backdrop that this dissertation examines the quest of identity in selected narratives. It attempts to make up for the insufficient attention that has been paid on how multicultural consciousness and the related transnational phenomenon contribute

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[4] Wilson, Janet. Cristina Sandru. Sarah Lawson Welsh. eds. *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium.* New York and London: Routledge, 2010.

[5] Sethi, Rumina. *The Politics of Postcolonialism: Empire, Nation and Resistance.* London: Pluto Press, 2011.

to the subversion of the traditional notion of *Bildung.* Contrary to the classic *Bildungsroman,* that foregrounds systematic "training of minds" (Lyotard, 4), and attachment to a place or culture, the texts chosen for this study explore more diverse and more liberal sources of knowledge. This new situation that Appadurai describes as "a new condition of neighborliness," opens multiple channels for education, thus making the process of maturation more complex. Therefore, Kristeva's concept of "sujet en procès," Bhabha's concepts of "hybrid agencies," as well as Stuart Hall's notion of "incoherent self," are relevant in this dissertation.

Scholars of the *Bildungsroman* including Mikhail Bakhtin, Jerome H. Buckley, Franco Moretti, and Joseph Slaughter have addressed the tendency of this genre to be conservative of the dominant order. In his book *Human Rights, Inc: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (2007), Slaughter argues:

> Both human rights and the *Bildungsroman* are social technologies of demarginalization (…) In this sense, the *Bildungsroman* becomes the generic name of certain transitive, human rights social work that, through its narrative heuristic of human personality development, tends to reinforce the dominant structures of state and to legitimize the normative logic and grammar of human and social development generally. (134)

Such an assumption becomes very problematic in the contemporary context, with the delegitimizing power of media and social interconnectedness. Moreover, Jameson's concept of "national allegory" becomes equally problematic in view of the transnational status of the protagonist in the emerging postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. In other words, it is tempting to ask, to what extent the symbolic or allegorical meaning of the *Bildungsroman* may be affected also by the tropes of transnational migration in postcolonial literature.

Narratives in this study fictionalize the development of young protagonists caught in a web of both local and transnational networks, in a way that triggers a new consciousness about self and the larger world as well. Hence, maturation involves not only self-awareness but also a critical attitude towards the social and geopolitical surrounding. In addition, the study investigates the implications of border crossing in the redefinition of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. In a word, it contextualizes the notion of *Bildung* and the *Bildungsroman* form within an era marked by diverse and expansive cultural connections.

In my analysis, I seek to demonstrate the ways in which the intensification of cultural exchanges through migration and global networks, known as cultural globalization, shapes the ideas, identities as well as the ways adolescent protagonists interact with the world. More precisely, I look at the ways in which "The dynamic shrinking of distance" to borrow a phrase from Joseph Nye, and the exposure to a world beyond the homeland, bring into existence new processes of identity formation, hence, a new type of *Bildungsroman* in Africa and the Caribbean.

The underlying assumption in this dissertation is that in this contemporary era characterized by intensive mobility, advances in technology and the rise in individual freedoms, the *Bildungsroman* necessarily inaugurates new plots, new patterns, and new types of subjectivities that push the horizon of the genre beyond its "native borders." Therefore, my argument is that the exposure to multiple cultures through various media and social networks complicates identity formation as adolescents find new ways of socializing within and across borders. Such social connectedness contributes to the

emergence of both a new sense of self marked by multiple allegiances or lack thereof, and a new type *Bildungsroman*, that accommodate such new configurations.

Hence, the fundamental questions we shall ask is, to what extent is the *Bildungsroman* as a literary genre concerned with such social and technological changes? In other words, in this interconnected and media-oriented world, how has the notion of *Bildung* shifted? How does multicultural consciousness as a result of this new condition shape the young protagonist's sense of self, place and community? How is identity negotiated both at home and in a foreign setting? How does the attempt to accommodate this new condition affect the form and the meaning of the *Bildungsroman*?

In order to provide clear answers to those questions, it is crucial to define and delineate terms such as traditional *Bildungsroman*, postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, and transnational *Bildungsroman*. The reason for this is that throughout my analysis, these terms will be contrasted with one another in order to highlight the level of evolution of the genre at specific points in time. In other words, this preliminary task will allow highlighting areas where the transnational *Bildungsroman*, which is the focus of my analysis, follows, extends or deviates from its predecessors.

My working definition of the traditional *Bildungsroman* combines some of the major perspectives on the genre. From Bakhtin to Buckley and Moretti, there seems to be little variation in the definition of the *Bildungsroman*. Except for Bakhtin who touches upon the Russian *Bildungsroman*, their respective contributions focus on the western tradition of the genre. Bakhtin's discussion of the *Bildungsroman* evolves around "the idea of testing a hero" (*Essays*, 16), and *"the image of man in the process of becoming"* (*Essays,*19). His essay, "The *Bildungsroman* and its Significance in the History of

Realism", deals with the historical evolution of the novel and the formation of the heroic figure in it. His perspective on the *Bildungsroman* as a novel that traces "the path of man's emergence from youthful idealism and fantasies to mature sobriety and practicality" (*Essays,* 22), strikes a note for the aspects that this study aims to explore. Bakhtin also argues that "This kind of novel of emergence typically depicts the world and life as *experience*, as a *school*, through which every person must pass and derive one and the same result: one becomes more sober, experiencing some degree of resignation" (22). His view is literally centered on reconciliation or integration as the single "happy ending" of the *Bildungsroman*.

By the same token, Buckley's definition of the *Bildungsroman*, which is one of the best known, also focuses on the hero's domestic crisis, his mobility and his eventual journey back. Buckley writes:

> A child of some sensibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, proves doggedly hostile to his creative instincts or flights of fancy, antagonistic to his ambitions, and quite impervious to the new ideas he has gained from unprescribed reading. His first schooling, even if not totally inadequate, may be frustrating insofar as it may suggest options not available to him in his present setting. He therefore, sometimes at a quiet early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also the relative innocence) to make his way independently in the city. There his real "education" begins, not only his preparation for a career but also . . . his direct experience of urban life. The latter involves at least two love affairs or sexual encounters, one debasing, one exalting, and demands that in this respect and others the hero reappraise his values. By the time he has decided, after painful soul-searching, the sort of accommodation to the modern world he can honestly make, he has left his adolescence behind and entered upon his maturity. His initiation complete, he may then visit his old home to demonstrate by his presence the degree of his success or the wisdom of his choice. (17-18)

By arguing that "that no single *Bildungsroman* will have all these elements, but none can

ignore more than two or three" (18) he adds a nuance to what appears at first glance as a clear-cut and unambiguous definition.

Both Bakhtin's and Buckley's descriptions of the classic or traditional *Bildungsroman* – which is in other words the European prototype of the genre – emphasize the depiction of a conflict between the protagonist and the values of society, ending with the former finally accepting those values and becoming accepted by the society in return. Moretti shares this vision in his famous book *The Way of the World* (1987), where he describes the *Bildungsroman* as the primary medium of class socialization in the 19th century. Furthermore, Moretti's argument about the contradictory nature and the symbolic meaning of the *Bildungsroman* is also significant to this study. He contends that the "*Bildungsroman* (…) is also the most contradictory of modern symbolic forms, we realize that in our world socialization itself consists first of all in the interiorization of contradiction" (10). This is similar to the idea of the hero's resignation found in Bakhtin's definition.

What comes out of these three perspectives on the *Bildungsroman* is that the classic form can be conceptualized as a metaphor of socialization. As Tobias Boes aptly points out, where he argues that the *Bildungsroman* "relates characters to their community by chronicling their voyages of socialization that lead to the inside of the community's signifying structures" (131). Hence, integration and reconciliation comes to be the dominant motif about the traditional *Bildungsroman*.

As for the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, it refers to the appropriation of the genre by historically marginalized groups and speaks to the genre's capacity to challenge pre-established values and assumptions. Since postcolonialism is associated with resistance,

the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* should obviously be understood as resistance literature. And resistance here is not just resistance to the "Western Center" and its conventions, but also resistance to any hegemonic and normative ideology. Therefore, the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* can be perceived as a contribution to the decolonizing and decentering effort that represent the essence of postcolonial literature.

In practice, the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* becomes a rewriting and a revision of the classic genre, and as a matter of fact, it becomes more difficult to define and predict. However, beyond its emancipated form, it is characterized by the allegorical nature of the life stories that it tells. That is to say that the growth of the protagonist is tied to the emergence of the nation. Such an allegorical meaning is an attribute that Jameson attaches to all postcolonial texts through his concept of "National Allegory." This concept has been and remains significantly influential in the interpretation of the postcolonial novel and the *Bildungsroman* in particular.

Nigerian critic Ogaga Okuyade[6] seems to subscribe to the concept of national allegory where he claims that the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* makes "the personal experiences of the protagonists serve as an index to the larger cultural, socio-historical conditions and thus the protagonists' personal *Bildung* becomes inseparable from the political agenda of their nations" (7). From this perspective, the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* becomes the expression of a larger critical agenda, a site for the articulation of subjectivities and national destinies, thereby making reconciliation

[6] Dr. Okuyade Ogaga teaches popular/folk culture, African literature and culture, African American and African Diaspora Studies, and the English Novel in the Department of English and Literary Studies, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

between the individual and the group more complex and more ambiguous. Many scholars of the genre share the belief that the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* stretches "the borders of the *Bildungsroman* genre, thereby foregrounding the fact that individual development involves not only achievement and integration, but also conflict and rebellion" (Okuyade, 3). This statement presents the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* as a potentially countercultural, progressive and disruptive form, a far cry from the European standard, which in most cases is profoundly conservative.

Consequently, in the postcolonial category of the genre, we find two subcategories that are distinguished from each other by the degree of attachment to the traditional conventions of the genre. While the early subcategory conforms to paradigms such as the search for a unified self and the protagonist's harmony with society, a more recent subcategory which is celebratory of multiple and complex subjectivities, and blurs the line between the local and the global is becoming more prominent in postcolonial literature. This subcategory that manifestly denies the existence of a unified self, affirms and asserts complex subjectivities is known as the postmodern *Bildungsroman*. Most transnational *Bildungsromane*, especially those published in the last two decades, fall into this category. As Adama Coulibaly et al (2015) note, specialists of literature draw a distinction between the older and the younger generation of writers that emerges around the 1980s.

This distinction between an early postcolonial bildungsroman and its postmodern subcategory lays the foundation for the contrast I wish to make throughout my analysis in this dissertation. In Africa and the Caribbean for instance, early *Bildungsromane* such as Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'aventure ambiguë*, Ferdinand Oyono's *Une vie de boy*,

Camara Laye's *L'enfant noir*, Geroge Lamming's *In the Castle of my Skin*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso sea* etc., and the most recent ones which include Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes and Memory*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hisbiscus,* Chris Abani's *Graceland,* Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* etc. are clearly distinct from each other through their respective ethico-political contents and narrative structures. The political and nationalist commitment associated with this older generation, obviously contrast with the orientation of the new generation who "see Africa (…), through the lenses of their experience far from home" (Cooper, 7).

This new trend in postcolonial literature – which, some critics refer to as migrant or exile literature, literature of deracination or nomadism, "écritures migrantes" for some Francophone critics – in my opinion, is better rendered by Jacques Chevrier's concept of "literature de la migritude."[7] This concept captures in a single shot the condition of mobility between two worlds as well as the problematic of quest for identity. Although reminiscent of the term "Negritude," it has an undertone that combines militancy and profanation. This trend, which has become dominant in postcolonial literature today, includes writers such as Alain Mabanckou, Calixthe Beyala, Thierno Monénembo, Jamaica Kincaid, Michelle Cliff, Daniel Laferrière and many more. Henceforth, the search for identity between different worlds becomes an integral part in the definition of the recent postcolonial novel. As such, the idea of a transnational *Bildungsroman* becomes fully justified and up-to-date.

The transnational *Bildungsroman*, which is the main focus of this dissertation,

[7] Jacques Chevrier, Professor emeritus at l'Université de la Sorbonne.

emerges from the writing of this new generation of postcolonial novelists who write about politics, identity formation, the circulation of people, capital and information etc. with a new mood and a new consciousness. Therefore, besides extending the trajectory of the protagonist, the transnational *Bildungsroman*, in its major part reinscribes old themes under a new light. In so doing, it marks the end of binaries and inaugurates the era of "interstitiality" and "in-betweeness."

Emerging in a period marked by promises of independence and freedom as well as connectedness and shrinking of distances, the transnational *Bildungsroman* calls attention to the causes and effects of displacements. It exemplifies the "interconnectivity caused by cultural globalization [and] challenges parochial values and identities because it undermines the linkages that connect culture to fixity of location" (Steger, 40). In short, it describes cultural crossroads, the push and pull factors of migration, as well as "The New Way(s) of the World."

Throughout this dissertation, I make an attempt to analyze selected *Bildungsromane* by both male and female authors belonging to the so-called new generation. My analysis mainly concentrates on the protagonists with a view to highlighting the process of maturation across geographical and social/societal borders. And to better highlight the elasticity of the *Bildungsroman*, it follows a thematic approach, bringing together two novels at a time within each chapter. The outline mimics the circular or cyclic itinerary of the classic *Bildungsroman* in order to create space for the assessment of the Transnational *Bildungsroman* against the structure of its classic counterpart.

Using a comparative method, this procedure allows demonstrating the extent to which the texts that are brought together illustrate or revise certain features of the *Bildungsroman*. Apart from the first chapter that provides critical reception of the selected texts, the three following chapters contrast two novels at a time in order to draw conclusions regarding the distance between the transnational *Bildungsroman* and its classic and postcolonial antecedents. Overall, this research is primarily a contribution to the ongoing debate of the reckless nature of the *Bildungsroman*. It represents a humble prompt for the rethinking of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, which is pointing to a new direction in postcolonial theory and criticism. While exploring the forces that set the adolescent protagonists out on the road to migration, it also assesses power relations as they are displayed in the so-called "Global Age."[8] It is among other things a critical reflection on youth identity formation in a postcolonial and postmodern context characterized by new media and enlarged social networks.

However, it would be unrealistic to seek to consider samples of the transnational *Bildungsroman* from all different sites of the postcolonial world within the framework of a dissertation. Therefore, I limit my focus to sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean for the sake of clarity and precision. Even within this limited terrain, my effort to ensure balance and comprehensiveness falls short of many aspects. My plan approaching this topic was to incorporate two narratives from sub-Saharan Africa and two others from the Caribbean. And for better balance I tried to have a female and a male wrtiter from both

[8] "Global age" is a concept developed by Martin Albrow in his book of the same title originally published in 1996. It refers to a period of time when there is a prevailing sense of the interconnectedness of all human beings (…)

sites. Surprisingly, finding a *Bildungsroman* by a male author that fits into the time frame of this study was an extremely big challenge, especially in the Caribbean. A difficulty that makes me wonder whether male writers are being forced out of their monopoly of the *Bildungsroman* by a new generation of female writers. This observation is in agreement with Akin Adesokan's argument that "popularly acclaimed novels in Western Europe and North America (…) are predominantly written by women" (Adesokan, 4). At any rate, this problem points to a drastic change in the appropriation of the genre in the postcolonial world.

Consequently, far from being a comprehensive academic work, this study is a preliminary case study about an issue that calls for more academic attention. It concentrates on four novels by distinguished postcolonial writers, belonging to the so-called new generation: *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994) by Edwidge Danticat, *Abyssinian Chronicles* (2001) by Moses Isegawa, *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003) by Fatou Diome, and *Graceland* (2004) by Chris Abani. These works illustrate, each in its own manner, the way in which advances in technology, the fluidity of borders, and the increasing capitalist and consumer culture significantly inform youth identity formation.

Edwidge Danticat, an award-winning Haitian-American writer, has been the recipient of positive critical and popular attention since the publication of her first novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. This novel has been praised on the literary scene due to its groundbreaking subject matter as well as its lyrical language. By emphasizing the relationship of a fatherless daughter with her over-controlling mother, and the attempts of the protagonist to reconcile with her mother and motherland, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, follows the pattern of the standard *Bildungsroman* in many respects. However, the

message of the novel exceeds Sophie's apprenticeship in her bilingual and multicultural world. Rather, it tells a great deal about the forces behind youth dislocation, the memories and trauma associated with the overall transnational experience.

Moses Isegawa is a Ugandan author whose work is set against the tragic years of political dictatorship in Uganda. Isegawa left his country in 1990 for the Netherlands where his debut novel, *Abyssinian Chronicles*, was first published in Amsterdam in 1998. He owes his international renown to this novel, which was very well reviewed when published in English in the United Kingdom and the United States, in 2001. *Abyssinian Chronicles* tells of the adventurous life of Serenety's family, and particularly Mugezi's coming of age that coincides with the dictatorship of Idi Amin Dada who the protagonist regards as a godfather, thanks to his philosophy of self-empowerment. This text, which is highly allegorical, focuses on the power of the "Trinity": Family, Church and State. Through the life story of Mugezi, the text also reevaluates the relationship between "the West and the Rest." Victimhood and guilt are the dominant tropes in this narrative that spans from rural Uganda to the heart of fortress Europe.

Fatou Diome, a Senegalese writer is known for her bestselling novel *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, published in 2003. Her work explores immigrant life in France, and the relationship between France and Africa. Her novel follows the journey of Salie, the difficulty of integration in France as an immigrant, and the nostalgia and memories of a difficult childhood in Senegal. Diome also extensively examines the toll globalization is taking on a community which has locked itself up narcissistically for a long time. The novel shows the power, the contradictions and the imbalances of globalization, but at the same time demonstrates the recklessness of identities in a world marked by pronounced

transnational movements, as well as media and communication technologies. Her narrator-protagonist, Salie is the epitome of a crossroad generation who is both in transit and in transition.

In the same vein, Chris Abani, author of *Graceland*, is a Nigerian novelist and playwright. His political commitment led him to leave Nigeria in 1991 for exile, first in the UK and then in the US where he now lives. In his keynote speech entitled "In Search of the African Writer" delivered at the African Literature Association (ALA) annual conference in Atlanta in April 2016, Abani problematizes his identification as an African writer, and rather refers to himself as just a writer. His novel *Graceland*, received the 2005 Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award, and Hurston-Wright Legacy Award. This novel follows Elvis, a sixteen-year-old impersonator of Elvis Presley. With a strong penchant for American movies, Elvis is an artist in search of a vocation. He shares this fascination and ambition with many street children, but idiosyncratically believes that his dream will come true someday in America. A dream he sets out to pursue on his own, despite his social background of poverty and the hostility of a military regime.

This dissertation is organized around four main chapters, which taken as a whole describe how the late postcolonial and late capitalist era complicates apprenticeship which used to be simplified as a journey of socialization. These chapters also present various perspectives on home and belonging by focusing on protagonists who find themselves at multicultural junctions, almost equidistant from every reference point. The chapters pose the problematic of closeness versus openness, mobility versus fixity, multiple options versus no choice, and realistic resolutions versus transcendental narratives. They present the transnational *Bildungsroman*, not as the opposite side of the

classic *Bildungsroman*, but as a subcategory devoid of the hierarchical, normative and normalizing nature of the latter. In brief, the chapters review the evolution of the key characteristics of the *Bildungsroman* as it journeys through the twenty first century.

Chapter One: The Transnational *Bildungsroman*: An Emerging Trend in Postcolonial Literature, discusses some of the formal characteristics of the transnational *Bildungsroman*. It looks at the way in which the appropriation and popularization of the *Bildungsroman* in the postcolonial world is synonymous to transgression and transformation at both formal and thematic levels. It engages with questions about the extent to which the transnational *Bildungsroman* is a revision of the traditional form and a shift from its postcolonial antecedent. Besides justifying the relevance of the selected novels in the category of transnational *Bildungsromane*, the chapter also looks at this subcategory as postmodernization and decanonization of the traditional genre.

Chapter Two: Education Begins at Home: Extending "The Contact Zone" in *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* and *Graceland,* examines the relation between media, migration and subjectivity in these two novels. It explores the effect of wide exposure to information technologies and foreign popular culture forms on collective identities. In other words, it describes how the notion of education takes a new meaning with mobility and information and communication technology. Both novels examine among other things, the effect of globalization – with the subsequent spread of mass media and popular culture – on African youths today. Drawing on Marie Louise Pratt's concept of "Contact Zone," the chapter seeks to illuminate the way in which these two stories introduce a new platform for cultural encounters and interactions. The chapter

demonstrates how, with new ways of socializing within and across borders, adolescents acquire a new sense of selfhood marked by complex cultural attachments and allegiances.

Chapter Three: Growing Away from Home: The Tropes of Memory and Belonging in *Abyssinian Chronicles* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory,* examines the implications of border crossing in the identity formation of the young protagonists in the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. The chapter makes the argument that "home", in its physical and metaphorical representation follows the protagonists in their quest for personality and happiness in a foreign setting. As a matter of fact, it engages with questions of diasporic identities such as attachment to a homeland, cultural memories, and cultural integration in the host land. In short, it underscores the interplay between memory and membership, and examines how Sophie and Mugezi, as migrants in New York and Amsterdam respectively, reconfigure their respective sense of place and belonging. By approaching the question of belonging, the chapter showcases the extent to which transnational mobility challenges the notion of *Bildung* and the structure of the *Bildungsroman*.

Chapter Four: The Voyage of Socialization in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique,* is built on the premise that in the postcolonial migrant text, homecoming means trial. The chapter mainly addresses the gender factor in the transnational *Bildungsroman*. It examines the return of the transnational heroine, her inconsistencies as she negotiates integration and acceptance in her community of origin. Simply put, this chapter attempts to emphasize the gender discrimination that surrounds the question of migration. It raises questions pertaining to accommodation, rebellion, reformation or withdrawal from the dominant social order by the returning female

migrant. This chapter addresses the ending as one of the main points of contention between the transnational *Bildungsroman* and its traditional counterpart. It shows the extent to which feminist contributions, which have skyrocketed recently in the postcolonial literary world, have revolutionized the *Bildungsroman* genre.

Chapter One: The Transnational *Bildungsroman*: An Emerging Trend in Postcolonial Literature

> And when the new psychology started to dismantle the unified image of the individual; when the social sciences turned to "synchrony" and "classification", thereby shattering the synthetic perception of history; when in ideology after ideology the individual figured simply as part of the whole – then the century of the *Bildungsroman* was truly at an end.
> Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World*

In his famous book *The Way of the World* (1987), Moretti makes this controversial pronouncement that predicts the demise of the *Bildungsroman*. His envisioning the end of the century of the *Bildungsroman* has given rise to a lot of criticism from many scholars who believe in the genre's "potential for evolution, transformation and adaptation" (Kociatkiewicz, 19). That is to say that Moretti's definition of the *Bildungsroman* has been deemed to be rigid and narrow. At least, that's what Matthew David Seidel seems to imply when he contends that Moretti sees "the intensification of the indefinition as an apocalyptic shift rather than an evolution" (6).

My contention in this chapter, building on such reflections, is that there exists no universally valid definition of the *Bildungsroman.* Rather, the *Bildungsroman* is an elastic form that has been proved to fit ideological needs of successive generations of both male and female writers since its inception. Its variation in the postcolonial world has given birth to a new trend that I refer to in this study as "The Transnational *Bildungsroman.*" As a matter of fact, this chapter focuses on the critical reception of this emerging trend, and ways in which it lengthens the list of the numerous subcategories of the *Bildungsroman* as a genre.

This new trend emerges towards the end of the 1990s and becomes the main tendency through the first decade of the 21st century in Africa and the Caribbean. To speak metaphorically, this new *Bildungsroman* can be considered as a grandchild to the early post-independence *Bildungsroman*. These early *Bildungsromane*, as already mentioned in the introduction, include *L'enfant noir* (1953), *In the Castle of my Skin* (1953) *Une vie de boy* (1956) *Mission Terminée* (1957), *L'Aventure ambiguë* (1961), *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) etc. My using this image of "grandchild", refers to the almost two-generation time span that separates the two sets of texts, rather than to a specific inheritance that the latter derives from the former. In other words, this image implies opposition between conservativeness and progressiveness; between "writing back to the Center" and "writing back to Self."

Contrary to the earlier generation, which focuses more on the irony, trauma and psychological alienation of colonization, and the need "to reinstate the subjectivity of the African that colonialism had obliterated" (Mwangi, 31), the transnational *Bildungsroman* explores the thematic of coming of age in a context of intensified transnational migration and multicultural encounters. In addition to the focus on identity formation within a social group in a specific nation-state, it examines through the development of the protagonist, the interplay between the local and the global. With a specific emphasis on the receptiveness of foreign influence and the ordinariness of growing up in a foreign environment, this new *Bildungsroman* offers a platform for critiquing various kinds of power dynamics as it relates experiences that engage multiple cultures in dialogue.

With a focus on the phenomenon that Fernando Ortiz[9] terms as transculturation, this new form is a good illustration of the hybridization of the *Bildungsroman* genre at both formal and thematic levels. It must be noted that the appropriation of the *Bildungsroman* in the postcolonial world has brought in a variety of cultural flavors. Thus, the term postcolonization of the *Bildungsroman* that indicates the transformation that the traditional form is going through in the postcolonial world is gaining currency.

This chapter looks at the implications of the traversing and trespassing of boundaries in the development and popularization of the *Bildungsroman*. The crossing of geographic and gender boundaries opens up avenues for new themes, new motifs and new narrative patterns that add to the fascination of the *Bildungsroman* genre. Even though most of the classic characteristics of the *Bildungsroman* have persisted throughout the history of the genre, in the transnational *Bildungsroman* identity formation and socialization take more complex forms as they engage the individual, not just with his/her social group at a local level, but also with other communities at a global level. This interplay between the local and the global generated by the protagonist's journey of self-discovery represents one of the major points of contrasts of this sub-category with its 19th century European counterpart in which the itinerary of the protagonist is invariably from a provincial location to an urban setting and vice versa.

While many of the earlier postcolonial *Bildungsroman* incorporated a transnational component, the protagonist more often than not held a "one-way ticket", which means the story ends with his/her departure. Laye's *L'enfant Noir* and Lamming's

[9] Fernando Ortiz Fernández (1881-1969) was a Cuban essayist, anthropologist, ethnomusicologist and scholar of Afro-Cuban culture.

In the Castle of my Skin represent a case in point. The few exceptions that include *L'Aventure ambiguë*, give glimpses of the hero's experience abroad and follow up with his homecoming. However, the difference between the earlier and the recent trends lies mostly in how the protagonist sees himself/herself in the midst of vying and contradictory forces, as well as in the ideology behind the production of the text. Put differently, the recent trend in coming of age novels is characterized by the protagonist's receptiveness to global interconnectedness, and the lack of ideological purity or seriousness in the narratives.

This new trend celebrates cultural diversity and global connections, rather than the superiority of one's original cultural values. In a world of technological advances that has more than enough to offer in terms of cultural encounter, the struggle to reconcile foreign influence with local cultural tenets has taken a new pace and new dimensions. Therefore, contrary to the earlier ones, protagonists in these novels usually hold "return tickets," "multiple entry visas" or "dual citizenship." This state of affair is indicative of a mindset in direct conflict with the nationalist sentiment of their predecessors.

As generally known, from the German prototype to its British and French variants, the genre has been predominantly male-centered, with a few exceptions. This patriarchal and heteronormative tradition has remained unchallenged until recently. Early criticism of the *Bildungsroman* concentrates on the male-authored ones. For instance, Bakhtin's essay "The *Bildungsroman* and its Significance in the History of Realism," is exclusively based on *Bildungsroman*e by male authors and about male heroes. In *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding,* the same attitude can be noted as Buckley's analysis focuses on male-centered narratives and overlooks the contribution of

female writers such as Charlotte Brontë who is contemporary to the Dickens and the W. M Thackerays, to whose works he dedicates a book that has become one of the most influential in the criticism of the *Bildungsroman* genre.

It is also interesting to note that the 18th and 19th century *Bildungsroman* by female writers has been associated with a phenomenon that Annis Pratt (1981) terms as "growing down." She uses this concept to describe a situation whereby the heroine "must give up those aspects of her independence that separate her from the patriarchal society, and must find ways to reconcile her view of herself with others' expectations of her" (Lorna Ellis, 18). Pratt applies this concept to Victorian novels such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* whose endings are conservative, conforming to the prevailing order of their respective societies.

With women's surge of interest in this subgenre, there is constant renegotiation of its defining features. A sort of "Renaissance" follows their relatively meager contribution in the genre in the 19th and early 20th century and their marginalization by literary criticism of the *Bildungsroman* for over a century. This can be partly explained by the fact that there is an increase in women's literacy and female readership, but also by the rise of the discourse about freedom and individual rights. As a matter of fact, these writers embrace the dual role of spokespersons of their gender, as well as contributors to contemporaneous debates. As Ellen McWilliams states "A number of feminist critics (…) see the emergence of the female *Bildungsroman* as directly tied to women's new-found public and political agency in the twentieth century and particularly in the 1970s and 1980s" (19). At the present time, there is an exponential increase of the number of women in the genre.

Contrary to the traditional *Bildungsroman*, the postcolonial female *Bildungsroman* does not just critique patriarchal practices and discourse, but also proposes "alternative worlds". While the heroine of the traditional *Bildungsroman*e rarely went beyond the provincial-urban configuration, and seldom achieved anything besides wifehood, the postcolonial era has known a turning point with women's groundbreaking contribution to this genre. Many critics, especially feminist critics, address the tremendous role of demarginalization played by the appropriation of the genre in this contemporary era. According to Joseph Slaughter, "Women as historically marginalized people appropriate the genre as a medium to express female agency and subjectivity" (38,124). In line with Slaughter, Marianne Hirsh points out that the novel of development in the twentieth century is "the most salient genre for the literature of social outsiders, primarily women or minority groups" (Abel et al, 245).

This resurgence of the female *Bildungsroman* also entails an extension in themes and motifs. Thus, themes as varied as sexuality, higher education, unchaperoned mobility, and transnationalism are explored in the contemporary female *Bildungsroman*. In brief, these *Bildungsroman*e show women successfully developing, learning, and growing in the world at large. As a matter of fact, rather than "a Counter-*Bildungsroman,*" the female *Bildungsroman* is an extension of the genre, a reflection of "women's fuller participation in society" (Labovitz, 1). As such, the restoration of harmony that marked the ending of the classic *Bildungsroman* is replaced by ambivalence and fantasy in the female version of the transnational *Bildungsroman* (McWilliam, 17).

Henceforth, transnational mobility and the ascending feminist sensibility are two factors that have both contributed to the revival and decanonization of the *Bildungsroman*

genre. In more specific terms, with the popularization of the genre, the classic codes and conventions are revised and at times subverted. To give a simple example, in the transnational *Bildungsroman*, a traditional quality such as the "Portrait of the Artist"[10] is quasi-absent, and the normalizing and socializing project has shifted towards the celebration of difference, tolerance and hybridity. In a word, while the postcolonial context has brought the *Bildungsroman* to the peak of its popularity, it has altered its traditional structure and has handled the artistic and ideological side with a great deal of incredulity and playfulness.

Focusing on the four works chosen for this study, this chapter makes an attempt to demonstrate the extent to which traditional patterns and general clichés in the reception of the *Bildungsroman* are reinstated or subverted in the transnational variant of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. *Breath, Eyes, Memory, Abyssinian Chronicles*, *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* and *Graceland,* are novels that very well illustrate the characteristics of what I have come to call the transnational *Bildungsroman*. In these novels "the protagonist learns his/her place in a home, home-country, and world" (Susan Strehle, 54).

My working hypothesis in this chapter is that while the transnational *Bildungsroman* draws strongly from the classic *Bildungsroman* and its early postcolonial variant, it represents a unique example of emancipation from these two categories. Therefore, the chapter discusses, its formal and thematic characteristics along with elements it has preserved from its immediate postcolonial predecessor, as well as from the traditional form. The analysis of the selected texts will show the extent to which the

[10] I use the allusion to James Joyce's first novel figuratively to refer to the intellectual, ideological and vocational quest of the protagonist.

respective authors contribute to the re-conceptualization of the genre by introducing new structures and motifs. Moreover, the chapter will make an attempt to highlight the way in which these narratives extend the Jamesonian allegory beyond national limits. In a word, the chapter will discuss the extent to which these writers have contributed to the postmodernization and decanonization of the *Bildungsroman* genre.

1- The Transnational *Bildungsroman*: A Postmodern Novel *Par Excellence*

This section demonstrates how the new *Bildungsroman* is reflective of a world characterized by border crossing at both literal and metaphorical levels. Focusing on *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, *Abyssinian Chronicles*, *Le Ventre de L'Atlantique* and *Graceland* as representative of the concept of transnational *Bildungsroman*, it seeks to highlight how the emerging trend in the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* is tied to the rise of transnational mobility and multicultural consciousness. In a word, it approaches this new form as a parallel to the image of both the writer and the protagonist who equally escape categorization because of their reckless condition.

From the 1980s onward, postmodernism and feminism have gone into high gear, causing a new awareness about self, art and style. This era has opened windows onto a new world characterized by freedom and departure from established ideas. With the influence of this movement many post-1980s narratives in Africa and the Caribbean became more liberated from preceding literary canons, and started breaking new ground. The transnational *Bildungsroman* emerges in this context and becomes one of the most emancipated and countercultural literary forms.

While these narratives have preserved many aspects of the traditional *Bildungsroman*, they both challenge and extend the genre as a whole. In this regard, the

opposition between the earlier and the late forms of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, as stated earlier, comes to mean opposition between conservativeness on the one hand, liberality and skepticism on the other. The seriousness and originality, which is traditionally associated with the post-independence canon, gradually starts giving way to playfulness, irony and parody. For instance, the serious and almost solemn tone of *L'enfant noir* and *L'Aventure ambiguë* can be contrasted with the relax narrative style found in *Graceland* and *Abyssinian Chronicles*.

Writers of this subcategory are necessarily transnational themselves and their lack of fixity – it can be argued – parallels both their writing style and the life experience they portray. Thus, the transgression and transformation, which is associated with transnational mobility, is reflected in the wrtings of these authors taken as a whole. As a matter of fact, fragmentation and lack of allegiance to established themes and narrative patterns come to be a defining feature of their works.

To begin with, one of the most remarkable features of the recent postcolonial *Bildungsroman* is the mixing of literary forms, or in other words, the use of unrelated sources. Thus, the boundary between "high" and "low" narrative styles is erased in favor of "freedom of narration" and critical self-awareness of the subject/narrator. This mixing of forms and styles is in line with postmodernism's practice of pastiche or collage, and could be seen as a challenge to metanarratives, which corresponds here to preceding theory on "narrative of representations of subjectivity in life writing" (Hutcheon, 189). Given that there is no limit to lack of conformity, every text is unique in its creative way of defying and modifying the established codes and norms.

Graceland is obviously one of the most remarkable examples of pastiche in contemporary African literature. Beyond the *Bildungsroman* form itself, Abani's book breaks away from established western conventions of the novel as a literary form. In addition to the fusion of the "Western novel's aesthetic with a Yoruban *juju* structure" (Sereda, 45), the book also challenges and "transgresses" a number of social and cultural norms by placing the Saint within the profane, and mixes vernacular with standard English. As Sereda confirms, "Abani smoothly moves through English, Nigerian pidgin, Scottish dialect or cowboy lingo in his text" (32). Moreover, the Koran and the Bible coexist with Elvis Presley, Bob Marley, Onitsha Market pamphlets, cryptic recipes and Igbo proverbs. By opening and closing each chapter with excerpts drawn from various sources, ranging from a cooking magazine, the Bible, the Koran, to Igbo folklore, and so on, Abani's collaging blurs the border between text and paratext[11]. Such a structure that "squeezes" Elvis's life story between these various elements, translates the latter's perplexity and confusion in front of the religious, cultural, and aesthetic input that such elements come to represent.

The same practice of intertextuality is present in *Breath,* where Danticat uses what Jo Collins refers to as "inset *Bildungs* narratives," whereby "Haitian folktales, become part of the texture of the narrative" (30). Such a narrative technique allows the author to deconstruct the patriarchal and political systems of oppression. The education of the protagonist about the world in general and about these two systems in particular, relies on lessons contained in folktales and family stories, passed down from one generation to the other. Early on in the novel, Tante Atie tells the story of her father's

[11] Paratext refers to materials supplied by editors that surround the main text of published authors (e.g. the story, non-fiction description, poems, etc.)

death in the cane field. At the end of the novel Sophie realizes that the recurring mother-daughter motif in the Haitian stories she was told as a child was "something essentially Haitian. Somehow, early on, our song makers and tale weavers had decided that we were all daughters of this land" (*Breath,* 230). By making use of popular stories, Danticat underscores their value and power as master-narratives, as well as models of apprenticeship or *Bildung*.

She seizes what McWilliams calls "The Power and Pleasure of Storytelling"[12] to deconstruct, not only patriarchy as a value system, but also to highlight the potential of popular narratives to invent and redefine identity and subjectivity. Such value and power of popular stories as metanarratives is addressed by Lyotard where he argues:

> Thus the narratives allow the society in which they are told, on the one hand, to define its criteria of competence and, on the other, to evaluate according to those criteria what is performed or can be performed within it. (20)

Thus, Danticat uses storytelling against itself to deconstruct its hegemonic power. Folktales related in her text carry a heavy patriarchal weight that the overall stand of the novel seeks to critique. She also takes advantage of the fact that they "enable education and growth" (Collins, 30) as both the narrator and the reader find food for thought. Hence, her novel appears as an oral narrative mode that she harmoniously shapes in the mold of the western tradition of the novel.

This indigenization of the *Bildungsroman* is also found in Diome's *Ventre*, where local folklore goes hand in hand with western thinking and technology. Diome's narrative

[12]Chapter Five: "Canadian Afterlives: The Power and Pleasure of Storytelling in *The Robber Bride* and *Alias Grace*". McWilliams, Ellen. *Margaret Atwood and the Female Bildungsroman.* Farnham, England ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate, 2009.

is peppered with exclamations in vernacular language (*Allah Akbar!, Wallaye, wallaye!, Kar kar!),* elements from the Senegalese folklore such as songs, as well as French rendering of local proverbs. Besides, her onomastic employment adds mockery to her aesthetics of satire. Names such as Ndétare, Ndogou, Gnarelle, Wagane Yaltigué, Sankèle, Garouwalé etc. carry a satirical weight embedded in the local social imagination.

In addition, her use of orature occurs along with intertextual references to Western and non-Western grand narratives, through figures such as Karl Marx, Dostoyevsky, Hemingway, Simone de Beauvoir, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor etc. By alluding to apparently contradictory narratives, Diome underscores a condition of postmodernity where people live at the intersection of multiple narratives, which in other words mean the end of a monological or unidirectional vision. Furthermore, she seems to underscore "the old principle that the acquisition of knowledge is indissociable from training (*Bildung*) of minds" (Lyotard, 4). For her formal schooling is necessary. However, Madické's identity formation, while feeding on a diversity of sources does not seem to hierarchize them could be seen as a sign of what Lyotard refers to as the postmodern condition (4).

With her talented use of irony, subtle at times and blatant at others, Diome skillfully deconstructs both her Senegalese background and her western culture of adoption. If Danticat's narrative can be read as an illustration of the power and pleasure of storytelling, then Diome's text on the other hand, can be fairly approached as an

expression of the power and art of irony. In an interview with Mbaye Diouf[13] she admits her taste for irony and confides:

> Elle existe dans toutes les cultures, c'est un peu comme une pince sans rire, on passe par l'humour pour régler des comptes et au lieu d'insulter les gens, les faire rire pour attirer leur attention sur des choses absolument ridicules et la bêtise humaine. (140)[14]

Thus, Diome demonstrates a great sense of parody, irony and quotation to an extent that makes her text equidistant from both her local and western readership. In a sense, her text can be perceived as a reflection of her transnational status, as well as her protagonists' hybrid identity.

In *Abyssinian Chronicles*, the realist and the supernatural merge into each other to form the most powerful critique of a country on the edge of the abyss. The novel is a harmonious combination of multiple prose genres ranging from the romance novel, the historical novel, to the horror novel. Jacqui Jones discusses Isegawa's mosaic literary composition in *Abyssinian Chronicles* in the following terms:

> The hybridity and eclecticism of his fiction, as well as his use of myth and metaphor, ensure that he does not foreclose on history or human subject. He does not, in other words, adhere to a master-narrative that espouses a monological vision. Instead he creates a dialogical space, a lucid or "carnival space". (Jones, 95)

Similar to *Graceland*, Isegawa's text is a good example of the confusion of fact and fiction, history and memory, the magic and the realistic. Both texts audaciously break the lines between the fantastic and the realistic, thus pushing the border of the western

[13] Mbaye Diouf is a professor at the Department of French Language and Literature at Université McGill, Canada.

[14] It exists in every culture. It is more or less like the dry wit. You use humor to settle scores. Rather than insulting people, you make them laugh in order to draw their attention on things that are absolutely foolish, on human stupidity. (Translation mine)

tradition of the *Bildungsroman* that rarely engages with such contradictory genres. One fascinating thing about these narratives is how they successfully create a parallel between the unconventionality of their writing styles and the uncertainty and unorthodoxy of their protagonists. Both seem to translate a spirit that Frederic Jameson, in his forward to Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition* (1984), describes as "making ourselves at home in our alienated being" (xix). By engaging with multiple genres, these novels reflect self-assurance and open-mindedness that simultaneously resist categorization and mark them as de-canonization or postmodernization of the *Bildungsroman* genre. Along the same lines, all these texts follow a non-linear structure where flashbacks mainly serve the purpose of contrasting past and present, local and foreign, new and old. The nonlinearity in these novels mirrors the multiplicity and fragmentation as well as the complexity of the overall identity formation of the subjects involved in the respective narratives.

Flashbacks are essentially associated with memory, which, while given free rein in postmodernism, is also central to the experience of the transnational subject. Therefore, these texts deliberately stimulate a sentiment of incredulity characteristic of the postmodern work of art. Hence, the break from the linearity of the narrative comes to symbolize a break from modernist narrative conventions. Thus, Moretti's argument that the *Bildungsroman* represents "a symbolic form of modernity," (5) conceals the fact that modernism is based on the belief in progress, which, in its turn is synonymous with linearity. Henceforth, subverting the linearity of the coming of age narrative amounts to subverting both form and meaning of the traditional *Bildungsroman* genre.

In *Ventre* Salie is a young adult living in France when we first encounter her. Then through retrospection, she tells us about her birth and childhood, and then returns to

the present. In fact, the novel is a series of anecdotes which are mostly evocations of events "that took place earlier than the [temporal field] of the story" (Genette, 40). What could be called chapters are discontinuous sequences focusing on specific events or characters e.g. Salie in front of her TV watching "the European Cup", Madické's "passion for Football", L'Homme de Barbès, Moussa's odyssey, a brief allusion to Salie's life in France and so on. At first glance, these anecdotes are random and unrelated. However, as the story progresses, Diome links them up to present a seamless picture of a whole community, and of a whole nation under the spell of globalization and neocolonialism.

The fact that Diome constantly shifts the spotlight between Salie and her brother, blurs the line between first person and third person coming of age narrative. Such a narrative device, presents in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Condition* and Tony Morisson's *Sula,* is characteristic of the dual or double *Bildungsroman*. That is to say, the life stories of the two characters (Salie and Madické) are interwoven into each other in such a way that it becomes puzzling to decide whose story is subordinate to the other's. Diome juxtaposes Madické's subject formation with his sister's (Salie's) in the same way as Dangarembga does with Tambu's and Nyasha's, or Morrison with Nel's and Sula's. Thus, like Dangarembga's and Morrison' texts, *Ventre* represents a revision of the classic *Bildungsroman* which usually follows the identity formation of a single protagonist.

At any rate, Diome's writing style, which is fragmented because connecting multiple anecdotes, reflects Salie's overall enterprise as a self-conscious writer, in quest of a coherent and unified identity. Her compilation of anecdotes is perfectly in line with Salie's endeavor to connect pieces of her identity: « souder les rails qui mènent à

l'identité »[15] (*Ventre*, 254). This self-conscious attempt to stitch fragments of her identity together appears as a good illustration of the postmodern concepts of collage and bricolage.

Nowhere are anachronies – to borrow Gérard Genette's term – more blatant than in *Graceland*, where, temporal indicators are provided at the beginning of every chapter in a non-chronological order. Oscillating between Lagos and Afikpo, and spanning between 1972 and 1983, the story makes flashbacks to the years of the Biafran civil war. The structure of the text as a whole evokes fragmentation and boundary crossing and is in consonance with Elvis's conflict and inconsistence between past and presence, between here and there. It exemplifies the work of memory and the authors' sense of subjective history.

With *Abyssinian Chronicles*, the author's attempt to rewrite or revise Ugandan history is covered up with references to real historical events in a chronological order. Beneath this façade we find an omniscient narrator who can be paralleled with Ken in Ken Bugul's *Le baobad fou* or Salem in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children.* Mugezi, the narrator, starts his story from his "pré-histoire" by going one generation back to the birth and childhood of his father, Serenity. This narrative technique, which Genette refers to as external analepsis, since the temporal field of the evoked events is outside the temporal field of the first narrative (Genette, 1980,49), poses the question of authenticity and narrative authority. Furthermore, it can also be argued that Isegawa's novel, like *Sula*, *Nervous Conditions* and *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, is also a dual *Bildungsroman*. Through flashbacks and anecdotes, Serenity's apprenticeship is almost entirely contained within the

[15] Soldering the rails that lead to identity (*The Belly of the Atlantic*, 182).

main plot line about Mugezi's coming of age. In this regard, there is confusion between first narrative and second narrative in many respects.

Of all these novels, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* seems be the only one with a chronological storyline comparable to that of the traditional *Bildungsroman*. Sophie's story begins with her childhood in Croix de Roset, continues through her journey to New York, where she reunites with her mother. The novel follows her growth up to the moment she returns to Haiti for the second time, for her mother's funeral. With various instances of allusion to the past, Sophie's narration also mimics human memory. Moreover, the frequent and untimely use of folktales poses the problems of narrative voice and the confusion of narrator with narratee. By engaging older and younger generations, Haitian and American cultures in a dialogue that allows mutual enlightenment, Danticat's text represents an instance of what psychologist David P. Lichtenstein[16] conceptualizes as polyrhythmic structure. Lichtenstein argues:

> Authors have used this structure to play one voice off another, to allow different perspectives to coexist, to juxtapose characters with different status or different history. In short, the notion of polyrhythm has allowed Caribbean authors to synthesize any number of conflicting factors or forces into one loose union (David P. Lichtenstein, n.pag)[17].

All these texts at one point or another represent a revision of the classic *Bildungsroman*. However, form is not an end by itself, but a means through which these writers challenge

[16] David P Lichtenstein is a professor of Psychriatry and Human Behavior at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

[17] Lichtenstein, David P. "Polyrhythm and the Caribbean: Literature." Caribbean Web [20 April 2016].

old paradigms and inaugurate new motifs. Thus, the transnational and postmodern context that dictates formal disruption also calls for thematic revolution. Dominic Thomas's statement that "New African literature remains engaged with the most compelling global ethical questions of the twenty first century" (240), implies the existence of a new type of novel independent from the social and political preoccupations of its post-independence predecessor.

The remarkable changes of the late twentieth and early twenty first century in terms of human rights in general and feminist sensibilities in particular, necessarily inflict a shift in the concerns of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. It goes without saying that the overarching theme in the *Bildungsroman* being the quest of personality or subject formation, the range of motifs cannot be sealed and hermetic. However, many motifs of the classic *Bildungsroman* such as marriage, quest of vocation, issues of parenthood etc. are treated along with new motifs engendered by the new social, economic and political configuration in the postcolonial world. In this regard, themes of domestic violence, political upheaval, war, AIDS, migration, and globalization occupy center stage in the recent postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. Thus, displacement, which is usually associated with the protagonist's quest of vocation in the traditional *Bildungsroman*, is present in many postcolonial *Bildungsromane,* but in such a way that ambition and aspiration are confounded with the instinct of protection and survival.

Except for Salie who pursues a career as a writer in France – even though marriage is the reason for her leaving in the first place – Elvis, Sophie and Mugezi*,* seem to run from a life-threatening situation in their respective countries. Mugezi who does not envision a future in Uganda in the aftermath of the war, leaves for an adventurous life in

the Netherlands. As for Elvis, he incarnates the desperate artist who refuses to see his dream shattered. In his attempt to escape from his downtrodden native Nigeria, he still carries his strong belief in his artistic aspiration.

However, neither Elvis, nor Mugezi has the artistic temperament of Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* who leaves irland in search of his artistic soul. And neither Salie nor Sophie has any of the vanities of Elizabeth in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* – since both have very little concern about what others think of them – or come close to Jane's wandering for vocational purposes in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. In their relatively stable societies, Stephen, Elizabeth, and Jane have an almost spiritual attachment to their aspirations. Their psychological uniqueness appears against the backdrop of clearly defined societal norms. Since their exile or wandering is clearly based on the quest for truth, their narratives lay emphasis more on their inner world than on their outer world.

Elvis and Mugezi's pursuit of their respective vocations is interrupted by a disastrous political climate that gives no chance to the development of their psychological uniqueness. In these two texts, the artist-protagonist is not clearly leaving in pursuit of an occupation. Rather, he becomes an escapee, a refugee, or a survivor on the run. In other words, their respective "conflicts" are not exclusively ideological but are mostly linked to security issues such as war, political turmoil or domestic violence. Therefore, leaving for safety and once for good, becomes a new motif that has given substance to the concept of war *Bildungsroman* that *Graceland* and *Chronicles* seem to be good examples of.

In *Breath*, even though family reunion is emphasized as the motif of Sophie's journey to New York, the fact that safety is at stake cannot be overlooked. Sophie leaves

Haiti in the middle of political upheaval and violent repression during the Duvalier dictatorial regime. Her Aunt Ati seems to rush her away from danger and seems to believe that Sophie should be grateful for being able to leave. Although in many respects, the novel follows the traditional *Bildungsroman* model, there is a reversal of the traditional pattern where Sophie leaves her surrogate mother to return to her biological one. The aspect of "parenthood crisis", as well as the starting point of her education, in brief, the line between "voyage in" and "voyage out" are completely blurred.

However, political and domestic violence are both emphasized as sources of transnational displacement. Martine's exile to New York after her rape by a Macoute, and Sophie's return to Haiti because of the trauma resulting from her mother's subjugating her regularly to the test of virginity[18] represent other examples of displacement caused by political or domestic violence. By concentrating most of the story around the cult of virginity, Sophie's dissidence through self-defloration and the subsequent sexual phobia, Danticat tackles the thorny theme of sexuality and breaches an age-old Haitian taboo.

The theme of transnational mobility that runs across these narratives opens up windows for reconsideration of the binary mindset present in preceding postcolonial texts. It enacts among other things ways of being "Neither Here nor There"[19] (Coly, 2002). Such tropes complicate the resolution of the transnational coming of age narratives. As a matter of fact, the conservative nature of the classic *Bildungsroman* is challenged by the hybridity and fragmentation of a subject, whose bicultural or

[18] The test of virginity in *Breath* consists in the mother inserting her pinky into her daughter's private part to make sure her hymen was intact.
[19] Coly, Ayo Abietou. "Neither Here nor There: Calixthe Beyala's Collapsing Homes." *Research in African Literatures* 33.2 (2002) 34-45

multicultural consciousness, as well as his/her social network resist traditional forms of resolution.

Thus, the ending, which coincides with maturity or adulthood, is one of the most crucial moments of the *Bildungsroman*. In the traditional definition of the *Bildungsroman*, maturity means integration, socialization, and recognition of one's place or role in the world, by accepting its values and rules. As clearly described by Genette's comment on Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*[20]:

> The final discovery of the truth, the late encounter with the vocation, like the happiness of lovers reunited, can be only a dénouement, not an interim stopping place; and in this sense, the subject of the *Recherche* is indeed a traditional subject. (227)

Since the ending is seen as the most critical moment of the journey of education, it becomes the most outstanding aspect in the rewriting or revising of the traditional *Bildungsroman*. In the postcolonial context, the ending of the *Bildungsroman* has been subject to diverse treatment to serve various ethico-political perspectives. However, with the countercultural stance characteristic of postmodernism, the ending of the transnational *Bildungsroman* has become more unpredictable and even unrealistic at times.

In her book, *Postmodern Utopias and Feminist Fictions* (2013), Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor's discussion of Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) and Nalo Hopkinson's *Midnight Robber* (2000) makes the case that the endings of these female *Bildungsroman*e are "far removed from "the common sense" endorsed by traditional ways of the world" (37). The transnational *Bildungsromane* in this study, male and

[20] In *Search of Lost Time* – previously also translated and published as *Remembrance of Things Past,* is a novel in seven volumes, written by Marcel Proust.

female versions alike, perfectly fit Wagner-Lawlor description since none of them confirms "the way of the world," or conforms to an *a priori* lesson to be learned (24). They are characterized by unfulfilled quests and yearning rather than assimilation and integration.

Unlike the rationalist or realist endings of the 19th century *Bildungsroman*, the transnational *Bildungsroman* presents a hero or heroine who dreams of alternative worlds in place of the ones local and global communities are willing to offer. While *Breath* and *Graceland* provide unresolved endings, *Ventre* and *Chronicles* present a far more unrealistic resolution that borders on fantasy. The fate of Sophie in *Breath*, like that of Elvis in *Graceland* is left open for speculation. These two protagonists occupy a transient space as both stories end in what can be interpreted as a "no man's land", where the reader cannot expect them to dwell (the plantation for Sophie and the airport for Elvis). With Salie and Mugezi, it's a sense of trying to make the impossible possible. While the former resolves to occupy an "imagined space," which is evenly inclusive of both Europe and Africa, the latter is yearning for a "world without walls" in the heart of "Fortress Europe."

Contrary to the protagonist in the earlier postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, the transnational protagonist is engaged in a struggle for "Hybrid Agencies" which, according to Bhabha occurs "when they find their voice in a dialectic that does not seek cultural supremacy or sovereignty" (212). In this case, the local and the global, the past and the present merge into each other to form a cross-fertilized subjectivity. This indeterminacy, it should be specified, corresponds with an ongoing process of deconstruction of both the present and the past, the local and the global. In a sophisticated

metaphor, Wagner-Lawlor compares the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* with a Janus-like character "looking backward and forward – as well as "here and now" – to make visible the painful structures of past and present" (13). She also argues that its endings "are not oriented by the resolution of familiar, happy endings. Rather, they are reoriented entanglements of the real, the imaginary, the possible, and the potential" (8). This description of the postcolonial novel finds its best illustration in the transnational *Bildungsroman*.

This kind of unsettled ending is nowhere more visible than in the female version of the transnational *Bildungsroman* that provides an ambiguous response to masculinist ideology or societal expectations for women. As Abel et al argue, "Women authors, most noticeably, have evolved a new model that alters the socialization process depicted in the traditional *Bildungsroman*" (305). Both Salie and Sophie go through processes that involve faking and mimicking in their attempts to reconcile their local culture with their western influence. Thus, identity becomes a mere performance resulting in what Lorna Ellis refers to as "separation of outward appearance from internal motivation (…)" (10). This split subjectivity, in fact, becomes the manifestation of the difficulty to socialize, which, according to Moretti,"consists first of all in the interiorization of contradictions" (10). The fact of the matter is that by subverting the masculinist norms, the female *Bildungsroman* disrupts the very essence of the traditional *Bildungsroman* as a metaphor of socialization. It thus, becomes a counter-cultural, a counter-hegemonic, or simply a postmodern variant of the classic form. As such, women's contribution to the Bildungsroman genre has the simultaneous double effect of popularizing and de-canonizing it.

By becoming a mode of expression for people from all walks of life, the 21st century *Bildungsroman* also undermines the elitist status traditionally associated with the genre. In other words, such popularization mostly comes with a degree of profanation and subversion of some of the defining features of the genre. The novels in this study illustrate the notion of postmodernization and de-canonization of the *Bildungsroman* in various ways. The fact that the protagonist of the transnational *Bildungsroman* aspires to become a citizen of the Big World, which means in other words that he/she has "a sense of belonging to a wider community of human beings" (Wagner-Lawlor, 27), entails the establishment of new modes of socialization, "new conceptions of community and affiliation, other ways of living, and new ways of learning and knowing" (Wagner-Lawlor, 37). Henceforth, the dialogue between the local and the global becomes more emphasized, and the ethico-political meaning of the *Bildungsroman* becomes more expanded.

In many respects, the transnational *Bildungsroman* subverts existing taxonomies of the *Bildungsroman* plot. This new *Bildungsroman* for instance, slips away from Buckley's outline of the classic English *Bildungsroman* plot, which seems to have become one of the most influential yardsticks for a typical *Bildungsroman,* even beyond the English canon. As mentioned in the opening chapter Buckley suggests:

> A child of some sensibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, proves doggedly hostile to his creative instincts or flights of fancy, antagonistic to his ambitions, and quite impervious to the new ideas he has gained from unprescribed reading. His first schooling, even if not totally inadequate, may be frustrating insofar as it may suggest options not available to him in his present setting. He therefore, sometimes at a quiet early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also the relative innocence) to make his way independently in the city. There his real "education" begins, not only his preparation for a career but also . . . his direct

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

As mentioned earlier the transnational *Bildungsroman* proposes a trajectory beyond national borders and exposes the protagonist to diverse cultural values. His or her initiation is never complete since every ending is a fresh start.

Despite Buckley's fairly comprehensive description, it appears that Bakhtin's definition of the *Bildungsroman* as a subcategory of the novel is more relatable than Buckley's to the transnational *Bildungsroman*. By stating, "no specific historical subcategory upholds any given principle in pure form," (10) his vision of the *Bildungsroman* encompasses the recent development of the genre. Bakhtin sees both content and form as subordinate to context when he states "since all elements are mutually determined, the principle for formulating the hero figure is related to the particular conception of the world, and to a particular composition of a given novel" (10).

Nevertheless, Bakhtin, Buckley and Moretti share the vision that in the *Bildungsroman*, "man is required to adapt, recognize and submit to the existing laws of the stable world" (Bakhtin, 23). Such a vision finds itself in direct confrontation with the tropes of subject fragmentation, placelessness, yearning and nostalgia that represent the bedrock of the transnational *Bildungsroman*. At a formal level, the reversal of the linear temporality, the mixing of forms, fantasy, irony and sometimes the utopian discourse are among others, elements that make the recent postcolonial *Bildungsroman* far removed from the classic *Bildungsroman* and its post-independence variant.

All in all, these narratives represent a patchwork of forms, and a transgression of realist forms of fulfillment. The protagonists in these *Bildungsroman*e incarnate multicultural identities as they participate in transnational social networks or globally connected cultures, and struggle with hybridity and "unhomeliness."[21] To various degrees *Breath, Chronicles, Ventre* and *Graceland* as archetypes of the transnational *Bildungsroman*, celebrate hybridity rather than fixity, self-reflectivity rather than essentialism, ambivalence rather than settledness. As a matter of fact, they represent good examples of the post-modernization or de-canonization of the *Bildungsroman* in the postcolonial world. They provide sufficient subject matter for the concept of transnational *Bildungsroman*, as well as enough evidence for the hypothesis that such a subcategory of the *Bildungsroman* represents a good niche for various sensibilities of the ever-spreading consumer and technology society.

2- Cross-Road Narratives: Extending the Socio-Political Allegory

This section seeks to highlight the value that the transnational dimension adds to the meaning of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. In other words, with the gradual collapse of nation-state borders, and the demise of nationalist discourses, how does the transnational *Bildungsroman* represent an extension of the traditional interpretation that tied the meaning of the coming of age story to nation and nation building? More specifically, how do stories in the respective works allegorize the international arena?

As mentioned in the previous section, distinctive characteristics of the emerging trend in the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* include the "uncertainty about where home is"

[21] Unhomiliness is a concept developed by Homi Bhabha to refer to a sense of foreignness within the self, or the feeling of not being at home in one's own body or home.

(Hitchcott, 10) or up-rootedness, and the celebration of hybridity. Therefore, looking at its symbolic meaning in a situation of decline of unified and coherent identities or ideologies represents a challenging undertaking. With the new generation of writers, the *Bildungsroman* opens possibilities to be read more as a speculative narrative than a metaphor of socialization. This state of affairs as such, opens up grounds for multiple interpretations. Thus, it could be expected that the symbolism associated with the *Bildungsroman* becomes tied to the fact that identity negotiation more often than not engages multiple cultures, and usually extends onto the international scene.

The opening section of this chapter has underlined the difficulty to define and conceptualize the meaning of the *Bildungsroman* of 20th century Europe. This reckless or irregular nature of the *Bildungsroman*, which led to Moretti's prediction of the end of the genre, has been pushed to the edge in contemporary postcolonial literature. In light of the controversy surrounding the meaning and development of the genre, my contention is, if the European *Bildungsroman* can be fairly interpreted as a symbol of modernity, then the transnational *Bildungsroman* can be rightly read as a symbol of postmodernity.

The substantial amount of criticism on the *Bildungsroman* imposes that we look at the extent to which the transnational *Bildungsroman* fits or resists existing literary interpretations of the symbolic meaning of the genre and its postcolonial variant. Such a discussion allows highlighting the new emphasis of postcolonial literature in an era of social and cultural interconnectedness, as well as the enduring potential of the *Bildungsroman* to respond to various sensibilities.

Bakhtin, Buckley, Moretti, Jameson and Joseph Slaughter, to name but the most familiar, agree on the symbolic meaning of the hero as a signifier of the nation. Again, in

The Way of the World, Moretti argues that the *Bildungsroman* is "a specific image of modernity: the image conveyed precisely by the youthful attributes of mobility and inner restlessness" (5). In this statement, Moretti clearly defines the *Bildungsroman* as a symbolic form or an allegorical genre by nature. Similarly, in Bakhtin's analysis, the *Bildungsroman* is about a man who emerges and the world may emerge along with him or remains static, in which case he argues, man is required to adapt, recognize and submit to the existing laws of the stable world (Bakhtin, 23). Such classic interpretations that relate the growth of the hero to the emergence of a nation have been prevalent since the inception of the form in the 18th century in Germany (McWilliams, 6-7). However, it is worth reminding that there are cultural and political differences that set apart the classic *Bildungsroman* and the postcolonial/transnational one. Since the protagonist of the transnational *Bildungsroman* negotiates multicultural norms and postmodern identities, the allegorical meaning of this subcategory requires a more far-reaching interpretation.

Jameson's 1986 article, "Third World Literature and the Era of Multinational Capital", provides a first glimpse since it is directed not only to postcolonial fiction, but situates the debate in a context of "Multinational Capital" which corresponds to some extent to the one from which the transnational *Bildungsroman* emerges. In his article, Jameson argues:

> All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call national allegories, even then, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel. (69)

Jameson focuses on "Diary of a Madman" (1918), a short story by Lu Xun, whom he refers to as China's greatest writer, and *Xalaa* by renowned Senegalese author and

filmmaker, Ousmane Sembene, to demonstrate his hypothesis. He skillfully attempts to highlight how the private story of the individual character is an allegory of the public or national situation. In other words, he shows how the domestic, the personal, and the libidinal are signifiers for the larger society or the overall condition of the nation-state. In simple terms, he claims that postcolonial texts "[say] one thing and [mean] another" (Fletcher, 2).

While many critics depart from his "prioritization of allegory and nation as key components of African literature" (Mwangi, 16) some still find it meaningful to read postcolonial literature as social and political allegories. Ogaga Okuyade for instance, subscribes to this view by arguing that the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* makes:

> The personal experiences of the protagonists serve as an index to the larger cultural, socio-historical conditions and thus the protagonists' personal *Bildung* becomes inseparable from the political agenda of their nations. (web, n.pag)

Both Jameson and Okuyade reinscribe the idea of the nation as the focal point of postcolonial literature. Thus, Jameson's concept of national allegory has been and remains a viable lens for the interpretation of literature at large, and postcolonial literature in particular. Moreover, the satirical and propagandist function of the allegory, its didactic potentials, in a word, its power as an instrument for political criticism find a niche in postcolonial literature regardless of and space distinction. However, the question remains whether this connection between the hero and the nation endures beyond the gradual demise of nationalism and national cultures in an era of economic and technological globalization.

One thing is certain. Even though the transnational dimension of these *Bildungsroman*e may extend the allegory beyond national borders, the nation-state

remains central as a subject of representation. Barbara L. Langston analysis of *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Annie John* shows that the internal and external (or international) dimensions are two sides of the same coin of the *national allegory*. By stating that the "search for individual identity is a metaphor of the Caribbean fight for its own sense of self beyond the Other created by British colonialism" (163), she indicates ways in which the national allegory signifies both the nation's "inner world" as well as its (the nation's) relation to the outer world, or the larger world system.

In light of this theoretical framework, the attempt to search for allegorical meaning in *Breath*, *Ventre, Graceland,* and *Chronicles* seems to be both viable and ambitious. However, the analysis will remain within the frame of generality with a few illustrative details from the narratives in order to highlight the interplay between the narrative aesthetic and their respective social and (geo)political contexts. Danticat, Isegawa, Diome and Abani respectively make commentaries on the postcolonial condition at both personal and national levels, with highly sophisticated narratological talents. Each of these writers presents a viewpoint concerning the dialectic between the local and the global. In these novels the emphasis is laid on the fragmentation and uncertainty of the subject in a context of advanced media technology, enhanced presence of multinational corporations, international agencies and organizations. With this picture of an interconnected world, the protagonist's restlessness becomes a symbol of the nation facing the imperative to adjust to a new world order.

In these novels the protagonists who are products of both local and foreign influences, grow up with the consciousness of the existence of global networks and the awareness of possible alternatives to their immediate surrounding. Thus, they incarnate

salvation from what Adichie calls "The Danger of a single story."[22] Hence, the respective protagonists in these works can be read in various ways as embodiment of the crisis, the conflict, and the contradictions that individual nations as well as the whole postcolonial world are going through. In other words, the turbulence, the inconsistencies and the suffering of the individual serve as signifiers of the social and political situation of these nations as part of a global system.

Despite the emphasis on deterritorialization and cultural transformation, these transnational *Bildungsroman*e are also very politically conscious. In this regard, they represent to a certain extent a continuation of the political concerns found in postcolonial novels since the 1980s. Contrary to the imaginary setting of the earlier texts, these new texts make reference to distinct historical events, recognizable settings and characters. Therefore, the traditional meaning of the hero as an incarnation of the national spirit is also present in these narratives. With the exception of *Ventre*, these texts describe "a world on the verge of despair and abyss" (Mwangi, xi), with cancer and decay as haunting metaphors for the destruction caused by political violence.

Through Elvis, an impersonator of Elvis Presley, Abani's *Graceland* functions as a riddle for the situation of Nigeria. With his multiple sensibilities, Elvis is the embodiment of Nigerian local diversity, as well as the substantial foreign influence Nigerian people are exposed to. Throughout the story, he shows talismanic attachment to both local and foreign objects such as his Fulani pouch, his mother's cooking magazine, an old Bible and a copy of the Quran. The fact that each of these objects represent a

[22] The topic of a TED talk given by the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in 2009. It is about what happens when people are reduced or exposed to a single narrative.

culture that adds up to his Igbo background, makes his whole being look like a patchwork quilt. This attitude is the material manifestation of his crossroad subjectivity.

His restlessness and uncertainty about who to turn to between Redemption (the "Western-maniac") and The King of the Beggars (a radical conservative) on the one hand, and about whether he wants to leave or stay on the other hand, can be analogized with the political uncertainty that the Nigerian nation is going through. Elvis's perplexity becomes a reflection of the country torn between corrupt politicians, military regimes and the advocates of a return to the traditions. With his friend Redemption, they represent a personification of the military regime as they both rely on illegal and sometimes criminal activities to stand on their own feet.

On another scale, Elvis is the embodiment of the deprived and orphaned people. His mother Beatrice who is being consumed by a breast cancer can be read as a personification of the infected and decaying nation. The breast as a symbol of nurturing, of life and vitality, has lost its primary role. By the same token the nation's life forces have become gangrenous, to a point that the nation is completely doomed. Not only is it unable to fulfill its nurturing duty, but it also turns against itself. Beatrice's use of war terminology to explain her breast cancer to Elvis, suggests the self-destructive downward slope on which the nation is pushed on:

> Beatrice woke up to go to the bathroom. As she stood up, the lappa covering her slipped off, revealing her nudity. Before she could cover herself, Elvis saw the emptiness where her breast had been. (…)
>
> "Do you know what's happening to me?" She asked.
> "Sure," he replied. "You are ill. That's what Oye says."
> "Granny to you!" she chided. "Yes, I am ill," she continued. "I have cancer."
> "What's that?" he asked.

> "Dat's when your body begins to fight you. So the doctor cuts away de angry part and hopefully you get well."
> "Was your breast fighting you?"
> "Yes."
> "So now it has been cut away, are you better?"
> "The doctor is not sure. It might spread."
> "The anger?" (*GLD*, 40)

The cancerous body here is the allegory of a self-destructive nation. With the probability of the cancer to spread, the end of the crisis of the nation becomes also unpredictable. With the death of Beatrice, Elvis becomes simultaneously the motherless and the nationless child in quest of a substitute "Mother-Nation." By extension, he becomes an allegory of diasporic and transnational experience at large.

Nowhere is the protagonist's coming of age as an allegory of the nation building more obvious than in Isegawa's *Chronicles.* In his book, *Africa Writes Back to Self: Metafiction, Gender, Sexuality,* Evan Mwangi greets this novel as a national allegory. As for the author, Isegawa, "[he] has been spoken of as another Rushdie, another Garcia Marquez, another Ben Okri, another V.S Naipaul…" (Mantel, 462). This statement speaks volumes about both the book's subject matter and style. The authors mentioned in this statement are famous for their appropriation of the *Bildungsroman* genre; their writing that blends magical realism within the western tradition, and above all for representing postcolonial classics.

In *Abyssinian Chronicles*, a common fate links Mugezi the protagonist, with a Ugandan nation completely brought to its knees by successive dictatorships and civil wars. The text is built around the metaphor of the abyss, with a thematic that evolves around "violence, political upheaval, anarchy, chaos and uncertainty" (Jones, 85). Imagery of ferocious animals, flies and maggots "infest" Isegawa's description of the decaying "wound" that Uganda has become. Andrew H. Armstrong writes: "Mugezi

comes to maturity, as the country struggles to emerge from the "wounds" of the Amin dictatorship" (133). Thus, *Abyssinian Chronicles* becomes one of the best exemplifications of the Jamesonian concept of national allegory.

According to Jones, "in *Abyssinian Chronicles* the personal is the political" (98). Along the same lines, Brenda Cooper also observes that in the novel, "the "Family", the "Church" and the "State" act in unity as multiple parts of one big system, such that "the public and the private become interchangeable (…)" (Jones, 96). Both Jones and Cooper clearly allude to how Mugezi functions as a personification of the country plagued with different forms of dictatorships including the church, Amin's and Abote's respective regimes. Padlock's despotism echoes both that of Idi Amin and that of the church as they both represent one and the same force that seeks to domesticate and tame the Ugandan people.

Mugezi's vitality, slyness and thirst for freedom is an embodiment of the oppressed and repressed population. By being caught between the repression of his mother Padlock, the threatening "serenity" and detachment of his father, and the "dressage" of the seminary, Mugezi becomes a perfect replication of the "Obote I- Amin-Obote II triangle of terror" (Armstrong, 130) or the Lewero Triangle as a site of oppression and resistance. With his stubborn and defiant attitude, he can also be read as a caricature of Idi Amin Dada trying to emancipate the country from foreign influence. His departure from Uganda parallels Amin Dada's going into an exile from which he never returned.

The metaphor of decay and cancerous bodies, as seen in *Graceland,* is also present in *Chronicles.* Dr. Ssali's raw circumcision after his conversion to Islam is an

allegory of the rejection and inappropriateness of foreign influence. It can be read as a metaphor for the counterproductive and blind zeal of political leaders whose attempts to control the country result in more chaos. Dr Ssali's fly-infested compound becomes a metaphor of Uganda under assault from both inside and outside. The flies symbolize aggression and greed and could be interpreted as an allegory of the selfish and insatiable attitude of politicians in their struggle for power. This analogy becomes viable if we know that "the heap of chicken entrails", "blood-caked dog heads" represents "a warning, a naked act of terrorism" which is assumed to "be coming from one person: the mother of the person who had sold him [Dr Ssali] the land on which he had built his house" (*Abyssinian*, 13). Thus, Ssali's house can be analogized with terror-stricken Uganda led by the zealous and violently contested Idi Amin Dada.

Despite the trauma resulting from the war and the military repression, both Elvis and Mugezi are faced with the uncertainty about whether to leave or stay. Their final resolution to leave translates their incapacity to adapt and submit to the prevailing order of a world that is not emerging along with them (Bakhtin, 23). Their pessimism or resignation about the situation of their respective countries can be better rendered by the metaphor of the shattered vase. Desperate about seeing their countries rise again, they turn away, with only fragments of the past to decorate their memories.

Thus, both Elvis's and Mugezi's departure seem to be motivated more by the instinct for survival than by a specific artistic quest. Unlike that of Joyce's Stephen Dedalus, Elvis's and Mugezi's respective departures could be assimilated with "rushing for the exit." This quest for an alternative world contradicts the pattern described by Bakhtin that consists in recognizing and submitting to the order of a static nation.

Therefore, these protagonists break the rule of representing metaphors of socialization, and become symbols of global interconnectedness. In other words, since to leave or to stay becomes subordinate to social connections inside and outside the country, both protagonists become personification of the demise or porousness of nation-state borders and the growing sense of deterritorialization.

In Danticat's text, Martine and Sophie represent the cycle of political oppression in Haiti. They respectively function as metaphors of the nation and its people. Like Beatrice in *Graceland*, Martine could be read as an incarnation of the nation. Her being traumatized and devastated by a rape can be equated with Haiti's long history of foreign invasion. As put by Helen Scott, Haiti is "a land long dominated by the legacy of forced labor, dictatorial domestic rule, external domination, revolutionary struggle and the ever-present sugarcane (…)" (463). Martine's attempt to restore her cultural and psychological equilibrium involves oppressing her daughter, which could also be equated with the dictatorship that took over after foreign occupation. Thus, Sophie becomes the embodiment of the suffering of the people and their thirst for freedom. By sacrificing her well-being in order to put an end to the humiliation she undergoes with her mother, she becomes a personification of the revolution of the Haitian people who put their lives in danger in order to break the manacles of dictatorship. In other words, the conflict between Martine's attempt to domesticate Sophie, and the latter's will to emancipate herself reflect the political struggle on the Haitian ground. By regularly subjecting her daughter to the test of virginity, Martine becomes a replication of the rapist, the aggressor, and the dictator that the Duvalier regime has come to be associated with.

Sophie's breaking of the chain of the generations-old tradition of testing parallels the Haitian people's revolution that put an end to the long regime of terror and humiliation of the Duvaliers. Sophie's bloody act of self-defloration can be therfore paralleled with the Haitian enterprise of "Dechoukaj"[23] (uprooting), a suicidal undertaking launched to put a definitive end to the dictatorship of the Duvaliers. From Scott's perspective, "the willingness of the Cacos to fight to the death for liberation is transformed in the person of Martine into grotesque self-immolation" (Haiti, 473). Thus, self-sacrifice, which is a hauntingly present trope in Danticat's text, serves as a metaphor for the bloody regime of the Duvaliers.

However, the birth of Sophie's baby, Brigitte, could be interpreted as the newborn democracy and people's ongoing hope for freedom. In other words, Brigitte becomes the promise of a new beginning. This seems to be the apparent meaning of Sophie's declaration that: "It was up to me to avoid my turn in the fire. It was up to me to make sure that my daughter never slept with ghosts, never lived with nightmares, and never had her name burnt in the flames" (*Breath*, 203).

Beyond the national space, these texts extend the allegory on the international scene. They literally and metaphorically underscore cultural dialogues, power relations between western and postcolonial nations, as well as the mindset generated by what Emmanuel Wallerstein[24] has theorized as "the penetration of peripheral spheres by a dominant capitalist core"(Christie, 59). In this regard, texts like *Graceland*, *Abyssinian*

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[23] *Dechoukaj* is a Kreyol term that literally means "uprooting". It is used primarily to refer to the political upheaval in Haiti following the exile of dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier on February 7, 1986. During the *dechoukaj* many ordinary Haitian peasants and city dwellers exacted revenge on their oppressors, including members of the *Tonton Macoutes.* (Wikipedia)

[24]Emmanuel Maurice Wallerstein is an American sociologist, historical social scientist, and world-systems analyst.

Chronicles, and *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* are caustic comments on globalization and its corollaries such as Structural Adjustment Programs. Protagonists in these stories become reflections of how their respective nations seek and negotiate position and status in a globalizing world.

Born in the 1980s, the Structural Adjustment Programs occupied center stage in socio-political debates of the 1990s and early 2000s. With its economic agenda to open "Third World" countries to the global market, the SAPs have also been a concern in recent postcolonial literature and criticism. In *Ventre* and *Graceland* for instance, Diome and Abani dedicate a good part of their narratives deconstructing the asymmetric and exploitative relationship between Africa and the western world. While Diome insists on discrimination in migration that she calls *"modern day Apartheid"*, Abani focuses on the shrewdness of international financial institutions that give with one hand and take with the other in the so-called developing countries.

Contrary to *Graceland* and *Chronicles*, Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* is more a commentary on the social and economic condition, than the political situation of Senegal. As Thomas argues, the novel "explores the bilateralism of French-African relations, connecting colonialism and postcolonialism through the question of migration" (186). However, for most of the story Senegal is portrayed as an index-nation to France. In order to have social and political legitimacy and reliability, one has to bear in one way or another, the hallmark of the French Republic. Diome's text is a scathing satire about this mystification of France by the Senegalese people in whose ears France rhymes with chance (*Ventre*, 53). By way of example, Diome's narrator provides the example of the marriage of former president Léopold Sédar Senghor to a white French woman, the

Senegalese athletes training in France, the socio-economic prestige of the "been-to-France" and so on. She narrates:

> Mon frère galopait vers ses rêves, de plus en plus orientés vers la France. Il aurait pu désirer se rendre en Italie, mais il n'en était rien. Les fils du pays qui dinent chez le président de la République jouent en France. Monsieur Ndétare, qui lui apprenait la langue de la réussite, avait étudié en France. La télévision qu'il regardait venait de France et son propriétaire, l'homme de Barbès, respectable notable au village n'était pas avare en récits merveilleux de son odyssée. (*Ventre*, 82)[25]

In *Ventre*, Diome's candidates to emigration, including Madické, look at only one destination: Paris. Diome's presentation of the youth's euphoria for France clearly translates the widely-shared view of Senegal as a satellite nation to the French Republic in international affairs.

By portraying a youth's subculture into which weaves soccer fandom and such mystification of France, Diome's narrative points to the magic of the media and and what she calls mental colonization. She points to a sort of allurement resulting from the asymmetric relationship that allows the West in general and France in the context of her novel, to show off and sell off its image to a non-western consumer youth (society). Kristen Stern explains: "This new mental colonization takes the form of seductive televised images of the fame and fortune of professional athletes, and send the message that success cannot be found in the home country, but rather only in the former colonial powers" (88). It is such a mental state that animates the youth in Niodior, and across Senegal, by extension.

[25] My brother was galloping towards his dreams, which centred more and more on France. He might have longed to go to Italy, but not a bit of it. The nation's sons who dine with the President play in France. Monsieur Ndétare, who was teaching him the language of success, had studied in France. The television he watched came from France, and its owner, the man from Barbès, a respectable, important man in the village, was full of marvellous tales of his odyssey. (*Belly*, 54)

As an addict of soccer programs on TV (and paradoxically a great fan of Maldini), and an unshakable candidate for immigration, Madické becomes a reflection of the Wallersteinian concept of "the penetration of peripheral spheres by a dominant capitalist core" (Christie, 59). Moreover, with his Quranic education and his love for the French language, he also becomes a perfect incarnation of the image of crossroads, or a personification of the syncretism and pseudo conservativeness of the Senegalese nation. This brings to mind Senghor's vision of "Enracinement et ouverture,"[26] or the image captured by Sheldon Gellar's book title, *Senegal: An African Nation Between Islam and the West* (1982). Madické becomes the perfect example of a youth with their *"feet in Africa and their heads in Europe."*

The emplotment of the World Cup in Diome's novel could be interpreted as an allegory of globalization, as it reflects various tenets of the so-called globalization. The way this event puts Niodior and Strasbourg on the same wavelength through the magic of television is a good illustration of the synchronizing ideal of globalization. On the soccer field, the only things that matter are efficiency and a sense of emulation. Thus, soccer becomes a reflection of globalization, which can be also seen as "a quick passes game" that leaves no room to compassion or sympathy. Therefore, historical ties between colonizer and colonized find no relevance on the "playground" of globalization, where interests are of the most selfish nature. In this regard, the famous slogan "May the best team win!" becomes a good description of the global market configuration.

Diome uses this event as a decisive moment in the "mental decolonization" of Madické, and of the Senegalese youth as a whole. Beyond its Olympic dimension, the

[26] Senghor's vision of cultural *métissage*.

soccer match opposing Senegal and France represents an unprecedented confrontation between the "Motherland" and the former colony. With the victory of the Senegalese Lion, over the French Cockerel, what used to represent the impossible in the imagination of the Senegalese youth has become possible. Thus, this historical victory represents an allegory of the collapse of the French myth, and mental decolonization of the youth that Madické is representative of. As Thomas argues "Diome's novel is framed around this victory, and it provides an initial step toward the rethinking of the myth of French superiority and an occasion to celebrate a newfound pride in the autonomous nation-state of Senegal, now accorded visibility on the global stage" (Thomas, 203).

The fact that Madické abandons his dream of seeking his fortune in France, and his resolution to set up business in Senegal instead, symbolizes a process of recovery and restoration of self-esteem and dignity. The message Diome seeks to send is that colonialism and its capitalist corollary has corrupted the Senegalese youth's sense of dignity, which they now associate with financial power. Through this denouement, she implies that dignity is not place-bound, neither is it a birthright, but a force and a state of consciousness with the potential to blossom within every human being. With this victory, a certain sense of dignity has indeed flourished and has succeeded in sweeping away the complex of inferiority that has held down the Senegalese nation for a long time. Thus, Diome's text can be inscribed in a national rehabilitation scheme that promotes self-reliance and self-development. The quest of such attributes is constitutive of the very essence of the *Bildungsroman*.

Elvis in *Graceland*, like Madické in *Ventre*, is also under the spell of globalization. But more than Madické, Elvis seems to incarnate Alain Mabanckou's

figure of the SAPE[27]. Put differently, he seems to be an embodiment of cultural *métissage* as well as the pleasure of consumerism. Both Elvis and Madické become a personification of the postcolonial nation that is open and exposed to the global market. Furthermore, by developing talents that are merchandisable on the global market, they both become an epitome of the business-oriented mentality born with the SAPs. However, their failure to market their talents on the international market could be read as a personification of the difficulty of postcolonial nations to rise to the expectations of the SAPs. While Elvis could be read as an allegory of the postcolonial nation seeking to create a place for itself in the international market, Madické's decision to stay in Senegal symbolizes self-reliance schemes advocated through concepts such as "consommer local,"[28] as a response to the SAPs. Both *Graceland* and *Ventre* allude to the global market with respect to offer and demand between first and third world. Both texts represent a stance against "the neo-colonial situation, which reduces human beings to the monetary value of their organs" (Kattanek, 429).

With varying degrees, each of these narratives depicts an unstable subject who straddles two or more cultures. They reject fixed moral codes and face the difficulty of choosing between diverse subject positions. More precisely, these novels without exception portray a generation in limbo. Such a condition suggests a transition between the local-oriented identity formation and complete openness to foreign influence. In other

[27] La SAPE, an abbreviation based on the phrase Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes (The Society of Ambiance-Makers and Elegant People) and hinting to the French slang word *sape* which means "attire", is a social movement centered in Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of Congo. The movement embodies the elegance in style and manners of colonial predecessor dandies. (Wikipedia)

[28] "Consommer local" is a governmental scheme in Senegal that encourages the population to rely on local products with a view to avoiding food importation.

words, it suggests a weakening of a traditional configuration that limits the choices of the protagonist in the *Bildungsroman*. In a word, they reflect the powerful upswing of a consumer and media dominated culture that reduces local entities to a single element of a large cultural affluence and influence.

By emphasizing transnational interconnectedness, these novels offer a way to rethink identity formation under a new light. Each of them can be read as an allegory of the postmodern condition that Stuart Hall describes as lacking the notion of a 'fully unified, complete, secure and coherent identity' (227). In place of a coherent identity, we have a fragmented, plural identity, constantly in flux and subject to the pressures of context (Jones, 100). Therefore, the attempt to reconcile these multiple allegiances, and the transitional or liminal state that is inherent to such an attempt are central to the transnational *Bildungsroman*.

Graceland and *Chronicles* underscore the post-independence chaos, which precludes the growth and quest of the protagonist. Both Elvis and Mugezi hold a pessimistic view of their respective countries. Their respective aspirations to pursue a career abroad and their search for refuge are confounded. In this regard, both Elvis and Mugezi fit the portrait of the artist as an escapee, and both texts significantly give substance to the concept of war *Bildungsroman*. In other words, they represent an incarnation of the oppressed people running for the exit, in search of an alternative nation.

In *Breath* and *Ventre* on the other hand, while the postcolonial and post-independence factors are strongly emphasized, women's condition within the contemporary geo-economic and geopolitical configuration are equally important. By

focusing on female protagonists trying to fend for themselves and wend their way through multiple types of oppression and deprivation, Danticat's and Diome's respective books can be reasonably approached as female *Bildungsromane*.

Transnationalism has become a major theme in postcolonial novels today. Because of the advance of technology and the intensification of migration, identity formation in postcolonial literature mostly involves a process of transculturation, which calls into play multiple cultures. This social reality that represents the backdrop in many postcolonial texts has remarkably influenced the development of the *Bildungsroman* genre. Identity formation being the fundamental focus of the *Bildungsroman*, the fast changing political and social environment in the postcolonial world brings more instability in the quest of personality as well as in the formal and thematic evolution of this literary genre. The transnational *Bildungsroman* therefore, marks a break and a transition from a context of "national self-determination" to a postmodern context whereby the nationalist discourse is challenged and undermined. In such a context, the role of the writers becomes as Moses Isegawa describes: "to reinterpret, to be able to have the traditional ball here and the modern ball there" (Jones, 94). This statement sums up the whole point about how the writing of the new generation represents a break from the post-independence nativist discourse that dominated the writing of that period. As Adélékè Adéẹ̀kọ́ observes,

> The old optimism within which the passion of early nativism was formulated does not exist anymore. Moreover, to speak of our reality today is to speak of the presence of non native operatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in our central banks. (130)

Simply put Adéẹ̀kọ́ is pointing at how "the multinational and media society of today" has brought about new perspectives on postcolonial literature and criticism.

While many previously established themes are reinstated in these new *Bildungsroman*e, there is more emphasis on a protagonist who learns ways of being in a world marked by the fusion of traditional values and late capitalist modes of thinking. In other words, they illustrate the confusion of "the borders between home and world" (Bhabha 1994, 9). Contrary to their predecessors of the 1950s who are charged with "nativist sensibility" (Mwangi, 31), these new texts celebrate "hybridity, mongrelism, the belief in cultural fusions and patchwork quilts, rather than in master cultures, unified identities or national certainty" (Cooper, 105).

Writers in this category who are rightly or wrongly christened "Enfants de la postcolonie"[29] or "Second Generation Caribbean writers"[30] or "Third Generation African writers"[31] distinguish themselves from their predecessors by the fact that they increasingly settle in the west or share their times between the mother country and the host country in the west. Therefore, it is not surprising that their works mirror their instability, multiculturalism or cosmopolitanism. The *Bildungsroman*e by such authors reflect hybrid subjectivities built around the idea of the existence of an alternative world, a second choice, and the growing transition from the concept of "Either Here or There" toward two other concepts of equal complexity i.e "Neither Here nor There" or "Both." This corresponds to the growing mindset among people of African and Caribbean descent

[29] "Enfants de la postcolonie" is a phrased coined by Abdourahman Waberi to categorize the generation of writers who were born after the independence of African states.
[30] "Second Generation Caribbean writers" refers to a generation of writers who, contrary to their predecessors live and work in North America.
[31] "Third Generation African writers" refers to a younger generation of writers, mostly born in the seventies onward. Adichie is given as an example of this generation.

in Europe as eloquently described by Miano (2012) (cited by Hitchcott and Thomas, 2014):

> Black Europeans today refuse to have to choose between the sub-Saharan or Caribbean part of their identity and the European part. Rather, they wish to provide a shelter for both, to meander from one to the other, mix them together without having to hierarchize them.[32](26)

A vision that, again, echoes Bhabha's concept of "Hybrid Agency."

On the whole, the transnational *Bildungsroman* could be better described as both transgression and blending of spaces and conventions. Protagonists in this new *Bildungsroman* who usually have difficulties finding themselves and their place in society have options, choices, and alternatives. They become the personification of the loss of place and national identity. Thus, the malleability of the *Bildungsroman* finds its best expression in this subcategory. Popularized by transnational writers in general and female writers in particular, this type of novel shows a new mentality that no longer sees the nation as the sole guarantor of success, and sees the world in a new light. The fact that Mugezi and Elvis renounce seeking their places in their respective countries and communities represents a significant shift from the long tradition of the *Bildungsroman*. With *Breath* and *Ventre* as female versions of the transnational *Bildungsroman*, the process of maturation recalls "Alice's fall in a rabbit hole"[33] in *Alice in Wonderland*.

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[32] Hitchcott and Thomas cited Miano's original text in French and provided the English translation as a footnote. Here is the original quote: "Aujourd'hui, les Européens noirs refusent d'avoir à choisir entre leur part subsaharienne ou caribéenne, et leur part européenne. Ils souhaitent abriter en eux les deux, les chérir, voguer de l'une à l'autre, les mélanger sans les hiérarchiser" (Miano, 84)

[33] A metaphor from *Alice in the Wonderland* used as an expression for the path to a surreal situation.

Both Sophie and Salie return to their communities after their respective journeys abroad only to realize the need for a new departure.

Finally, the transnational *Bildungsroman* becomes an illustration of Gramsci's vision that "the old is dying and the new cannot be born" (275-276). In today's world, with the fast pace of technological advance that enhances cultural encounters, identity formation becomes both a fluctuating and unceasing process. Despite porousness of borders, and the shrinking of geographical and cultural distances, freedom and justice remain in the realm of yearning and expectation, because of asymmetric power relations at both local and global levels. However, it will take the youths who are generally infatuated with the new, to travel the world to rid themselves of the old.

Chapter Two: Education Begins at Home: Extending "The Contact Zone" in *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* and *Graceland*

> In other words, a host of information and series of propositions slowly and stealthily work their way into an individual through books, newspapers, school texts, advertisements, movies, and radio and shape his community's vision of the world.
> Frantz Fanon, *White Skin Black Mask*

This chapter engages with ways in which the exposure to the larger world complicates apprenticeship, which is traditionally tied to notions such as a vocation, mentorship and the existence of a set of social codes of reference within a specific community. It explores the challenges that the diversification of sources of knowledge represents in the process of identity formation. It makes the argument that with easy and early access to the larger world, youths grow up with a multicultural consciousness that opens up windows for an identity search that in many cases transcends the limitations of a specific social group, and even national borders. The chapter seeks to answer two fundamental questions: how does exposure to foreign culture affect collective identity? How are new subjectivities formed and reconfigured in the self-imposing multicultural context?

Exposure to foreign culture as well as the material and psychological adjustment resulting from it is not a new theme in postcolonial literature. The works of writers such as Ousmane Socé Diop, Ferdinand Oyono, Camara Laye, Chinua Achebe to name but a few, are examples of early depiction of the theme of cultural encounter between Africa and the West. Bernard Dadié's novel *Un nègre à Paris* for instance, explores the quest of identity of an African young man who gains consciousness of the western world through school and a journey to Paris. In the same vein, Ousmane Socé Diop's *Karim,* as well as

Laye's *L'enfant noir*, also explore the experience of a young protagonist in the intersection of two cultures.

In these earlier coming of age novels, the cultural encounters involve direct communication with the foreign culture through colonial institutions or face-to-face communication with the non-native individuals or groups, as well as a journey of discovery. With the widespread of "media culture" there is an extension of the platform for social and cultural encounters. Therefore, what Marie Louise Pratt has called "contact zone" which stages the trial and tribulation of social groups in a bicultural context, has become more expansive and largely virtual.

Pratt defines contact zone as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (575). This definition captures the whole idea of the quest of selfhood in a context of diverse cultural production as found in recent postcolonial literature. Recent postcolonial coming of age novels, exemplify the extension and update of this concept by portraying the quest of identity of young protagonists who have most of the time diverse means of access to knowledge, and more than two cultures to grapple with. Ranging from magazines, the telephone, television, to the Internet these various means of access to the outside world complicate the notion of apprenticeship or *Bildung*.

Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* and Chris Abani's *Graceland* are good illustration of the complexity of coming of age in a media oriented and multicultural world. Both novels emphasize the effect of media and popular culture within communities that are struggling with transition from parochialism to cultural

globalization. Put differently, while the focus on how postcolonial cultural identities are formed and reconfigured remains the same throughout postcolonial texts, writers like Diome and Abani lay a strong emphasis on the social and cultural impact of the intensive circulation of people, capital and information. Thus, the notion of contact zone is tackled from an angle that highlights mediated experience to the detriment of direct communication with foreign cultures.

With new information technology and intensive migration, the distance between the foreign and the local becomes significantly reduced. This shrinking of distances creates a condition that Appadurai refers to as the new condition of neighborliness whereby technology largely contributes to bringing the local and the foreign cultures close together. Henceforth knowledge does not result only from the training of the mind through family and formal institutions. In other words, education involves a diversity of (f)actors, resulting in changes in the quest of identity that now includes more than two points of reference. Elements that define the classic *Bildungsroman* such as a home to return to, mentorship, and search for vocation are therefore affected to the core.

Bildungsromane like Diome's *Ventre* and Abani's *Graceland* exemplify this state of affairs. These two novels do an excellent job highlighting the contrast between youth sense of individuality and the older generation sense of collective identity. Both novels depict the coming of age of youths in an era of intensive mobility of people and goods, and expansive distribution of information. They represent good examples of the power of media and popular culture in youth identity construction, as well as ways in which multicultural consciousness complicates the process of maturation. They both illustrate

phenomena or forces behind transnational migration as part of youth development in contemporary postcolonial literature.

Geographically isolated and culturally locked in, Niodior, the setting for Diome's novel, is completely monoethnic, monocultural and radically traditional. The island presents the characteristics of a cocoon with a community that repels the presence of foreign "bodies" in the name of cultural purity and tranquility. The way they deal with Ndétare and Salie is evidence of their concern to protect a certain sense of cultural identity, which, for them simply means to keep the village lineage unmixed. Salie is excluded because of her birth out of wedlock, which is considered an abomination and a potential threat to the genealogy in Niodior, where cases of excommunication of unmarried mothers and killing of their babies are recorded. As for Ndétare, the schoolteacher, he is referred to and treated more so, as the foreigner which is what his name literally signifies. The fact that Ndétare is nameless makes him fit into Jacques Derrida's vision of the absolute other who, unlike the foreigner, "cannot have a name or family name" (25). This community's lack of openness is described in the following terms:

> Cette société insulaire, même lorsqu'elle se laisse approcher, reste une structure monolithique impénétrable qui ne digère jamais les corps étrangers. Ici, tout le monde se ressemble. Depuis des siècles, les mêmes gênes parcourent le village, se retrouvent à chaque union, s'enchainent pour dessiner le relief de l' île, produisant les différentes générations qui, les uns après les autres, se partagent les mêmes terres selon des règles immuables.[34] (Diome, 77)

[34] This island society, even when it allows an approach, remains an impenetrable monolithic structure that never digests foreign bodies. Here, everyone's alike. For centuries, the same genes have been running through the village, present ion every marriage, defining the features of the island, producing successive generations which, one after the other, have shared the same lands in accordance with immutable laws. (*Belly,* 50)

This passage clearly describes this community's sense of homogenization, and delineates the criteria for belonging. This close-knit organization is what makes both Salie's and Ndétare's integration almost impossible. It is against this backdrop of cultural conservativeness and resistance that Diome sets the coming of age story of Salie and Madické who gain openness to the outside world thanks to school, media and the encounter with returning émigrés. However, it is worthy to note that the declared cultural protectionism of this community is simply anachronistic since what they believe to be their collective identity is explicitly syncretic with traditions and superstitions coexisting with Islamic practices. This means in other words that they focus on blood ties and seem to be unaware of the fact that they are not immune to cultural hybridization. At any rate, the important point about this community is their unanimous consent about the meaning and values of being born as a *Guelwaar*[35] or, in other words, as "a child of the Island."

On the other hand, the Igbo community in *Graceland,* which is one of the hundreds of communities that populate Nigeria, is a world apart due to the intrinsically multicultural setting of Lagos. Despite the openness of this community to western influence, it still harbors pockets of resistance to foreign influence. Sunday Oke's family is the epitome of the transition this society is experiencing. At a surface level almost everything pertains to western civilization e.g music, cooking journal, bibles etc. However, the community is based on a strong belief in Igboness, which include the sacredness of parenthood and kinship, as well as a high sense of honor. According to Sita Maria Kattanek the traditional beliefs and practices of the Igbo community in Afikpo is

[35] *Guelwaar* refers to a Serer pre-colonial dynasty. They distinguish themselves with their high sense of heroism, conservativeness and protectionism.

facing the challenges of a fast paced urbanization and westernization. She argues: "[Afikpo, Elvis Oke's village] is also a place of disillusion: Western civilization has found its way into the village, showing how global politics have affected local thinking" (427). Along the same lines, Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis adds that many of the old Igbo rituals have lost their substance, since they have "been streamlined for the convenience of modern life" (2010: 169).

Elvis grows up with multiple worlds present in his life, especially the world of cinema, rock music, and fashion. He becomes the symbol of a certain cultural *métissage* that does not reveal any particular sense of preference or hierarchy. His position across cultures goes against his father's intention to make him embrace Igboness which includes "defending old patriarchal structures that include honour killings, leading to an increase in violence towards women and children" (Kattanek, 427). Henceforth, Elvis's coming of age is marked by a certain sense of conviviality towards diversity in a way that predicts his journey out of the confines of the Igbo community. In other words, his quasi cosmopolitan surrounding predisposes him to a life of exploration with no specific point of reference.

Looking at it closely, one can realize that the *Guelwaar*s in *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* and the Igbos in *Graceland* represent two different stages of the process of cultural mixing. If Niodior represents an early stage of foreign influence, the Lagos of *Graceland* represents the full impact of western influence through diverse media and popular culture forms. This situation of mediated foreign cultural experience drastically influences the notions of vocation and mentorship which may be situated beyond the framework of the local community or national borders. To put it differently, television or

cinema images create role models and ambitions that put the protagonist in direct confrontation with the home community which, for all intent and purposes is unable to satisfy their dream.

The first section of this chapter addresses the way these narratives extend the concept of "Contact Zone." It emphasizes the fact that the notion of *Bildung* is in many respects liberated from family, neighborhood, and locality as popular culture, media technology and migration substantially inform youth identity construction. The second section analyzes the identity crisis that results from such multicultural consciousness. It discusses ways in which the protagonists grapple with both local and foreign cultural elements and try to create a third space for themselves. The fact that Elvis, Salie and Madické look outward, translates a consciousness that goes against the "Guelwaardesque" claims for a coherent and unified sense of identity.

1- Opening a Window on the World: Media, Popular Culture and Collective Identity

As in many classic *Bildungsromane*, the protagonists in these novels grow up in a relatively stable social environment. Contrary to many of the early postcolonial *Bildungsroman* where the protagonists' identity crisis starts more often than not after a journey to the metropole – Paris or London depending on whether the writer is Francophone or Anglophone – in the recent *Bildungsroman*, the identity crisis starts at home. In other words, the protagonist is in constant interaction with the outside world to such an extent that his/her vision about self and other is, so to speak, prematurely formed. In most cases they grow up in a society that antagonizes their new trends or life style.

In *Le Ventre de l' Atlantique*, Diome emphasizes the anachronistic pride the community in Niodior takes over their collective identity as *Guelwaar*. This collective identity is based on values which are slowly but surely being eroded by globalization. In this completely monocultural community, families are identified as descendants of the founding fathers of the village. Salie, the narrator provides glimpses about the way people in Niodior are unified around a specific collective identity known as *Guelwaar*, which simply refers to the preservation of an unmixed ancestry. In the context of Diome's novel, Guelwaar refers to the single lineage that constitutes the aboriginal inhabitants of the island of Niodior.

When Salie uses the term "authentique *Guelwaar*" she refers to a line of descent to which a set of values, that run the gamut from the machoism of the male to the subservience of the female. By referring to Madické as an authentic *Guelwaar,* Salie alludes to his privilege as a male member of the mainstream lineage of the village: « Male donc, et fier de l'être, cet authentique *Guelwaar* savait, dès l'enfance, jouir d'une hégémonie princière: ravir les rares sourires de son père, le plus gros morceau de poisson, les meilleurs beignets de sa mère et avoir le dernier mot devant les femelles » (40-41)[36]. Moreover, in praise of her grandmother's courage and clear-sightedness, Salie refers to her as « cette *Guelwaar* guerrière » (76). By the same token, people in Niodior are shocked and outraged to learn that Sankèle has been involved in ballet dancing in the capital. For them such an act is unworthy of a *Guelwaar* : "tout le monde fut scandalisé:

[36] A male, then, and proud of it, this true *Guelwaar* has enjoyed a princely dominance since childhood: beneficiary of his father's rare smiles, the biggest bit of fish, the best of his mother's doughnuts and the last word when women are present. (*Belly*, 24)

une authentique *Guelwaar*, une fille de noblesse, ne se donne pas en spectacle» (136)[37]. Therefore, in addition to being a birthright, being a *Guelwaar* presupposes acceptance of such a worldview that associates courage and dignity with the male and modesty and docility to the female.

Niodior, which the narrator repeatedly refers to as "ici," *here*, is a unique place due to people's attachment to blood ties and their sense of solidarity. Their seamless sense of community and ties of kinship is described in the following terms : "Ici l'arbre à palabre est un parlement, et la généalogie une carte d'identité »[38] (79). « Ici, …l'individu n'est qu'un maillon de la chaine tentaculaire du clan »[39] (127). In this description Niodior is presented as a cocoon with a homogeneous and self- reliant population. The inhabitants of this Senegalese island, which is fictionalized in Diome's novel as autonomous and isolated, primarily live on fishing and agriculture. They have little interest in the outside world and barely feel the need to leave the island. Unfortunately, these people's sense of dignity, which translates into a sense of economic independence, is gradually eroding their parochialism. Henceforth, what we witness with the outward looking younger generation can be equated with a breaking through the cocoon.

It is against this background of extreme provincialism that Diome depicts Salie and Madické's coming of age. While Madické, like any other male child on the island carries hope for the community that sees him as one of the perpetuators of the ancestors' surname, his half-sister Salie Diome, who carries a surname alien to the island, is

[37] Everyone was scandalized: a true *Guelwaar* of noble descent doesn't put herself on show! (*Belly*, 93)
[38] Here, the palaver tree is a parliament, the family tree an identity card. (*Belly*, 52)
[39] Here, …the individual is merely a link in the clan's all-powerful chain. (*Belly*, 86)

virtually locked out of doors. Her fate is exactly the same as that of Ndétare, the nameless schoolteacher or "ce Senegalais de l'exterieur" (77) who is a declared foreigner due to the fact that he is not related to the families on the island. However, this chauvinistic attitude of the community that has endured on the island for a long time is gradually being swept away by the educational institution and returning émigrés as well, who are gradually opening windows to the outside world. Henceforth, the narrative becomes a depiction of the bittersweet sentiment of a community, which is at the same time intrigued by what is new and unusual and tempted by the prospect of gain for unremitting dignity.

Contrary to Diome, Abani portrays a community, which is grappling with urban life and the deluge of western popular culture that gradually hybridizes their Igbo culture. The hybridization of Igbo culture has affected almost every practice and belief, including rituals as sacred as the celebration of "the first step to manhood". Elvis's first step to manhood is celebrated with the killing of a chick instead of a real eagle, and the traditional palm wine is replaced by white horse whisky and soda. "In our days, it was a real eagle," observe the elders convened for the occasion (*GLD*, 20). While the old men, seem to express a feeling of nostalgia by looking backward, Sunday's reaction to their remark: "Let's just get on with it [the chick]," far from being a sign of openness to change and genuine acceptance of the new order, translates a mood of resignation in front of the breakthrough of the consumer culture. This attitude of adapting "borrowed objects to traditional functions (…) amalgamating the old and the new, with the new primarily founded on the old" (Dike, viii) is according to Azuka A. Dike, a way to assume continuity of Igbo traditional values. Henceforth, the event of Elvis's first step to

manhood is one instance of an attempt at revival and endorsement of Igbo culture in a context of a global market economy.

However, if adaptation does occur at a superficial or ritualistic level, the spirit of braveness and tactfulness as an essential component of Igbo manhood, signified through the act of "killing an eagle" is unambiguously present. Therefore, behind this façade of a hybridized community, there is a profound sense of collective identity. In other words, a traditionally held idea of what it means to be an Igbo, and an Igbo male for that matter. The same character Sunday Oke, who condones the killing of a chick instead of a real eagle, as well as celebration of the event over white horse whisky and soda, is radically opposed to Elvis's ambition to become a dancer. His disapproval is based on the will to preserve a certain heritage whose purity is apparently doubtful. With a solemn and remorseful tone, he talks to Elvis: "All I have to give you is my name, your name, Elvis Oke. And when I die, it will continue to help you build something for your children. Dat's why I don't want you to be a dancer. It will spoil your name" (*GLD,* 188). Sunday's statement gives an idea about the pre-established goals and meaning for Elvis's life and for any Igbo child by extension.

While the Igbos in *Graceland* don't seem to be concerned with cultural purity at a surface level, the *Guelwaar*s in *Ventre* struggle to maintain their comfort zone by literally rejecting western influence. However, the effort to maintain youth within a preset cultural framework is exposed to the insidiousness and implacability of "soft power." People's experience with foreign culture is mediated in different ways, including school education, media and returning émigrés. As a new element in Niodior, and part of a long tradition in Lagos, school education lays the groundwork for the access to foreign culture. A

traditional trope in early postcolonial literature, school education serves Diome's purpose to traditionalize her narrative with a view to questioning any radical sense of cultural identity, and emphasizing the vainness of any effort to preserve cultural purity in the contemporary context.

The mediated, yet powerful experience of the youths in Niodior is dominated by images on television and speculations spread by returning émigrés. Paula Agnevall addresses this "alien presence" in Niodior via television and the telephone when she argues:

> Malgré la forte présence de la France dans la vie des habitants de Niodior, la zone de contact entre les deux lieux n'est qu'indirecte, car il n'y a pas de Français sur l'île. En effet, l'image paradisiaque de la France se forme à partir de la télévision, de la publicité, de quelques rares coups de téléphone et des récits embellis, racontés par ceux qui reviennent de France. (Agnevall, 20)[40]

In this sense, the community in Niodior is fighting an already lost battle in their attempt to preserve the purity of their local culture. The irony is that most of them keep a level of self-assurance due to the fact that the island is isolated from big cities that they associate with western culture, such as Mbour and especially "Ndakarou"[41] which, for them, has become a city of "Toubabs"[42] (*Ventre*, 69).

Lagos, where Elvis moves with his father, represents a completely different scenario. The half slum half paradise setting of Lagos harbors communities, which never really blend. White expatriates and tourists, rich Nigerians, wealthy Indians and Lebanese

[40] Despite the substantial presence of France in the life of the inhabitants of Niodior, the contact zone between the two places is only indirect, for, there is no Frenchman on the island. In fact, the paradisiac image of France is formed through the television, advertising, a few scarce phone calls and embellished tales, told by those who have been to France. (Translation Mine)
[41] "Ndakarou" is a word for Dakar, usually used by elderly people.
[42] "Toubabs": a word to designate white people, western or westernized people.

businessmen live in western style buildings in affluent neighborhoods that people like Elvis can only see from a distance. As narrated in *Graceland*, "Lagos did have its fair share of rich people and fancy neighborhoods, though, and since arriving he [Elvis] had found that one-third of the city seemed transplanted from the rich suburbs of the West" (*GLD*, 7). Elvis's development occurs at the intersection of multiple worlds that contrast socially, economically and culturally with one another. Along the same lines, Kattanek emphasizes the striking effect generated by the closeness of these two diametrically opposed worlds. She describes: "The distant shore presents the vision of an altogether different world, so that first and third world are separated virtually only by the lagoon" (427). It is against this backdrop of intense cultural diversity and closeness that Elvis's apprenticeship takes place.

This physical proximity between the rich and the poor neighborhoods leads to an exacerbated desire to "look over the fence." In other words, it arouses the curiosity and stimulates the envy to penetrate the myth or the mystery of the West that these places come to be associated with. Elvis's venture into one of these opulent and western style neighborhoods, where he expects to get handouts from white tourists for his performance, results in failure and humiliation. That is to say that like Salie and Madické in *Ventre*, Elvis experiences foreign influence mostly through popular culture, rather than direct contact with foreigners. Henceforth, the attempt to discover the multiple "cultural others" present in their surrounding becomes an integral part of their search of identity. In this context, formal education that has always been a point of contention in the classic *Bildungsroman* and a contact zone in postcolonial literature becomes more problematic

for protagonists whose exposure to the outside world is greater than the political and ideological confines of school curricula.

In his book, *Ecole blanche, Afrique noire,* Samba Gadjigo argues that the western system of education in colonial Africa was perceived as a contact zone, "'mise en contact' de deux cultures differentes," with the sole objective of modelling the colonized subject in the image of the colonizer (Gadjigo, 13). Gadjigo also demonstrates how school as a "contact zone" has been a central trope in many early postcolonial coming of age narratives including Bernard Dadié's *Climbié*, Cheikh A Kane's *L'aventure ambiguë,* Mongo Beti's *Mission terminée* and Camara Laye's *L'enfant noir*. Although present in the new coming of age novel, it exists alongside other sources of information and becomes part of a large and diverse network of cultural influence.

In her attempt to traditionalize Niodior, Diome presents school as one of the primary "Contact Zones." With the schoolmaster as a foreigner and French as the language of instruction, school plays an important role in breaking the cocoon of the *Guelwaar* community. In addition, young people's dreams and ambitions are created outside schools and familial spheres. Agnevall's rhetorical question : « Comment la France peut-elle toujours être omniprésente dans l'esprit des insulaires alors qu'elle se trouve si loin géographiquement ? » (4)[43], implies the power of the diverse modes of exposure to foreign culture present in Niodior. As she notes later, the image of France is present on the island through diverse information media, including television,

[43] How can France be omnipresent in the minds of the islanders when it is geographically so far away? (Translation mine)

advertisement, the stories of the returning émigrés, as well as school education (Agnevall, 9).

Students' parents primarily see Ndétare, the school headmaster who comes from the city and who is also western educated, as an influence for western culture. The well-known proverb in Niodior, "bon converti sera meilleur prêcheur" (*Ventre*, 116) is circulated among parents as a warning about the western influence that Ndétare might represent for their children. For the more radical ones like The Fisherman, Ndétare is just a mask of the colonizer, "un perroquet savant, payé pour vous inculquer la langue, les coutumes des Blancs, et vous faire oublier les nôtres ! »[44] (124). Their attitude towards Ndétare parallels an opinion originating from colonial times when school education was perceived as an aggression against people, and a threat to their traditions (Gadjigo, 59, 130).

Despite the aversion of the majority of the population, his talents as a pedagogue and his social relationship with the youth has allowed him to educate them beyond the confines of the classroom. He is the teacher, the soccer coach, the mentor and a confident on serious matters for some of the villagers. Also, as a confirmed trade unionist he incarnates progressive ideas and, for Salie he possesses the key to the world, "la clé du monde" (66). Ndétare constantly works to make everybody look beyond himself or herself, and both Salie and Sankèle are living proofs of his endeavor, and by extension, product of western education and thought. This is all the more true that Salie's remembrance of him sounds like an ode in praise of his achievement as someone who has

[44]A performing parrot, paid to instill the whites' language and customs in you and make you forget our own!

allowed the outside world to trickle into the island for the benefit of young minds like herself. As she remembers:

> Ndétare se distingue des autres habitants de l' île par sa silhouette, ses manières, son air citadin, sa mise européenne, son français académique et sa foi en Karl Marx, dont il cite l'œuvre par chapitre (…) Bien sûr que je me le rappelle. Je lui dois Descartes, je lui dois Montesquieu, je lui dois Victor Hugo, je lui dois Molière, je lui dois Balzac, je lui dois Marx, je lui dois Dostoyevsky, je lui dois Hemingway, je lui dois Leopold Sédar Senghor, je lui dois Aimé Césaire, je lui dois Simone de Beauvoir, Marguerite Yourcenar, Mariama Bâ et les autres. (*Ventre,* 65-66)[45]

Through the person of Ndétare, Salie is simply paying tribute to the educational institution that has shaped her and has guided her steps outside the confines of the Island and into the larger world. Seen as a foreign body himself, Ndétare is also the incarnation of worldviews that are foreign to the island, thus he becomes, so to speak, an echo of the world beyond the island. As a non-*Guelwaar*, sent in exile on the island for his activism as a trade unionist, his presence impacts more than one person. If to Salie, Ndétare has awarded a key to the world through his classroom, to Sankèle, he has given wings that have allowed her to become a *"Pitiamome-Bopame*"[46], a totally free bird. Salie recounts : "Il aimait passer des heures à parler à sa dulcinée des grandes figures historiques de toutes sortes de résistances, y compris celle du féminisme" (129)[47]. Ndétare's revolutionary teaching leads Sankèle to defy the age-old tradition of arranged marriage

[45] Ndétare is distinguishable from the other inhabitants of the island by his silhouette, his urban manners, his European clothes, his academic French and his complete faith in Karl Marx, whose work he can recite chapter and verse. (…) Of course, I remember him. I owe him Victor Hugo, I owe him Moliere, I owe him Balzac, I owe him Marx, I owe him Dostoevsky, I owe him Hemingway, I owe him Leopold Sédar Senghor, I owe him Aimé Césaire, I owe him Simone de Beauvoir, Marguerite Youcenar, Mariama Ba and the rest. (*Belly*, 41)

[46] *Pitiamome-Bopame:* a Wolof phrase that implies that one is free like a bird.

[47] He enjoyed spending hours telling his beloved about the great historical figures of all different resistance movements, including feminism. (*Belly*, 88)

on the Island, as well as the taboos of extramarital pregnancy. She finally finds a way out of the island, into the much larger world of cities such as Mbour, Dakar and Paris.

The presence of Ndétare as an incarnation of multiculturalism has an impact that the local protectionist system is unable to stop. By introducing Salie to reading skills – for which she is very much grateful– Ndétare opens countless worlds for her. Salie's hyperbolic tribute to him appears as a statement in favor of formal education as an obligatory step for the training and emancipation of the mind. Diome's text allows a contrast between Salie's successful school education and the lack thereof among young people of the island. In so doing, she seems to hold the belief in formal education as being irreplaceable and much more valuable than self-education through random encounters. Salie frowns upon the self-importance of Madické and his friends as self-taught "artists." She looks down at them as young people who are mentally alienated by the ongoing spread of media and popular culture.

In *Graceland*, unlike Salie, Elvis does not see school education as a privilege or a necessary step. At fourteen he drops out of school and, as an excuse for doing so he simply explains that he was not learning useful things (*GLD*, 165). This happening reinforces the idea that school is no longer the sole source of knowledge or education. Thus, Elvis's contempt for school can be attributed to his involvement in the realm of music and movies, which have allowed access to a world larger than the one the classroom makes available. If Salie magnifies and brags about the numerous worlds that she has discovered through her formal education, in *Graceland,* Elvis's discovery through popular culture is no less important. He contents himself with leisure reading,

watching movies and listening to music. At the USIS Library[48] for instance, his horizon is broadened and his desire to experience America stimulated further by showbiz magazines like *Entertainment.*

Elvis's experience with popular culture can be likened to that of the young Nidiorians like Madické in Diome's novel. It can be noted in both cases that school play a little part in the constitution of these young people's dreams. As Coly observes: "with soccer identified as the route to France, education is totally neglected and the human capital of the island is unproductively channeled into developing soccer skills" (104). Ndétare as the personification of formal education is quickly eclipsed by the television and the wonderful stories of *l'homme de Barbès*. Moreover, the material comfort of returning émigrés and the subsequent upward social mobility, is a temptation beyond the resistance of the youths. The fact that the center of attention of the youths shifts from Ndétare to *l'homme de Barbès* and his television set, indicates some truth about school education being rivaled by diverse phenomena that provide "cheaper home schooling." This situation showcases the complexity of identity search in a context of diversity, and proximity. While Salie's intellectual development is credited to a limited number of agents including Ndétare and her grandmother, there is no such paternity credit with the psychological development of youths such as Madické and Elvis.

In the village, *l'homme de Barbès* incarnates the figure of the nouveaux riche : "A son arrivée, on se contenta d'admirer son pouvoir d'achat, faramineux par rapport à la moyenne de l' île " (Diome, 32)[49]. His exhibitionist attitude, along with his readiness to

[48] USIS: United States Information Service Library.
[49] When he arrived, they were content to admire his spending power, which was astronomical compared with the island average.

paint Europe as a wonderland, represent deliberate attempts to stimulate the envy of the youths, essential for the elevation of his social rank. In so doing, he simultaneously contributes to the fortification of the myth of France, which is already under construction in the imagination of the young islanders. *L'homme de Barbès* is always eager to answer the questions of the young people who are equally eager to hear more about France:

> - Alors, tonton, c'était comment là-bas à Paris ?
>
> - C'était comme tu ne pourras jamais l'imaginer. Comme à la télé, mais en mieux, car tu vois tout pour de vrai. Si je te raconte réellement comment c'était, tu ne vas pas me croire. Pourtant, c'était magnifique, et le mot est faible. . . (*Ventre*, 83)[50]

L'homme de Barbès with his fantastic and hyperbolic stories about France, knowingly stimulates the young people's desire for adventure outside the island, especially to Europe. This desire is taking concrete form through the particular interest some of them start taking in the French language. Madické for example, starts approaching Ndétare for French classes because of his plan to join his sister in France. His interest in learning French, just like Elvis's attempt to stick to Standard English serves as a means to a single end, which is the prospect of migration. The correctness of Elvis's English, which is considered by his comrades as a sign of corruptness, can be understood as a manifestation of his ambition beyond the borders of Nigeria, an attempt to appropriate American or global life standard more specifically.

Thus, we witness an era of gradual cultural diversification, resulting in a generation that is desperately looking for anchorage, a center of gravity between local realities and mediated experience of foreign culture. The introduction of television in

[50] - So, uncle, what was it like there, in Paris?
- it was like notihing you could imagine. Like on TV, but better, because you see it all for real. If I told you what ti was really like, you would't believe me. It was magnificent, but the word doesn't do it justice.

Niodior, inaugurates this new era on the island. With France occupying the frontline of the programs the world beyond the island becomes accessible "as images and information to them" (Tomlinson, 133).

> Pour la première fois de leur vie, la majorité des habitants pouvait expérimenter cette chose étrange dont ils avaient déjà entendu parler : voir les Blancs parler, chanter, danser, manger, s'embrasser, s'engueuler, bref, voir des Blancs vivre pour de vrai, la, dans la boîte, juste derrière le vitre. (*Ventre*, 49)[51]

By seeing both blacks and whites, Senegalese urban life and places overseas on the television screen, a new sense of locality as well as of "self" and "other" has come into existence.

Television crystalizes the attention of young people in Niodior, and turns out to be a factor of affinity reconfiguration. This "new condition of neighborliness" also causes what Arjun Appadurai calls "a community of sentiment," which is "a group that begins to imagine and feel things together" (8). A case in point is the fact that television brings Salie, who currently lives in France, closer to her soccer fanatic brother in Niodior, as they simultaneously watch the same soccer programs. This emotional closeness between Salie and Madické, Agnevall argues, is also symbolic of emotional connection between France and Senegal: "le temps d'un match, Salie se sent très proche de son demi-frère. Malgré la distance, la télévision crée le contact entre frère et sœur, entre la France et le Sénégal » (10)[52]. At both local and global levels, social relationships are configured and reconfigured. Young people bond together based on their TV program preferences, and

[51] For the first time in their lives, the majority of the villagers could try out this strange thing they'd already heard about: they could see whites speaking, singing, dancing, eating, kissing, fighting – see whites, in fact, really living, there in the box, just behind the glass. (*Belly*, 30)
[52] For the duration of a match, Salie feels very close to her half-brother. Despite the distance, the television creates the contact between brother and sister, between France and Senegal (Translation mine).

form their soccer teams based on affinities. Moreover, their feeling of solidarity is no longer limited to the *Guelwaar*s on the island; it crosses borders as seen with Salie and her brother Madické, but also the old Fisherman with his "secret son" who plays soccer in France.

In the same manner as the image of France dominates TV programs in Niodior, the familiarity of the youths in *Graceland* with Hollywood movies, leads to the assumption that the myth of America is being formed and consolidated in the imagination of the young Lagosians. With free cigarettes and free movies, the audience, which is predominantly young, shares the belief that "America must indeed be the land of the great" (146). Like Madické and the other young people in Niodior, Elvis and his playmates in *Graceland*, share a strong attraction to American movies and, by extension, a common desire for America. The movie screening at the local motor park brings a multitude of them together, absorbed and united like one individual, "hundreds of people swaying from side to side, chattering away like insane birds, worshipping their new gods" (*GLD*, 148). This almost religious devotion to the screen in *Graceland*, is at the same time indicative of new ways of socialization that breach the limits of traditional folklore.

Contrary to the reality in Niodior, in Lagos what could have been dubbed Americanization of the culture is counter balanced by other foreign cultural inputs. Nonetheless, the image of America is given a place of honor in media and in the imagination of the Igbo youths as Matthew Omelsky underlines: "The youth in *Graceland* latch on to the *residue* of cultural capital from both America and India, though primarily the former" (88). To give an example, Elvis's penchant for dancing started very

early with his exposure to Elvis Presley's music. His infatuation with American movies and his dream for a career in America intensifies when he starts socializing with people like Redemption for whom leaving for America, and becoming a millionaire have become an obsessive mantra.

In both *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* and *Graceland*, media stands for an important cultural landmark and in many respects, a substitute for the larger society. For the youths in *Graceland*, the criteria for good or bad behaviors are defined by the attitude of the movie stars they have come to regard as their role models. Obed, one of Elvis's playmates, having seen blue movies, suggests that they experiment on each other. Elvis and Titus object to the proposition on the ground that it's homo, taboo and forbidden. However, Obed insists:

"But I saw it in de movies."
"Was it John Wayne doing it?"
"Or Actor?"
"No. dese were two men I do not know, but dey were doing it and it must be all right because dey do it in de movies" (*GLD*, 197).

This passage clearly situates these youths at the intersection between the local cultural values and the influence of foreign culture through media. This scenario is symptomatic of a multidirectional quest, which, while not completely ignoring the local cultural background, displays recognition and validity of some sort to foreign elements.

In Niodior, on the other hand, the young people who adore soccer programs on television, and who have now adopted soccer as their favorite game, start naming themselves after their European soccer idols. Moussa becomes the Michel Platini[53] of

[53] Michel Platini is a French former football player. He is regarded as one of the greatest footballers of all time.

Niodior, and Madické is nicknamed Maldidni[54], after the Italian attacker. According to Thomas, "this process of identification with global "commodities" is indicative of the degree to which Africa is of course influenced by a highly complex network of global cultural influences outside of former colonial ties" (252).

Even Salie falls prey to this practice by idolizing Sokhna Dieng, the female journalist she regularly sees on the Senegalese national television. For her, she represents more than a female public figure. She represents a female voice, a model of articulation of the French language. In one interview, Diome admits the powerful impression that this journalist had made on her as she was growing up into adolescence. She fictionalizes that impression through Salie, the young protagonist whose dreams is to be a journalist. She confesses : "je rêvais d'être professeur de français ou journaliste. Dans mon livre je raconte comment je rêvais d'être comme Sokhna Dieng[55], de présenter le journal et de parler bien le français » (*Interview*, 140). This speaks to the nature of *Ventre* as a semi-autobiographical novel.

These examples indicate how popular culture and media represent alternative sources of cultural input for youths in search of an identity in communities where traditional conceptions of personality are still strong. In *Graceland* for instance, Elvis uses phrases such as "As they say in the States," and his claims about America are supported by statements such as "I saw it in movies" (*GLD,* 138). For him and his friends, television has become the new oracle, the new god that dictates their plans and define virtue and moral for them. In both Niodior and Lagos, instead of seeking their

[54] Paolo Maldini is an Italian former professional footballer who played A.C. Milan and the Italy national team.
[55] Sokhna Dieng is the name of the first woman journalist to have presented programs on the Senegalese national television when it started broadcasting in 1972.

idols and roles models in Igbo or *Guelwaar* epic and founding myths, youths forge their dreams and personality based on movies and television series, which are for the most part from the West. Film screening having systematically replaced storytelling as a social activity, the King's assertion that "films open your eyes" (*GLD*, 132) can be absolutely taken as valid.

However, the impact of the emergence of information and communication technology cannot be exclusively associated with the youth only. Society as a whole is affected and traditional social networks are insidiously giving way to new and more far-reaching networks. Both Diome and Abani portray modern networks, which extend across national borders to create what Appadurai has termed a new "condition of neighborliness" as mentioned earlier. The "*Télécentre*" in Niodior for instance, is a piece of technology that has successfully moved two worlds closer together: the island of Niodior (*here*), and the so-imagined-paradise across the waters (*over there*). Thus, it contributes to the villager's ontological and epistemological awareness of the world. With the telephone, their spirit of defensiveness and egocentricity is giving way to receptiveness and reaction vis-à-vis the outside world. This relationship between the island and the outside world starts being infused with enthusiasm and affection. "*Here*" for Niodior and "*Over there*" for the rest, have become part of a system of communicating vessels, as money, goods, and news are being exchanged between the two on a daily basis. This now established connectedness is almost perfect as people don't just see the outside world on television, they get to talk to them as well. Agnevall

argues: “Si la télévision montre des images venues de loin, c’est le téléphone qui est le principal moyen de communication entre la France et Niodior » (11)[56].

Madické for example, with his unquenchable passion for soccer, takes advantage of the telephone to discuss tournaments and request soccer magazines from Salie. Dominic Thomas writes: “Madické relies on phone calls to a call center from his sister in order to receive regular score updates and match summaries” (Thomas, 252). In this respect, the phone has caused the demise of distance between the two worlds in a way that Salie and Madické deal with each other like neighbors. To give an example from *Graceland,* Oye’s letters that share the same basic function as the telephone in Niodior. Not only do they routinely bring her information from elsewhere, but they also make her feel closer to people geographically far away from her homeland. These letters which are part of Oye’s daily humdrum have become substitutes for the neighbors that she completely lacks in the story.

The fact that Elvis is able to make up replies for Oye’s letters is proof of his familiarity with some daily routine away from his home. Hence, what was traditionally regarded as foreign has become part of the familiar space. In a word, these letters open a window on the world in the same way as movies and books. But still better than books and movies, these letters, like the *Télécentre* in Niodior, involve action, agency and affect. To borrow Thomlinson’s words, the mediated experience of these people involves them emotionally, and morally “with distant others, events and social contexts”

[56] If the television is in charge of showing images from distant places, the telephone is the principal means of communication between France and Niodior. (Translation mine)

(Tomlinson, 151). What we witness is the introduction of new values and hybridization of collective identities.

When little kids in Niodior rehearse the Miko commercial and go so far as carving out of wood a Miko-like-shape (19), there is a strong signal of a new social order in which the local must take the global into account. *L'homme de Barbès* and Wagane Yaltigué are two expatriates who have become the sole role models of the youth in Niodior. Their respective nicknames point to the fact that a capitalist mentality starts gaining ground and money has become a new factor in the negotiation for space and belonging. They are more than welcome in the village and in the circle of dignitaries where they are treated with courtesy and deference. Because of their wealth and their observance of local traditions, these two men have become the yardsticks for all retuning immigrants. In other words, they have carved a road that any returning immigrant is expected to follow to earn dignity in the village. *"Every scrap of life must serve to win dignity!"* is a slogan, a motivator, or even a talismanic phrase, that constitutes the driving force behind the determination of the youths to earn not just a living, but to earn dignity by any means necessary. Dignity ceases to be a birthright of the *Guelwaar*. It has become something one has to work and compete for.

In *Graceland* on the other hand, the heroization of the male and the sense of honor that are cornerstone values of Igbo culture are receding in front of a frenetic quest for gain. Thinking "like a millionaire," "get rich or die trying" (*GLD*, 54), become the organizing principle of young people's life, to Sunday's desolation. He confesses to Elvis: "in dis place, it used to be that all you had was your name – before dis new madness with money started. De measure of a man was his name" (187). By confronting

his father on the specific question of honor killing, Elvis stands for a generation which is critical of some of the values that define their community. But what does Sunday's insistence on the importance of a name – a name that people can respect, one that opens doors – reveal to us, after having given the name Elvis Oke to his son? Looking closely at the composition of the name, it betrays Sunday's will to remain rooted in his traditions, while adjusting accordingly to a new social order. Elvis Oke's name is simply a pastiche that combines two cultural symbols: Elvis representing American pop culture and Oke as a mark of his Igbo heritage. Elvis himself becomes a product of a community whose cultural identity has clearly become a pastiche, therefore both his inner and outer personality reflect this condition.

2- Consciousness of The World as a Whole and Subject Formation

This second section lays emphasis on ways in which experience with the world outside the homeland or local community, contributes to the protagonist's perception of self and other. In other words, it engages with questions related to the outcome of multicultural consciousness in terms of adopting a worldview and negotiating conflicting subjectivities. As Lene Arnett Jensen, drawing on Shweder et al, suggests, "forming a cultural identity involves taking on worldview beliefs and engaging in behavioral practices that unite people within a community" (190). He further explains that "forming a cultural identity becomes mainly a conscious process and decision when you have exposure to more than one culture" (190). However, even though the idea of the difficulty forming a cultural identity in a multicultural context is universally shared, that of a making a decision between different cultures is controversial.

As shown in the previous chapter, Diome and Abani's protagonists emerge from a more or less conservative cultural background into a multicultural environment. How do they resolve their own contradictions in the process of adopting a subject position? How does each reconcile the inner self with the mainstream culture that does not necessarily emerge with them? These two fundamental questions pertain to the difficulty of coming of age in the intersection of diverse and sometimes antagonistic cultural forces. However, they both suggest what Kristeva calls a "sujet-en-procès," a subject in process (24). The protagonists in these two novels make and remake their identities, adopt a trial-and-error approach to find their true self, and struggle to bring an appropriate response to their respective social and cultural conditions. They grapple with local and foreign cultural elements in order to create and occupy a space for themselves. A space that corresponds to what Homi Bhabha terms "a Third Space," given the fact that it is an "interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative" space where new cultural meanings are formed and produced to blur existing boundaries and challenge established categories of cultural identity.

This section looks at how this condition of interstitiality or ambivalence fits within the coming of age dynamic. Salie and Elvis respectively seek to develop simultaneously a "local identity" based on indigenous traditions, and a "global identity" informed by exposure to a global (often western) culture conveyed through media. Based on the openness and receptiveness to outside influences, it can be anticipated that they give no precedence to one cultural entity over the other. In more specific terms, their quest of identity operates within a hybrid space where cultural meaning and representation – to borrow to Bhabha's terms – have no 'primordial unity or fixity'

(Bhabha 1994). That is to say that, any sense of center is lost as a result of the multiplicity of the sources of knowledge. Taking this assumption as a starting point, how does Salie's and Elvis's search of self, represent a decentered quest or a shift from an established center?

In these two narratives, the image of the grandmother is omnipresent and represents a symbol for local or traditional education. Bringing the grandmother into the picture allows a contrast between outer forces and the traditional values of which she is the personification. For instance, Salie's cultural experience is a hodgepodge of resources that run the gamut from her grandmother's storytelling, her formal education, to her direct and indirect encounter with western cultures. By magnifying both her grandmother's and Ndétare's contribution to her formation she demonstrates a sense of ambivalence between western and local modes of thinking. However, if cultural identity is a decision one makes – as Jensen would have it – Salie's choice is difficult to come out.

The fact that in France, she claims belonging with Niodior, and once in Niodior, she realizes that she is out of place and starts longing for France is indicative of Salie's divided self. Her resort to Senegalese music and dance to break the monotony of her life in Strasbourg rather than representing a sufficient claim of cultural identity can be interpreted as a response a situational need. Through this example, cultural identity becomes a performance, a strategy for emotional emplacement. Her statement that "Irrésistible l'envie de remonter à la source, car il est rassurant de penser que la vie reste plus facile à saisir là où elle enfonce ses racines, » (*Ventre*, 166) rather than being a declaration of her cultural identity, appears as a confession about her need for an

emotional buttress. In the same manner, in Niodior, she becomes appreciative of western culture at times, and strategically appropriates it to shield herself from the hostilities of her community.

Her attitude towards both cultures can be understood as a reaction of resistance whereby cultural identity serves as a bunker. Such an attitude seems to correspond to Stuart Hall's idea of identity as ""moveable feast": formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us" (598). Therefore, it can be argued that Salie's acknowledgement of her roots is not a complete submission to her local culture. To put it differently, she seeks to secure a base but does not definitely content herself with a one-sided vision or experience of the world. Rather, she acknowledges a component – probably the strongest – of her identity. Agnevall's argument that Salie's local identity is more powerful than the other identities that she tries to construct by adding up her multiple selves (19) is founded on that premise.

What appears as an attachment to her roots is complemented by Ndétare when he says to her, on the occasion of one of her regular visits in Niodior: " (…) je suis bien content de voir la petite liane enracinée »[57] (*Ventre*, 159). Ndétare's choice of the word "liane", which is the French for a climbing plant or a creeper, is a metaphor that clearly maps Salie's multiple selves as a transnational subject. Since there is no plant without root(s), Ndétare's emphasis on the term "enracinée" indicates Salie's level of attachment to her roots. However, the image of the "liane" per se encapsulates a sense of duality that

[57] (…) I'm pleased to see that the little liana has deep roots.

comprises self and other. Like the "liane" that creeps and mingles with other plants – while remaining firmly rooted – Salie's connections stretch beyond her family, community and country.

This sophisticated analogy is reminiscent of Kwame Anthony Appiah's concept of Cosmopolitan Patriot which refers to a person with the capacity to "entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of his or her own but taking pleasure of other, different, places that are home to other, different, people" (Appiah, 91). Another concept that come to mind with the image of the "liane" is Senghor's vision of negritude which suggests rootedness of the Self in the first place and openness to the Other (or to the rest of the world). To sum it up, Salie is presented as a citizen of the world whose cultural disposition "is not limited to concerns of immediate locality" (Tomlinson, 185). Thus, she becomes the epitome of an emerging generation on the Island where the cult of roots is still powerful.

This sense of identification with a specific cultural background is absent with Elvis in *Graceland.* Being orphaned at an early age and growing up under the shared custody of his alcoholic father and her wizard grandmother, Elvis is the incarnation of a split since the beginning. His grandmother, Oye, unlike Salie's, is a patent embodiment of syncretism and blurring of cultural landmarks. Daria Tunca's detailed description, presents Oye as:

> [An] uneducated woman with a rural background, she speaks English with a Scottish accent, picked up from the missionaries she used to work for. Even though she does not master the language's idiomatic expressions, she addresses everyone, including her daughter and grandchild, in the colonial tongue instead of her native Igbo. (2)

With the lack of clear-cut cultural background, Elvis is bound to follow his own reflexes through the world. The fact that he is torn between two poles of attractions as he seeks to negotiate space between Redemption and the King of the Beggars who are at odds with each other is another indication of his "split-self". The King who is a radical conservative incarnates the local, he "calls everyone to return to the traditional values and ways of being." He fights for a local cause and is skeptical about foreign influence, especially the American brand of capitalism, which, for him, "promoted the individual interest over the communal" (*GLD*, 155). As for Redemption, he is a typically pro America fellow, an incarnation of material gain, and for Elvis, a locus for opportunity.

Furthermore, Elvis's cultural dilemma can also be attributed to the long sickness of his mother and her subsequent death. Basically, Elvis grows up in a family, and a community which is fragmented in every sense of the term. As mentioned earlier, the fact that his first steps to manhood coincide with the hybridization of this initiation rite can be understood as a missed opportunity for the cultivation of a sense of cultural identity. On the occasion of his "eagle killing," only fragments of the tradition are present. A chick has replaced the real eagle, and white horse whisky and soda are used as substitutes for the traditional palm wine. With the death of Beatrice, as his biological mother, and purported custodian of the tradition, as well as the "symbolic annihilation" of rite of passage, Elvis is doubly bereaved. With the hybridization of this ritual specifically, the measure of manhood as part of his identity becomes equally problematic.

In addition, the dislocation of his family after his mother's death and his father's taking to drinking, left him with both an emotional gap and a feeling of bewilderment. Hence, the task of "digging out" and re-membering his mother, of excavating fragments

of his tradition, as well as that of becoming a man, are all his own. According to Amy Novak his lack of a coherent identity can be attributed to the fact that "he finds himself cut adrift from his past and alienated from his father after the death of his mother" (7). Despite having become emotionally impaired, Elvis is urged from all sides to become a *man*. His father Sunday, The King of the Beggars and Redemption, all of them are eager to see Elvis grow into a "man". Unfortunately, the Igbo sense of manhood, which is associated with courage and a sense of dignity and honor is also declining with urbanization, poverty, violence and the spread of western values. Therefore, Elvis's attraction for movies, music and reading can be understood as a frenetic search for guidance, a great desire to form a personality and become a man in his own understanding.

While Salie is seeking to anchor her Self, Elvis seems to be less concerned with fixation and goes wherever his intuition takes him. Being placed between several fleeting forces, in addition to his parenthood crisis, Elvis undergoes a crisis of mentorship and membership. For Elvis the desire for roots and consolation is reduced to his attachment to objects that belonged to his mother, especially her journal and Bible. These objects, which represent the only heritage Beatrice left for him, have become fetishes or talismans for him. They have no extrinsic or practical value for Elvis except that they represent what Pierre Nora calls *lieu de memoire,* a site of memory. Moreover, they can be understood as symbolizing the umbilical cord that nurtures him and connects him to his mother on the one hand. On the other hand, they represent archaeological relics – scattered pieces of Beatrice – that he needs to assemble for a complete reconstitution, a whole re-membering or full representation of his mother.

Henceforth, contrary to Salie who is looking for a center of gravity in her affectionate upbringing by her grandmother, as well as in Ndétare's teaching, Elvis choses a rotating platform that comprises actual and virtual entities. Salie's refusal to valorize her western education over the empirical knowledge and guidance through traditions that she is granted by her grandmother denotes her stance to becomes an embodiment of both the past and the present that Ndétare and Grandmother respectively symbolize. Her sense of cultural anchorage is clearly expressed in the following passage:

> Que croit-on m'apprendre en m'expliquant que $E=mc^2$, puisque j'expérimente la théorie de la relativité à l'échelle de ma vie toute entière afférente à cette *Guelwaar* guerrière qui, de ses yeux en amande, m'a ouvert un chemin dans les ténèbres de la tradition ? Peu importe qu'elle ne sache ni lire, ni écrire, aucun de mes chemins ne peut s'éclairer sans son sourire ». (*Ventre*, 76)[58]

In her isolation in Strasbourg, Salie's local culture becomes the omnipresent soother and comforter. On happy occasions as well as in moments of depression, she invariably rejoices or invigorates herself by evoking home through a variety of practices. Through occasional phone calls to her half-brother, frequent tunes of Senegalese music, as well as the flavor of food sent from Senegal, Niodior becomes part of Strasbourg, and Salie a "Niodioroise" in this utterly individualistic place. However, her attachment to Niodior is too strong to be fended off by the interface with technology alone (TV, radio, computer). Her decision to visit home occasionally, functions both as a temporary flight from her seclusion in Strasbourg, as well as an expression of what Takeyuki Tsuda has termed "a nostalgic desire to rediscover ethnic roots" (3).

[58] What do they imagine they're teaching me when they explain that $E=mc^2$, since I've been testing the theory of relativity all my life, which is entirely related to that female *Guelwaar* whose almond eyes opened a path for me through the shadows of traditions? What does it matter if she can't read or write? None of my paths can light up without her smile. (*Belly*, 49)

For Elvis and Salie, rather than being an absolute and inflexible decision, cultural identity is transient and synonymous to performance. Bored and frustrated for being constantly ignored and controlled at the same time, Salie sees herself for the first time during her stay in Mbour, embarked in a frenetic dance to the rhythm of the traditional tam-tam. She describes this ephemeral performance as a moment of reconnection with her roots as well as emotional healing:

> La tête vrillée par ce son ancestral, les pieds enfoncés dans le sable froid des soirs côtiers, on ne saurait mieux s'imbiber de la sève de l'Afrique. C'est comme une communion venue du plus profond des âges. On peut remplacer nos pagnes par des pantalons, trafiquer nos dialectes, voler nos masques, défriser nos cheveux ou décolorer notre peau, mais aucun savoir-faire technique ou chimique ne saura jamais extirper de notre âme la veine rythmique qui bondit dès la première résonance du djembé. …Malgré les coups assenés par l'histoire, ce rythme demeure, et avec lui notre africanité, n'en déplaise aux prêcheurs de tout bord. Ah ! Comme il était bon d'être là ! Je suis heureuse, heureuse ! Répétai-je. (*Ventre,*195)[59]

Likewise, dancing in Strasbourg to the rhythm of Yande Codou Sène, the Serer diva, and to the music of Youssou Ndour, another Senegalese musician, represents in Billig's terms a way to wave symbolic flags (Jones, 43), to play out a sense of belonging to an uplifting order she calls Africanité. However, even though this statement is close to a declaration of cultural identity, it remains within the framework of using culture in an ad hoc manner.

What emerges from the analysis of Elvis's and Salie's multicultural consciousness is that there are at least two Selves that confront each other. On the one hand, the

[59] Your head spinning with this ancestral sound, your feet buried in the cold sand of seaside evenings, there's no better way to drink in the sap of Africa. It's like a communion handed down from the beginning of time. Our loincloths may have been replaced by trousers, dialects corrupted, our masks stolen, and we may straighten our hair or bleach our skin, but no technical or chemical know-how will ever be able to extract from our soul the rhythmic vein that thrills to the first notes of the djembe. (…) Regardless of the blows dealt us by history, this rhythm remains, and with it our Africanness, whatever preachers of any stripe may say. Oh! It was so good to be there! I am so happy, I said over and over. (*Belly*, 138)

inclination to connect with roots, and on the other hand the desire to find pure individuality. In Niodior, a self that rejects the local beliefs and stands in stark opposition with the values that represent the bedrock of the community springs out of Salie. This self who is absolutely informed by her education and her experience abroad keeps her aloof. She finds herself unfit to integrate the homogeneous companionship of the illiterate women who are at ease in the home of their habit. Her feminist worldview that she is unable to share with them represents the main hindrance for her integration in the world of these women who totally adhere to the patriarchal legislation. Her tendency to override the gender standards in Niodior, after her return from France, earns her the nickname of "Garçon manqué," a tomboy. If Ndétare jokingly uses this label to address her, Salie is identified as such by the others for deliberately crossing gender boundaries and failing in her womanly duties (by the standard of the community in Niodior). In Niodior Salie becomes more aware of the "self" she does not wish to be, than of the self she really wants to be.

Elvis on the other hand, seems to be convinced about the man he wants to become. His dream of fame and fortune as an impersonator of Elvis Presley tells a great deal about the type of identity he is striving to create. By letting his body occupy the center of his attention – which is evidenced by the almost omnipresence of his mirror throughout the story – he is not only preoccupied by emulating his American idol, but also concerned with the unattainable goal of looking exactly like him. The following passage describes one of his desperate attempts to resemble Elvis Presley: "With a defeated sigh, he turned to the small tin of talcum powder stuck in one of the pockets in his bag. He shook out a handful and applied a thick layer, peering into the mirror. He was

dissatisfied; this was not how white people looked" (*GLD*, 78). With a black wig on his head and his face covered in talcum powder, he performs beautifully fluid movements, for the "pink expatriates baking slowly in the sun" (Kattanek, 427). This is another instance of cultural identity as performance, or a strategic play acting for recognition. In other words, since the imagined self is unattainable, one may perform or relinquish it according to circumstances.

At any rate, the fact of being exposed to more than one culture seems to cause instability of cultural identity and subject position. Salie's and Elvis's fluctuating positions corresponds to Hall's characterization of the post-modern subject who "assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent "self" (Hall, 598). However, if it is possible at all to settle on Salie's selfhood, one thing is certain, she is constantly in search of her Self and gladly admits her hybridity. Her statement, "Je suis l'enfant présenté au sabre du roi Salomon pour le juste partage. Exilée en permanence, je passe mes nuits à souder les rails qui mènent à l'identité" (*Ventre*, 254), is a clear metaphor of her fragmentation which precisely translates the Kristevan concept of "sujet en procès," "a subject-in-process, but a subject nevertheless" (Kristeva, 13). Moreover, Salie's difficult attempts to reconcile her multiple identities into one coherent self is captured by Thomas' argument that her subjectivity is "characterized by the kind of cultural and social in-between-ness alluded to by Salman Rushdie in his notion of "double-unbelonging," whereby she is no longer completely African and not quite French" (257). This self that finds fertile soil neither in Niodior nor in France, consists of additions only possible in her imagination : « Enracinée partout, exilée tout le temps, je suis chez moi là où l'Afrique et l'Europe perdent leur orgueil et se contentent

de s'additionner: sur une page, pleine de l'alliage qu'elles m'ont légué" (*Ventre*, 181)[60]. If Ruth Robbins' argument that "we are what we read" (21) is true, then it can be even truer that we are what we write. Therefore, Salie's multiple subjectivities can be sought with no risk of error in what she reads and writes.

Salie's repeated references to certain readings suggest some ideological relationship with those authors and their legacy. In short, she seems to identify with what she reads. She refers to her odyssey and her experience of negotiating a transnational identity as "mon aventure ambiguë," my ambiguous adventure. This allusion functions as an explicit testimony of the impact of the well-known classic text by Cheikh Hamidou Kane. She identifies with Samba Diallo, the hybrid protagonist of this famous text who describes his own condition in the following terms: "Je ne suis pas un pays des Diallobés distinct, face à un Occident distinct…je suis devenu les deux (*L'aventure*, 164)[61]. As Abiola Irele has argued,

> Samba Diallo is the archetype of the divided consciousness, of the African who suffers in his mind the effects of cultural dispossession. His agony is that of his dual nature, marked by a cleavage rather than an integration of its two frames of reference. (203)

Even though Salie shares the "divided consciousness" with Samba Diallo, her difference with him resides in her capacity to recover from her agony by rationalizing and celebrating her hybridity.

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[60] Always in exile, and with roots everywhere, I'm at home where Africa and Europe put aside their pride and are content to join together: in my writing, which is rich with the fusion they've bequeathed me. (*Belly*, 127)

[61] I'm not a distinct country of the Diallobe facing a distinct Occident, and appreciating with a cool head what I must take from it and what I must leave with it by way of counterbalance. I have become the two. (*Ambiguous Adventure*, 150).

Along the same lines, her stance against polygamy, as well as her calling herself "féministe modérée" (41), brings to mind female authors such as Mariama Ba, that she refers to nominally, Buchi Emecheta and Flora Nwapa as emblematic figures of an African version of feminism. Buchi Emecheta's description of herself as "an African feminist with a small f" and Mariama Ba's stand against polygamy in *Une si longue lettre* can be rightly remembered here. Hence, through her pronouncement about being a moderate feminist, Salie is seeking at the same time distinction from the radical western form of feminism, and affiliation with what has come to be known as African feminism.

Her belief in Africanité and cultural hybridity simultaneously, draws on both Cesaire's concept of *Negritude* which includes acceptance of black heritage, and Senghor's theory of *"La civilisation de l'universel"* that envisions Western and African unity by symbiosis. Moreover, her critic of neocolonialism under the garb of globalization aligns her with many African writers who belong to the anticolonial and postcolonial vein. Without exception, the ideas of such writers are re-inscribed in one way or the other in *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* as narrated by Salie.

Salie's reading list incorporates both African and European writers as a mark of her openness and her belief in universality. The ideas of these writers combined, can be articulated around themes that run the gamut from self-determination, social justice, progress, modernization and intellectual development. In her interview Diome magnifies the legacy of some of the authors that compose Salie's reading list and generously shares her outlook:

> Lire Césaire, lire Senghor, c'est découvrir qui on est en tant que Noir. Lire Marguerite Yousenar, c'est apprendre une maîtrise absolue de la stylistique française. Lire Victor Hugo et *Les Misérables*, c'est comprendre qu'il y a toujours

> des personnes qui se sont intéressées aux gens qui souffrent dans la société, et ainsi de suite (Interview,140).[62]

However, Salie's writing functions both as a mode of evasion, as well as a space for her voice. This view is corroborated by Thomas who maintains that "Writing offers an escape mechanism with which to process her anxiety …thereby enabling her to reconcile her "double soi: *moi* d'ici, *moi* de là-bas"[63] (258). Hence, through writing she experiences a rebirth, reconstructs her identity and compensates for her loss. When she writes: "My memory is my identity" (162) she is clearly making an attempt to reify her identity which escapes external control since it is accessible to her alone, through her imagination. When she declares: "I seek my country on a white page, a notebook that can fit into a travel bag. So, wherever I put down my suitcase, I'm at home" (183), she is expressing – to borrow Hamid Naficy's terms - her exilic subjectivity including provisionality and improvisation (Naficy, 1999).

Moreover, Gikandi's view that "the simultaneous existence of a modern and a traditional world could only be negotiated through works of imagination" (382) supports the argument that writing provides a platform for the articulation of Salie's freedom as a multicultural subject. Eventually, Salie is not just *what she reads*, she is also *what she writes*. Since reading is just a passive and receptive skill, Salie decides for the more active and productive skill which writing represents. By writing she develops what Jacques Lacan calls "creative subjectivity" (Lacan, 1977), which allows her to negotiate

[62] To read Césaire or Senghor is to discover who you are as a black person. To read Marguerite Yousenar, is to learn perfect French styles. To read Victor Hugo and *Les misérables* is to understand that there always exists people who are attentive to those who suffer in society, and so on.

her way among the contradictory forces that surround her. Above all, for Salie writing becomes a militant act, an expression of agency through which she gains comfort, freedom and voice, which she is otherwise denied. She declares : "L'écriture m'offre un sourire maternel complice, car, libre, j'écris pour dire et faire tout ce que ma mère n'a pas osé dire et faire[64]» (*Ventre*, 227). Henceforth, writing offers a space for a subject position and agency beyond the performance and mimicry of the real world.

While Salie is concerned with questions such as "who I am?" and "where I am?" which, according to Jensen are vital to cultural identity (190), Elvis is thinking of "the possibility of being in a film with the real Elvis Presley" (*GLD,* 55), and "to be a famous dancer like Elvis" (168). His ambitions are formulated in a very selfish manner and his imagined world gives the mental picture of a Ping-Pong game, with the two of them (Elvis Presley and Elvis Oke), concentrating on each other and acting identically. Contrary to his friend Redemption who think of making millions in America, for Elvis, America does not mean anything without Elvis Presley: "Elvis Presley aside, he wasn't really sure he liked America" (*GLD,* 56). At this stage Elvis is a subject in the sense that "[he] is powerfully subjected to forces outside [himself]" (Robbins, 14), rather than being a *subject of action* (Kristeva, 15). With this attitude, Elvis is no more than a springboard, a reflector of the language and actions of others, especially those of his favorite movie stars. For instance, instead of an appropriate verbal reaction to Comfort's harassment about his having to pay the rent, Elvis "raised eyebrows, the way he remembered Roger Moore doing in *The Saint*" (*GLD*, 50). Thus, his behavior towards others is an extension

[64] Writing smiles at me knowingly for, free, I write to say and do everything that my mother didn't dare say and do. (*Belly*, 162)

of his performance of American pop culture, and his understanding of life remains within the frame of film sequences that he has seen.

Rather than thinking critically about those movies, he looks at them romantically and hope to see life turn into a concrete manifestation of the virtual realm that they depict. This is further evidenced in one of his daydreaming moments described in the following passage: "in the distance a woman sang in a sorrow-cracked voice that made him catch his breath, stop and look around. In a moment, it all looked so beautiful, like a sequence from one of the films he had seen" (*GLD,* 58). For being completely immersed in the world of music and movies, and obsessed by his vocation as an Elvis Presley impersonator, he lacks a clear-cut personal worldview, or to borrow Redemption's expression, he does not "think beyond the guns" of the action movies that he adores watching. His plans are informed by movies and television, and by the regular advice he gets from Redemption who is also a movie fanatic, and more of a sounding board than an insightful advisor.

Contrary to Salie, Elvis contents himself with passive reception and uncritical consumption of foreign popular culture, including movies and books. He does not seek any form of agency since his ambition is purely egocentric and selfish. In other words, Elvis does not envision or intitiate any thought or action that involves more than his own self. In this regard, Elvis seems to match Michel Foucault's self-caring subject that Zizek describes as characterized by the "ideal of the 'all around' personality mastering the passions within himself and making his own life a work of art" (Zizek, 2). Elvis's supposed self-caring attitude is apparent in his plans that do not involve others, not even

members of his family. For that reason, both Redemption and his aunt Felicia criticize him and call him a selfish person.

Being dazzled by the dream of becoming famous for the sake of it, he spends the money he earns through the deals that Redemption negotiates for him on personal items, and gives any surplus to whoever is lucky enough to approach him at the right moment. This behavior which the reader can misinterpret as genuine generosity simply confers him an instant feeling of being a hero. Redemption confronts him about his tendency to self-gratification or self-heroization:

> Dis Elvis, you dey very selfish…
>
> Until you see somebody dat you think is her, you never even talk of finding her. You never even think it. Now you say you want to help. Na lie. You dey want be hero, de savior of your cousin. Oh yes, I know your type. I *am* your type. If you can't save yourself, den save others, abi? Dat way you pretend to be good person. (*GLD,* 246)

Here, Redemption rebukes Elvis for his indifference and unwillingness to help with Efua his runaway cousin, after he thought he saw her with a group of Maharaji people. This incidence is also an indication of Elvis's indifference vis à vis blood ties, which goes counter the principles of Igbo culture.

Elvis becomes a perplexed character who seeks to remain cool despite being torn between multiple forces. Contrary to his counterpart in *Ventre*, he sees everything but seldom tries to make a statement. He asks questions but never proposes any solution or alternative. He has mixed feelings as he tries to reconcile the personality he tries to build out of readings and movies on the one hand, and the man both Redemption and The King expect to sprout out of him. Even though the King and Redemption have conflicting conceptions of what it means to be a man, Elvis is showing full satisfaction to neither of

them. The King's advances are imbued with a sense of nationalism that conflict with Elvis's ambition. He does not subscribe to Redemption's risk-taking approach to life either. Eventually, he becomes difficult to situate and can only be perceived as an incarnation of the figure of the flâneur, a person who venerates leisure.

Unlike Salie, Elvis is not really attentive to his cultural identity. He enjoys his position or lack thereof between the different cultural entities as long as his flânerie, or pleasure to explore the city is not jeopardized. Contrary to Salie who is militantly assertive, Elvis lacks a sense of cultural or political agency, for, that would mean fixation and endorsement of specific values. However, during his tour with the JOKING JAGUARS, which took place after the failed organ trafficking deal with Redemption and the subsequent death threat to both of them, and his father's effort to protect Mokoro from destruction, Elvis takes a moment of profound introspection. His signs of sadness annoy George who cannot help asking him what the matter is. To George's question Elvis answers: "I just realized that it is only a small group of people who are spoiling our country. Most people just want to work hard, earn a living and find entertainment. Yet, it seems that no matter how they try, they remain poor." Elvis's insightful and straightforward answer impresses the King of the Beggars who convinces himself that the boy is growing into a man. "'Leave him, he is making sense,' the King said, coming over to join them. He laughed deeply and slapped Elvis on the back. 'De boy is becoming a man,' he said" (*GLD*, 280). For the King as a political activist, to be a man is to have a cause, more precisely, to be aware of the social and political situation of the country and take action.

Unlike Salie who forsakes external influence and seeks her identity in her own imagination and creativity, Elvis allows himself to be carried by the frenzy of consumerism. He experiences the difficulty of making any specific choice, despite the urges of people like Sunday, the King of the Beggars and Redemption. With multiple cultural influences present in his life, he is an embodiment of what Rakesh M. Bhatt calls "new identities, which are neither colonial-global, nor necessarily indigenous-local" (520). He seems to be an allegory of what Kattanek has referred to as "a complex picture of 20th-century globalised Africa" (Kattanek, 426). Furthermore, because of his inclination to remain serene, Madhu Krishnan sees him as an atypical subject who "embodies the desire …to be allowed just to be…" (5). She analogizes Elvis's uncontainable existence with an *ogbanje*, and maintains, "Elvis is finally represented as neither here nor there, condemned to ambivalence" (6). This observation is all the more relevant that the reader's temptation to label him as a fanatic of America is dissolved by his uncertainty. As we note in the following passage: "He mused over his mixed feelings. His fascination with movies and Elvis Presley aside, he wasn't really sure he liked America. Now that the people he cared about were going there, he felt more ambivalent than ever" *(GLD, 55-56).* Despite the fact that he adopts American cultural standards for happiness and seeks for role models in Western culture, Elvis is not truly concerned with cultural identification.

If any parallel between Salie and Elvis is possible, it is with regards to their ambivalence and their respective states as "sujets-en-procès." Contrary to what Jensen argues, choosing a world is a difficult decision to make. With these two protagonists, we witness a dilemma, which is associated with the unrealistic enterprise of embracing both

local and foreign cultures, and the impossibility of one coherent choice. This condition of ambivalence and ambiguity that marks both Elvis's and Salie's identities corresponds to what Homi Bhabha calls "unhomeliness". While Salie is a supporter of the fusion of both the local and the foreign cultures, Elvis can be considered a supporter of whatever is convenient at a specific point in time. What these two positions have in common is that the point of reference or center is no longer fixed and immutable. This state of affairs significantly affects the traditional pattern of the *Bildungsroman*, which lies on a point of reference, or a center to which one returns.

Salie's retreat in a hotel in Mbour reveals her lack of comfort with the local culture and her desperation about achieving wholeness or recognition of her divided self. Therefore, her temporary refuge in a hotel suggests that she occupies a liminal space, which, though materially distinct from both France and Niodior, nonetheless fails to procure a real sense of home. Her "unhomeliness" refers to her uncertainty about where to find a space that transcends the restrictive forms of existence, which characterize both France and her native Niodior. Given that for Salie, home intrinsically means freedom, only writing can allow full expression of her subjectivity and provide a sense of belonging and acceptance in a network of solidarity that extends beyond physical borders. As far as Elvis is concerned, he never really seeks belonging to any specific culture. His "unhomiliness" is represented in a more or less symbolic way. The narrative of *Graceland* ends with Elvis waiting in the airport for his name to be called out for departure. This is a "neither here nor there" space characteristic of the conditions of transnational migrants. At the moment of his departure from Nigeria, he has not yet

demonstrated a clear sense of cultural identity, and his American dream is unfortunately giving way to a huge emotional toll.

This chapter has made an attempt to demonstrate how multicultural encounters have become the "way of the world." With this reality, a great deal of the cornerstone notions of the *Bildungsroman* such as attachment or allegiance to a specific place or community is challenged. In other words, the notions of integration and reconciliation that mark the classic *Bildungsroman* become problematic. This is due to the fact that with the extension of the contact zone to more liberal media and technology, as well as intensive travelling, we witness early development of multicultural consciousness resulting in the protagonist's difficulty informing a coherent and unified cultural identity.

Le Ventre de l'Atlantique and *Graceland* are good examples of novels that stage this complex contemporary condition. Both novels successfully show the penetration of foreign influence and the demise of cultural fixity. By depicting the coming of age of protagonists who grow up with multicultural consciousness, they become good illustrations of a literature that celebrates cultural diversity and hybridity. With protagonists who claim multiple attachments or conversely give little importance to them, it can be argued that these novels belong to a form of "littérature désengagée," which contrary to early postcolonial literature, exposes and debunks any discourse of legitimation of a fixed cultural center of gravity. In other words, both novels provide enough evidence for the argument that multicultural consciousness represents a challenge vis-à-vis collective identity. Rather than glorifying or legitimizing specific cultural references, they seem to promote the idea of a world characterized by cultural amalgam, gradually emerging from parochialism and cultural bigotry. With the wide exposure to

information technologies and foreign popular culture forms, locality is no longer a shield from cultural transformation. What emerges then is a condition that Tomlinson defines as deterritorilization whereby "people are lifted out of their ties to place" by media and travels, without completely losing their sense of locality (148).

Both novels examine among other things, the toll globalization – with the subsequent spread of mass media and popular culture – is taking on African youths today. This material reality with its psychological implications necessarily shape the contemporary coming of age narratives at various levels. With the world gradually becoming a global village, protagonists are more frequently at the junction of multiple cultures. Such a condition results in the emergence of a new mentality, a new worldview, along with various ways to negotiate conflicting subjectivities. The more information and products are exchanged between the multiple sites, the more the euphoria of the outside world grows among the younger generation.

Chapter Three: Growing Away from Home: The Tropes of Memory and Belonging in *Abyssinian Chronicles* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*

> Exile or émigré experience (…) involves discovery and self-transformation. What is discovered is not only the foreign place and culture (…) but also one's own person and the home culture perceived and understood in new ways. Igor Maver, *Diasporic Subjectivity*…

While the previous chapters have shown ways in which young people in a postcolonial setting grow up with a multicultural awareness as a result of media and migration, this chapter looks specifically at the implications of border crossing in the identity formation of the young protagonist in the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. Like many earlier *Bildungsromane* from the postcolonial world that portray the transnational movement of a protagonist, the texts in this study emphasize in one way or another, notions relating to diasporic identities such as attachment to a homeland, cultural memories, and cultural integration in the host country. In a context of intensive transnational interconnectedness, facilitated by technology and mass movement, the representation of migrant experience in literature raises questions relating to the value accorded to locality and affiliation. How strong has people's attachment to their homelands and communities become? How transportable and reproducible home cultures have become? And finally, how is belonging negotiated in a foreign setting with the pervasiveness of the home culture? This set of questions provides a good point of entry in the analysis of the relationship between memory and belonging. It can be argued without mistake that memory and belonging are closely linked and are central to any attempt to map migrant identities. Therefore, the distance between "home" and "abroad," attachment and detachment is emphasized or bridged, depending on the nature of the memories of the migrant.

Looking at the evolution of migrant literature from the early post-independence period to recent times will essentially call attention to the tropes of memory and belonging. Many of the early postcolonial *Bildungsromane* depict protagonists who cross national borders to pursue their education abroad. These *Bildungsromane* include Cheikh Amadou Kane's *L'aventure ambiguë*, Camara Laye's *L'enfant noir*, George Lamming's *In the Castle of my skin*, as well as Ken Bogul's *Le baobab fou*. Some of those, such as *L'aventure ambiguee* and *Le baobab fou* provide a complete picture of the diasporic trajectory of the protagonist, which usually ends with his/her homecoming. In *L'aventure ambiguë* and *Le boabab fou* for instance, after spending time in Europe, Ken and Samba Diallo respectively return back home and face the test and trial of their communities. In *L'enfant noir* and *In the Castle of My Skin* Laye and Lamming focus on childhood experience up to the circumstances leading to the departure of their respective protagonists. Laye's autobiographical work portrays the growth of the protagonist between Tindican and Kouroussa, his school years in Conakry, and ends when he boards a plane for Paris. Very similarly, at the end of Lamming's novel, G, the narrator and protagonist is about to leave Barbados in order to search for his identity in a foreign land.

What is at stake in this demonstration is that these narratives – even though some of them follow the protagonist abroad – lay more emphasis on the circumstances resulting in their departure, and in the importance of homecoming. With the host country being invariably the "mother country," the protagonist is always expected to return, and he/she usually returns physically or figuratively. The act of returning open up avenues for diverse ways of validating or negotiating with an overpowering local system that most of the time resists western values and technology. In a word, the literary production of this

period is stamped by a sense of nationalism, which Said defines as "an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage" (Said, 176). To borrow a concept from the vocabulary of negritude, this earlier period was marked by what is referred to as "enracinement" or deep-rootedness.

In contrast, many of the most recent migrant texts, focus on the diasporic experience of their protagonists. This means that they put more emphasis on the experience of the protagonist as a transnational subject with the possibility to return "home" or stay "abroad." This recent trend in the literary representation of transnational migration focuses on the uncertainty of where home is, and celebrates the hybridity and the fragmentation of the subject. This condition that writers of this period try to capture is eloquently described by Ian Chambers in a way that puts it in stark opposition with what is described above as the post-independence representation of the migrant experience. Chambers writes: "[the] migrant's sense of being rootless, of living between words, between a lost past and a non-integrated present, is perhaps the most fitting metaphor of this (post)modern condition" (27).

This new trend celebrates and romanticizes hybridity and mobility or migrancy "which involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain" (Chambers, 5). Henceforth, the question of cultural belonging, which has always been at issues, is made more complex than ever by the lack of attachment to a homeland and the lack of fixity to locality. Nevertheless, cultural identification remains essential for the pursuit of happiness, the search for affiliation and belonging. Thus, reflection and discussion on the new parameters of belonging and the new techniques of negotiating space becomes both stimulating and challenging.

By posing the problem of identity formation away from home this chapter brings to the table questions about the relationship of the protagonist with his/her home, and the ways in which that relationship affects the sense of belonging. Put differently, the chapter seeks to illuminate the fundamental link between memories and the formation and exercise of diasporic identities. Paraphrasing Judy Giles (2002), Vijay Agnew writes: "[m]emories play a role in the individual's struggle to construct a social and personal identity in a world in which subjectivity is both fragmented and fractured" (7). Agnew also addresses the tension that the individual living away in the diaspora experiences everyday "between living "here" and remembering "there", between memories of places of origin and entanglements with places of residence, and between the metaphorical and the physical home" (4).

Focusing on Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memories* and Moses Isegawa's *Abyssinian Chronicles*, this chapter makes the argument that home, in its physical and metaphorical representation follows the protagonists in their quest for personality and happiness abroad. More precisely, it makes the claim that memories of home represent a big challenge in the quest of freedom, happiness and ultimately belonging, that both Sophie and Mugezi are indulged in. Sophie who is raised, loved and pampered by her surrogate mother, Tante Atie, leaves Haiti to reunite with Martine, her biological mother who lives in New York. Sophie's journey takes place in a context of political turmoil that has severely marked her family in a way that she is still too young to comprehend. Mugezi in *Abyssinian Chronicles* leaves his native Uganda, devastated by several years of war, as a bereaved adolescent who has lost almost all members of his family: some

having died during the war and others from disease or depression in the aftermath of the conflict.

While Sophie chooses to remember, Mugezi wishes to forget. These two opposing attitudes towards memory are very thought provoking. This reality prompts questions about the nature of their respective memories and the implications of those memories in their pursuit of happiness and self-fulfillment away from home. The goal of this study is thus, to investigate the way in which their memories are significant to their identity formation, their sense of place and belonging in their new locations.

Furthermore, what does the fact that Sophie is sent to New York to join her mother, and Mugezi flies to Amsterdam with the help of an Aid Organization (*Action II*) tell us about their estrangement and sense of belonging? To be sure, in both cases foreignness is reduced to the minimum because of the presence of people, objects and artifacts that reflect their ethnic and cultural background in their new location. As such, the chances for cultural encounters and for the enactment of both collective and individual memories increase. In other words, being away and being at home become interlaced and cultural identity becomes particularly problematic. It is this inside/outside pattern in Sophie and Mugezi's migrant experience that the first section of this chapter will examine. More specifically, it will analyze the extent to which memory is instrumental to the pursuit of happiness of these protagonists in a context of cultural globalization. The fact that both Sophie and Mugezi hold American and British passports respectively, signals a new relationship with place, a redefinition of home and a controversial attachment to the homeland. The second section of the chapter puts at stake the various modes of negotiating cultural belonging, that Sophie and Mugezi, as

transnational subjects bring into play in order to be part of a community or simply remain citizens of the world.

1- Home: An Indelible Phenomenon

In his seminal work, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977), Yi-Fu Tuan explores different perspectives on the notions of home and homeland. He discusses questions relating to the character of the sentiment of attachment to a homeland and clearly states the intensity of this sentiment. He writes: "Human groups nearly everywhere tend to regard their own homeland as the center of the world. A people who believe they are at the center claim, implicitly, the ineluctable worth of their location" (149). Tuan's argument implies that knowledge of the physical and social milieu by the individual, through exploration and dynamic exchanges, is necessary. With this argument in mind, this section opens with an attempt to examine Sophie and Mugezie's relationship to their respective homelands, as well as the affect and memories associated with their departure and residence away from home.

Sophie, whose spatial and geographical horizon is limited to Croix-des-Rosets where she lives with her aunt Atie, and to La Nouvelle Dame Marie where her Grandma Ifé lives, does not have strong emotional ties to Haiti as a larger geographical entity, prior to her departure. She is still more attached to people than to actual physical places. However, the word "people" here refers exclusively to Tante Atie and Granmé Ife, as the following statement seems to suggests: "[m]aybe if I had a really good friend my eyes would have clung to hers as we were driven away" (*Breath*, 31). Since she does not have what she calls a "really good friend" it becomes safe to say that at this point, her

emotional attachment is restricted to Tante Atie and Granmé only. This state of affairs opens up space for anticipation about the content to give to Sophie's memories after she has left home.

But what is indeed Sophie's sense of home(land)? Tuan's study about the relationship of the child to space and place gives reasonable insight on the topic. In his attempt to investigate about what place means to the child, he writes: "[h]ow does a young child understand place? If we define place broadly as a focus of value, of nurture and support, then the mother is the child's primary place" (Tuan, 29). This statement clarifies the fact that, at her age, Sophie still associates home with the presence of her aunt Atie, her surrogate mother. She feels so comfortable with Tante Atie that she does not imagine herself in any place without Atie being right "at hand reach". She displays a sense of security and composure with Atie who, on the other hand is all too caring and protective. From this point of view, Sophie's home would be the familiar space, while 'away' would be 'a strange land'" (Chambers, 18).

Her dream about Martine chasing her to squeeze her into the small frame of her picture is suggestive of the strong bond of affection and confidence between her and Atie, as well as the sense of estrangement between her and Martine. Sophie narrates:

> I sometimes saw my mother in my dreams. She would chase me through a field of wild flowers as tall as the sky. When she caught me, she would try to squeeze me into the small frame so I could be in the picture with her. I would scream and scream until my voice gave out, then Tante Atie would come and save me from her grasp. (*Breath,* 8)

A possible conclusion that could be drawn from this dream is that Sophie is closer to Atie than to her mother. The close relationship between the two characters is further clarified in the passage where Sophie identifies herself as "my mother's daughter and Tante Atie's

Child" (*Breath*, 49). The fact that Atie is the one who saves her from Martine's grip places Atie on the motherly terrain and translates the reality that Sophie associates home and security with her and cannot imagine those with anybody else. Sophie's insistence that Atie too, should go to New York with her, supports this point. Secondly, Sophie cannot imagine her mother in any place other than the frame of the photograph since that is the only place where she has ever seen her. Moreover, instead of being a soother and comforter, Martine appears in Sophie's dreams as a predator, a kidnapper. These attributes are apparent in the use of verbs of action such as "chase," "squeeze" and "grasp" that clearly convey the violence and aggressiveness that Sophie comes to associate with the act of separation from Atie. All this demonstrates that Sophie regards her mother Martine and her soon-to-be new home as "a small frame" (Braziel, 127), and the journey to New York, simply as a departure from the paradise of wild and tall flowers, for a restrictive and unwelcoming place, symbolized here by the "small frame" of the photograph.

The fact that Sophie has no place in her mind's eye except the one where she usually lives with her surrogate mother, is according to Sara Ahmed's definition of home, an expression of the very feeling of being at home. Ahmed argues that:

> Home is implicitly constructed as a purified space of belonging in which the subject is too comfortable to question the limits or borders of her or his experience, indeed, where the subject is so at ease that she or he does not think". (339)

It can be derived from this argument that Sophie's home means the warmth and the loving care of Atie (Mardorossian, 18). By associating home with a feeling of familiarity and comfort, both Tuan and Ahmed reinforce the idea that Atie occupies the

center of Sophie's (home)land, and is the most significant component of what Sophie may feel or think of as home.

Atie's effort to reassure Sophie about her trip to New York testifies the fact that she represents what is familiar to the young girl, and Martine is perceived as what is foreign, and thus causes Sophie's fear and anxiety. In her attempt to comfort her and suppress her anxieties about Martine and New York, Atie says to Sophie: "You should not be afraid, (…) Martine was a wonderful sister. She will be a great mother to you. Crabs don't make papayas. She is my sister" (29). These words suggest that Sophie's journey to New York is not just a geographical displacement, but also an emotional transfer whereby the host land and the biological mother represent the two unknown variables in Sophie's equation.

By teaching Sophie to love her mother, Atie is not just pointing at a human emotion but also at the natural loyalty and filial duty towards her mother and the lineage as a whole, as the saying "Crabs don't make papayas" seems to imply. By strongly emphasizing the mother, Atie is forming for Sophie an identity embedded in their matrilineal system. The preparations for Sophie's trip to New York, rather than giving her the feeling that she is leaving one locality for another, give the impression that she is being transferred from one end of the "maternal blood line" to the other, from the familiar hands of Tante Atie to Martine's unfamiliar ones.

Despite the political scuffles that punctuate the day of her departure, Sophie does not really understand what is at stake in her journey. Going to New York means nothing more than leaving Tante Atie, the comfort of "home", the person who has tended and nurtured her since she can remember. In other words, she is leaving the familiar Atie, for

a woman she has only known through a framed photograph beside Atie's bed, and through a tape-recorded voice. Even though Sophie is drilled to refer to Martine as her "mother", in her heart of hearts, she is no more than "other." She is as foreign to her as the City of New York that lies far beyond her limited horizon of Croix-des-Rosets. Jana E. Braziel holds a similar view when she writes: "[Martine] is not associated with motherland, but rather with diaspora" (126).

Another insinuation that lies beneath Atie's advice to Sophie is that she believes that Sophie's salvation resides in her attachment to the "mother". Therefore, a metaphorical link can be established between the biological mother and the "motherland" as they both add up to ancestry, lineage, customs and traditions. In that sense, Atie's insistence that Sophie should love her mother, can be rather perceived as an exhortation for the respect of the blood ties, and by extension the respect of the heritage that a mother is expected to pass over to her daughter. Thus, by urging Sophie to love and respect her mother, Atie is simply exhorting her to love and to remain faithful to her roots, thereby, setting in motion an act of remembering prior Sophie's departure.

Because of her lack of maturity, Sophie is undisturbed by the violent atmosphere that surrounds them on their way to the airport. She is rather saddened by the prospect of leaving Atie, which is in no way synonymous with leaving Haiti. When her Aunt Atie asks: "Do you see what you are leaving?" she crudely replies "I know I'm leaving you" (34). This answer tells a great deal about the fact that Atie completely fills Sophie's horizon. It vindicates at the same time Tuan's claim that: "A strange world holds little fear for the young child provided his mother is nearby, for she is his familiar environment and haven. A child is adrift – placeless – without the supportive parent" (29). A sort of

conflict of interest occurs as Atie is concerned with Sophie's security, and Sophie with her impending loss of maternal affection and support.

If home can also be associated with the concept of safety, then between Atie and Sophie, it is like a dialogue of the deaf. For Sophie, home and safety means staying with Atie, whereas for Atie, Sophie has every reason to feel safe in New York, away from Haiti, with her mother (who is home too). Henceforth, leaving Atie to join Martine virtually amounts to the same. This means in other words that figuratively, Sophie is not leaving home, she is going home in a different way. This viewpoint confirms one definition among many, that associates home with where one's family live. All these arguments put together represent evidence for Sophie's complex notion of home and homeland, but more generally about the question of being at home and leaving home.

Contrary to Sophie, Mugezi has known an adventurous upbringing that started in his grandparents' homestead, then continued in his parents' house in Kampala, before his full year of training at the seminary. His formative years also include the experience of horror and terror, as well as black market activities during the Amin's dictatorship and the subsequent guerilla wars. Therefore, unlike Sophie, Mugezi is actively involved in what can be called a family odyssey and has witnessed memorable times of the Ugandan political life. For that reason, his attachment to his homeland has to do with his sweet childhood memories but also with many of his very controversial social and political affiliations.

His involvement in public life marks his confirmed sense of being at home and his strong attachment to the place and its people. Thus, for Mugezi, leaving means simultaneously loss and recovery. When he confesses: "I had swallowed the village, its

spirit, every worthy bit of it, and my job was to rebuild it elsewhere" (*Chronicles*, 408), he makes the purpose for his journey very clear. His intention is to recover the haven of peace of his childhood.

Paradoxically, prior to his departure from Uganda, he undertakes to rebuild "the burial site under the jackfruit tree where [he] had spent so many childhood hours looking at Mpande Hill" (408). Through this undertaking, Mugezi is trying to keep his childhood memories alive and is marking his attachment to the land and the people, especially his dead ancestors. His action signifies cultural rootedness, a tacit pact sealed with his tribal land, and an allegiance to the memory of his parents and ancestors. Tuan (1977) highlights the significance of such an undertaking when he argues:

> A homeland has its landmarks, which may be features of high visibility and public significance, such as monuments, shrines, a hallowed battlefield or cemetery. These visible signs serve to enhance a people's sense of identity; they encourage awareness of and loyalty to place. (159)

Thus, through the act of rebuilding the burial site, Mugezi reclaims full belonging to a community, and spiritual attachment to a land that has nurtured him and his family forever. His homage to the dead carries with it his full awareness of the sociopolitical context that has orphaned and frustrated him to that point in time. His instinctive choice to leave reflects a great desire for salvation, which simply means turning his back not just to a place he has so dearly revered, but also to the ghosts which, from now on haunt the whole place.

As he is being gradually overcome by the desire to search for a substitute homeland, one question that needs to be asked is: to what extent is his unquestionable attachment to his homeland crucial in his pursuit of self-fulfillment abroad? Unlike Sophie who is being prepared to remember, Mugezi decides to forget despite several

irremovable scars and his tribute to his ancestors. These diametrically opposed attitudes to memory raise a certain number of questions. What accounts for such attitudes vis-à-vis memory? Is it possible to erase memory? What plays better for self-fulfillment, remembering or forgetting? The truth of the matter is that whether one wants to remember or to forget, one does not control memory, which can be embedded in both material and non-material realities around us, wherever we are. Therefore, the social and material environment in the host country is determinant in how these two protagonists deal with the resurgence of memories.

It is important to note that for Sophie, departure means loss and for Mugezi, one is tempted to assume that he has more to gain than to lose. Therefore, while Sophie is overcome by sadness and bewilderment, Mugezi, is overwhelmed by excitement and anticipation. By the same token, whereas Sophie associates New York with violence and oppression, Amsterdam is nothing less than a promised land for Mugezi. He confesses that: "Getting on the plane was one of the best things that had happened to me in years" (*Chronicles*, 417).

In their respective host countries, both Sophie and Mugezi stay in ghettoes, which are places par excellence for multicultural encounters but also sites for the enactment of cultural memories. Instead of being marveled they manage to find the familiar in the foreign and describe their places of residence as if they are familiar or close to familiar. In New York, Sophie is not overcome by the sentiment of wonderment and infatuation found with heroes in early postcolonial migrant texts. Even though the tone of the description is devoid of any kind of judgment, it rather allows for the reader a feeling of pity and desolation. In Sophie's description neither her mother nor the city is idealized in

any kind of way. She scrutinizes Martine only to contrast her appearance with "the picture Tante Atie had on her night table" (42). Her description of the neighborhood where Martine lives suggests poverty, and insecurity.

> All the street lights were suddenly gone. The streets we drove down now were dim and hazy. The windows were draped with bars; black trash bags blew out into the night air. There were young men standing on street corners, throwing empty cans at passing cars. (43)

This description of the neighborhood shows neither amazement nor disappointment. It rather suggests that what she sees is not completely strange or unusual, compared to the little she knows about Haiti. In her young mind, the prevailing atmosphere of insecurity and misbehavior on the side of the young men simply appears as commonplace. On her way to the airport with Tante Atie, she witnesses a relatively similar scene: "a group of students were standing on top of a hill, throwing rocks at the burning car" (34). Her apathy in front of these two scenes of violence can be explained by the fact that she resolutely associates the world outside Atie's home with violence and aggressiveness, and is not surprised at all by what she is seeing. It is based on this mindset that Martine appeared in her dream as an assailant.

Sophie lands in a neighborhood where life is characterized by racism, seclusion and distrust. Martine, who is very much aware of the racism and insecurity of the place, locks herself up with her daughter "behind the walls of the old culture they have both brought along and left behind" (Rushdie, 356). She only interacts with fellow Haitian people and thus falls prey to the resurfacing of memories; she is also overcome by the need for self-valorization. Addressing the ghetto as a site of memory alludes to similar situations where people are excluded from the mainstream society and find enough leeway to indulge in practices informed by cultural memories. Martine's radical practice

of Haitian culture both in the public and in the private sphere, is a good illustration of this view.

Similarly, in *Chronicles,* Mugezi's brief description of the lights, colors and commotion of Brussel and the city of Amsterdam is made in a tone that is also devoid of admiration or exaltation. Mugezi's view, like Sophie's seems to be familiar to him. The fact that Mugezi does not feel a complete change of scenery, results from his familiarity with city life. His description of the crowd at Central Station shows that he is not really disoriented in this new place: "I was installed in a small hotel opposite Central Station, and from my window I could see thousands of people pouring out of the station gate. They reminded me of the crowds at the taxi park in Kampala" (419). This lack of wonderment can be explained by the idea of "new condition of neighborliness" mentioned in the previous chapter. His experience of urban life began at home, in Kampala. And for that reason, being abroad becomes an extension of "home". Thus, Mugezi's excitement, as mentioned earlier, has more to do with his feeling of being safe away from home, than with any cardinal values that he attaches to his destination.

Sophie's and Mugezi's lack of excitement suggests a feeling of having not really moved away from home. Their sentiment of déjà vu is emphasized further by the presence of people around them, who make the neighborhood a nearly perfect replication of the ambiance "back home". Sophie describes Martine's neighborhood as full of people who "walked, talked and argued in creole" (*Breath,* 52). This social décor, along with the exhibition of common Haitian products and cultural artifacts such as "small statues of the beautiful mulatresse, the goddess and loa Erzulie" (*Breath,* 52) in shops and in the streets, gives her the impression that Haiti is transplanted to that part of Brooklyn.

The same phenomenon of cultural transplantation is also observed in *Chronicles* where a place called Little Uganda is mostly populated by exiles from Uganda. The existence of such a place in Amsterdam and New York testifies to a world in motion, porousness of borders and cultural deterritorialization as markers of globalization. Such places, where cultural memories are likely to occur do not seem to correspond with Mugezi's ambition to forget, but obviously meet Sophie's need to remember. Mugezi's endeavor to forget is jeopardized by the fact that the *Action II* head office is full of pictures that bring forth memories of Uganda. Those pictures unearthed the ghosts he deceptively believed he had left behind. Seeing those pictures of cadavers and sick adults and children, filled him with the disappointment of someone going against the underlying raison d'être of his journey. He feels sorry for himself for having to cope with memories that are liable to endanger his quest for salvation. He expresses his indignation in front of his hopelessness to find the haven of peace he has been yearning for and that he has been hoping to see in Amsterdam. With the pictures at the *Action II* head office Mugezi is simply unable to stop thinking about horrible scenes he has witnessed firsthand during the war in Uganda:

> The vision of blue-green flies and the small black ones colonizing carrion, shit and putrescence filled the booth with cadaverous stench and made me nauseated. Alas, I had left nothing behind. I had buried nothing in the clouds. I had brought it all with me, coded secretly, gnawing away in the dark like the virus that had killed Aunt Lwandeka. (421)

The irony of the situation is that *Action II* as a development aid organization, lives on propaganda based on scenes of horror captured in places where war or disease are rife. Mugezi's flight from *Action II*, leads us to believe that far from being dedicated to their cause, he simply used the organization to reach Europe.

In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, on the other hand, the buzz around Sophie is not that of flies, but that of Haitian people who have transplanted their homeland to America, leaving almost nothing behind. The Miracin's, a Haitian restaurant and the Haitian Adventist School are places where Haitian cultural identities and collective memories are played out on a daily basis. At the Miracin's, people eat Haitian food (e.g Boudin) while vehemently arguing about the political situation back home. They seem to perform what Ben Rafaeli et al call "long-distance nationalism" (12). They talk so passionately about Haiti but none of them seems to consider going back.

In fact, what is at work in the restaurant is a collective act of memory, which corresponds to what Sten Hagberg aptly calls "politicized memory," which points to recollections that reflect a politically informed agendas (119). Thus, to Sophie's astonishment, the restaurant functions as a space where Haitian ethnic self-image is remade and reshaped continuously. By making the atmosphere in the restaurant look like an exact replication of Haiti (54), these migrants demonstrate the idea that home is "nowhere, but now here."

In a more formal manner, Maranatha Bilingual Institution plays the same role of creating, promoting and preserving a Haitian self-image. This institution is a good example of the inside/outside complex, since it is both ethnic and confessional, and the language of instruction is French instead of English. Language being an "important marker of ethnic identity" (Hochman et al, 346), kids going to this institution are ostracized and referred to pejoratively as the Franchies. Hence, elements of the Haitian culture and homeland distinctively exist alongside the American culture in this metropole. Sophie feels very frustrated by this kind of confinement that makes her feels

both inside and outside. She complains: “I never said this to my mother, but I hated the Maranatha Bilingual Institution. It was as if I had never left Haiti” (66).

Sophie’s intention to remember is put to the test by the overwhelming presence of “home” through what primarily represents an attempt to cling to a heritage, a desperate will to make oneself “remain at home.” But, if the school represents for parents a way to allow their children some sort of cultural immersion and keep them connected to their heritage, for Sophie the school isolates children and slows down both their integration in the mainstream society and their acquisition of the English language. Paradoxically, even if everything in the school is meant to reflect Haiti, Sophie has no feeling of being at home psychologically. On the contrary, she feels alienated within her own culture by the contrasting aspiration to learn English and integrate the American mainstream society.

In both *Chronicles* and *Breath*, the ghettoes function as sites of cultural self-consciousness. They reflect the image of what can be called “a city inside a city,” because of the isolation from the mainstream society and the rootedness of the communities who are very much concerned with their self-image. These ghettoes open up space for both community building and cultural resistance. For that reason, they become fertile ground for the reproduction, the shaping and remaking of ethnic and cultural identities. For example, the Haitian neighborhood in New York not only responds to Martine’s demand for Haitian products such as foodstuff and cosmetics, but is also favorable to the radical Haitian ways in which she wishes to raise her daughter.

Her attitude towards her daughter is governed by memories and a sense of duty to perpetuate a tradition. For instance, the act of testing her daughter’s virginity is an exact restitution of her experience with her mother Atie. An experience that she level-headedly

shares with Sophie in order to legitimize it: “when I was a girl, my mother used to test us to see if we were virgins. She would put her finger in our very private parts and see if it would go inside” (*Breath*, 60). Through this practice, Martine strives to preserve a cultural heritage but more importantly, it provides her with the feeling of belonging somewhere, an anchorage in Haitian culture. Thus, “testing” as the narrator shortens it in the story, allows Martine to have a sense of being at home and to mark demarcation vis-à-vis the (white) American culture about which she is somehow skeptical and distrustful.

Moreover, the practice of testing can be understood according to Assmann et al, as cultural memory “that serves to stabilize and convey a society’s self-image,” (132) Haitian society for that matter. This practice can be also aligned with the practice of scarification, circumcision and the like, which, according to Appadurai’s interpretation are “complex social techniques for the inscription of locality onto bodies (Appadurai, 179). Furthermore, it can be safely argued that Martine’s ethnic radicalization is caused by the endemic racism and insecurity of their neighborhood in Brooklyn. As Agnew notes: “racism affects our consciousness of ourselves and mediates our continuing attachment to the symbols of our culture and ethnic heritage” (13).

Thus, both Sophie and her mother get locked in a vicious circle in which one memory calls upon another. Sophie’s performance of doubling suggests that the act of remembering can be both conscious and deliberate. To counteract the shameful practice of testing, she voluntarily brings to mind other memories in order to feel at home psychologically. In the following passage she explains her practice of doubling which is a peculiar way of confronting the humiliation of the testing:

> There, she made me lie on my bed and she tested me. I mouthed the words to the Virgin Mother's Prayer (…). In my mind I tried to relive all the pleasant memories I remembered from my life. My special moments with Tante Atie and with Joseph and even with my mother." (84)

In the event of performing testing on her daughter, Martine would also tell her the story of "The Marassas" to distract her. Both the practice of testing and the folktale are rooted in the Haitian tradition which Martine has come to embody. Sophie appropriates the Marassas folktale for exactly the same purpose as her mother. She brings it to mind to distract herself from a painful act she is about to commit upon herself, i.e breaking her hymen with a pestle in order to put an end to the ordeal of testing.

Through the act of doubling, which is also a way of appropriating the Marassas folktale, Sophie performs what can be termed as "counter-memory." In this regard, memory is enacted as a form of agency, thus representing a source of empowerment. By the same token, in the moment of her devastating act, Sophie recalls the story of "the woman who walked around with blood constantly spurting out of her unbroken skin" (*Breath,* 87). This also functions as another instance of memory as agency since, through this act of memory, she analogizes herself with the bleeding woman who stopped bleeding by accepting the sacrifice of being transformed into a butterfly by Erzulie.

Both "the bleeding woman" and "Marassas" which are folktales derived from Haitian popular imagination – from grandma's repertoire more precisely – offer a model of resistance to the sexual oppressiveness of the testing. According to Mardorossian, grandma's folktales, which, in addition to the two mentioned above, also include "the lark," and the "flying woman," ultimately provide Sophie with models of resistance to the patriarchal ideology (26). Jo Collins adds that "Sophie's story of the bleeding girl transformed into a butterfly, suggests that difficult and dangerous situations can be

negotiated with success (30). Henceforth, Sophie's painful undertaking can be interpreted as a manifestation of her desire to "buy her freedom." On the whole, the act means at the same time self-renouncement and renouncement of the Haitian protocols about the mother/daughter relationship, which is in turn sustained by a patriarchal system.

For the strict purpose of this chapter, what should be retained is that Sophie uses memory, invokes the very cultural heritage from which testing derives in order to free herself "from the history of violence passed on by her mother" (Mardorossian, 26). In light of this, it can be argued that Sophie is a victim of memory (Martine's memories), but at the same time, she is a performer of memory. This means that her memories are conducive to constructive action. They are means of exerting power and control over a situation of oppression. Ultimately, one is tempted to ask: where does the difference lie between Sophie's testing and Martine's rape? Ironically, the practice of testing in a foreign context such as New York, is very much similar to Martine's rape by a Tonton-Macoute in Haiti. Figuratively speaking, both Sophie and Martine live away from home without having really left home.

bell hooks pushes the discussion about memory further by highlighting the double-facets of memory which can be on the one hand, a way of learning from the past in order to bring about change in the present and on the other, "a passive reflection, a nostalgic longing for things to be as they once were" (hooks, 40). hooks' argument adds light to the interpretation of Sophie's use of memories to empower herself and to break the manacles of a Haitian tradition. Finally, her desire to remember means that she wants to know people, their history and customs in order to position herself and adopt a personal worldview.

Along the same lines, Mieke Bal argues that "cultural recall is not merely something of which you happen to be a bearer but something that you actually perform" (vii). Both hooks and Bal's descriptions reveal memory as being double-facetted. It can be both something you undergo, cringing at its occurrence, as well as something you can perform and translate into concrete action. Based on this logic, Mugezi can be seen as a passive bearer of memories. He gives up his commitment with *Action II*, because of his incapacity to carry the emotional burden stimulated by the pictures of starving and cadaverous people. Contrary to Sophie whose memories represent a source of empowerment, he morally collapses in front of the memories aroused by those pictures at the *Action II* headquarters. He is completely bewildered by the feeling that his pursuit of happiness is at risk. He complains about his short-lived excitement upon arrival in Amsterdam as a result of those photos:

> My euphoria lasted only till the following morning: flies had ambushed my new paradise. And like Dr. Ssali, Aunt Tiida's husband, who had to deal with the terrorism of those terrible creatures with a raw circumcision wound, I found myself fighting a war on two or more fronts. (*Chronicles*, 419)

Those "terrible creatures" as he calls the flies, along with other objects are repositories of bitter memories that Mugezi seeks to elide. The emotions stimulated by those things are incompatible with his ambition to take a break, to get salvation after having witnessed and experienced so many atrocities during the several years of war in Uganda. Like Sophie, who had to break away from her mother in New York to be free, Mugezi also has to break away from *Action II* in order to pursue his self-fulfillment.

His job, as a caretaker did nothing but worsen his feelings as he becomes more exposed to memories. Having to deal with graves, skeletons, skulls, and the like, he is constantly reminded of the numerous rotting dead bodies he has seen in the Luwero

Triangle in the aftermath of the guerilla war in Uganda. However, Mugezi goes further than just recollections of past atrocities in the Luwero Triangle. He starts engaging in self-reflection and critical reflection about the concept of memory and the act of remembering. In the following passage he recognizes the usefulness of memory and consequently, the uselessness of his attempt to discard his memories: "[t]he burning of these remains, these relics of past lives, touched something inside me that burned brutally and pointed to the valuable role of memory and the fragility of the past" (*Chronicles*, 455). This statement marks some kind of awakening, since he has come to terms with the fact that the past is fragile by itself, but cannot be buried by a voluntary effort to forget.

However, it remains true that whereas Sophie appropriates memories accordingly to take action, Mugezi refuses to confront the past, in any form, for fear of seeing his dream shattered. He continues to believe that his salvation resides in volitional-amnesia, which means in opposition to Sophie's doubling, the attempt to completely discard memories, and erase oneself from the annals of the past.

At the end of the day, being away from home does not eradicate the presence of home. In *Breath*, Sophie's journey to New York does not mean safety and distance away from the experience of home. For both Sophie and her mother, life in New York is merely a change in location since, like the majority of the Haitians, they are confronted with racial and cultural exclusion. As a consequence of this exclusion they seek to reclaim their ethnic heritage. In this sense, cultural exclusion in a foreign setting can be seen as conducive to community building which in turn fosters collective and individual cultural memories, and to the radical practice of customs and traditions from back home.

In this regard, the fact that Sophie is sent to New York means in many ways a continuation of her education about her home and homeland. Joining her mother simply means reconnecting with traditions that Martine's status, as an American permanent resident did not manage to remove. Henceforth, Haiti is present in their daily life through practice and memories. While Martine is destroyed by live memories of her experience in Haiti, Sophie's effort to remember has served the purpose of liberating both herself and the posterity that her daughter represents. At least it is the belief of Mardorossian who assumes that Sophie will not carry on the tradition of testing with her own daughter, Brigitte (26).

On the other hand, *Chronicles* equally showcases the impossibility to eradicate the homeland. Mugezi's determination to forget has not proved successful, simply because he is permanently haunted and sees his Ugandan past in almost everything. The persistence of his memories about his experience in Uganda threatens his pursuit of happiness. Nevertheless, he perseveres in his aspiration to configure a new self in his new location in Europe. Such an enterprise requires him to erase people and elements associated with Uganda in Amsterdam.

Despite the massive presence of Ugandans in the ghetto, giving rise to the name "Little Uganda" there is an atmosphere of distrust between them, which is caused by the fact that there is no way to tell an Amin or Abote torturer from a government spy. This atmosphere is very much treasured by Mugezi who likes the notion of anonymity. He declares: "Here I could live a quiet life, responsible for and to nobody, and if I got tired of it, maybe I would return to Uganda" (*Chronicles,* 424). It is clear from this statement that Mugezi does not really belong with the African community in the ghetto. Now, the

question is whether reaching out to other communities, mainly white people, will help in his effort to achieve self-oblivion, and in his struggle for independence.

To conclude, Sophie and Mugezi's respective experiences seem to give good reason to Ahmed who maintains that "the question of being at home or leaving home is always a question of memory, discontinuity between past and present" (343). This argument holds truth in both Sophie and Mugezi's journey away from home. Both of them have had at one time or another the feeling of having not been away from home. This is due to the fact that, as a consequence of the fluidity of mass movement, as well as the easy and rapid circulation of goods and information, cultures are also transplanted across borders. Therefore, the psychological comfort of being at home, as well as the anxiety of being reminded of a less agreeable past punctuate in a more or less frequent way, the daily life of the transnational migrant.

The idea of the persistence of home in the experience of the migrant is deeply expressed in a passage from Richard Wright's *Black Boy*. The passage in question is a reasonable illustration of the idea that being at home or being away from it is just a question of affect and lived experience. Wright writes: "Yet, deep down, I knew that I could never really leave the South, for my feelings had already been formed by the South (…) So, in leaving, I was taking a part of the South to transplant in alien soil" (*Black Boy,* 284). In this passage, Wright surrenders and capitulates where Mugezi stubbornly struggles to leave the past behind and feels tormented and paralyzed by the slightest manifestation of it.

Cultural exclusion and ghettoization of minority groups provide means to examine the real meaning of cultural globalization and the extent to which it has become

effective. At least within the scope of this study, cultural globalization can be understood as the transplantation/translocation of cultures whereby it becomes possible to be abroad and at home at the same time. That is to say, the practice of culture is no longer bound to locality since to adopt Appadurai's point of view, there exist "processes by which locality is materially produced" (180) in a foreign setting. However, culture is not static and unchanging. On the contrary, it is dynamic and will prove more so in the meeting-place of give and take that the world has become today.

2-Citizenship and Belonging: Transnational Identity Politics and the Notion of *Bildung*

Both Sophie and Megezi are confronted with the task of configuring or reconfiguring a new sense of home and self in their respective white dominated environments. Such a situation whereby the protagonist stands between two cultures and tries to assume a new identity corresponds to what Paul Gilroy, following WEB Dubois refers to as "Double Consciousness." Gilroy argues that: "[s]triving to be both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness" (1). A close reading of this statement leads to the conclusion that there is no one way of negotiating belonging. In other words, it implies that each migrant is unique with respect to the techniques and strategies he/she uses to assume some sort of cultural integrity in a foreign environment.

This section scrutinizes the strategies both Sophie and Mugezi make use of to claim, reject or adopt some kind of national, cultural or ethnic belonging. Social and cultural elements including language, marriage, citizenship, and affiliation among of the multiple means through which these protagonists carve and secure space for themselves

within and across borders. This section will analyze some of those social and cultural elements as part of the practice and politics of belonging and empowerment.

To begin with, the most shared feeling between Mugezi and Sophie is their love-hate relationship towards their respective homelands or cultures. It is worth recalling that Sophie leaves Haiti at the age of twelve, when she is not really involved in public life. Initially, her relationship with both Haiti and New York is somehow neutral. However, as she grows up, these two places start to develop different meanings for her. At some point, her attachment to Haiti can be seen primarily as a consequence of her emotional attachment to her family, whereas the United States is home for her husband and daughter. Even though both places are equally significant for her, her description of the two places shows her belief that no place is essentially good or bad, despite the fact that each of these places presents a dark side.

Later, during her visits in Haiti, she becomes more aware of the poverty and the insecurity that are prevalent but does not seem to share the idea that everybody should leave at any cost. Because of this, Sophie cannot be clearly categorized as an exile like Martine. It is equally problematic to categorize her as first or second-generation immigrant. She seems to have been gratified with the benefit of two homes that are equally important to her.

In *Chronicles*, Mugezi is also portrayed as having a love-hate relationship with Uganda. He makes the informed choice to leave because of the sociopolitical context that has orphaned him and shattered his dreams. He leaves his country in a context where hope for reconstruction is minimal, and looking back is probably unrewarding. Although

he is strongly attached to his ancestral homeland, his instinct for protection and survival overweighs everything else.

On the occasion of his departure from the land that has decorated the memories of his childhood, Mugezi does not let himself be overcome by emotions that are usually associated with departure. On the contrary, leaving the country seems to be one of his best experiences. He reveals that "those seven solid hours of flight were like purgatory; I felt like a soul hovering above its bleeding corpse, caught between the shreds of the man I had been and the man I wanted to become" (417- 418). This statement displays the attitude of a person who has forsaken both his homeland and his old self, and aspires to a new existence wherever the wind takes him. Besides, the fact that he withdraws from the fundraising scheme of *Action II* is evidence of his decision to cut the umbilical cord that once tied him to his homeland. Henceforth, he does not seem to fit the definition of an exile in which the homeland is a significant object of longing and a place that one looks forward to returning. Rather, he enacts a sense of what Ahmad describes as a "new global identity and community" (Ahmed, 338), as he seeks detachment from any particular sense of home.

Looking closely at the journey of these two protagonists, one realizes that the question of return is not of great concern in these two texts. With Sophie who has the possibility of staying wherever she pleases – obviously with some degree of estrangement in both places – and Mugezi who is able to abandon everything to become a sort of aimless wanderer, these texts inaugurate a new relationship with place and a new sense of identity. Moreover, since identity is also about social belonging and acceptance, social networks tell a great deal about people's attempt to settle down and form new identities.

With the exception of Joseph, Marc and Martine, Sophie's social environment is composed of women from different origins. She goes counter the principle embodied by Marc and Martine that would have her find social connections among fellow Haitians. Yet, her connection with women in her sexual phobia group, even though it is apparently based on their shared predicament as victims of some kind of domestic violence, considered from another angle, is an expression of some sort of ethnic solidarity. Buki, an Ethiopian college student, Davina, a middle-aged Chicana and Sophie are brought together under the therapist, Rena, an African American woman.

Throughout the story, Sophie's identity seems to be influenced by the racial divide, as she never ventures to cross racial boundaries. Her color consciousness is a consequence of an environment where racial prejudices are still very prevalent. Her experience with white kids and her mother's warnings are good reasons for such restraint. She is compelled to seek psychological comfort and security among black people, or at least people from minority groups. Thus, despite the fact that these women are alienated, America functions as a fertile site for their struggle against oppression, and their struggle to find a voice.

The process of therapy reveals a certain number of things about Sophie's ambivalence vis-à-vis her mother and her family as a whole. Despite her psychological injury, she openly reclaims her mother line when she asserts: "My mother line was always with me, (…) No matter what happens. Blood made us one" (*Breath*, 207). She also refuses to hate or blame her mother and grandmother, and goes as far as finding an excuse for them, and a way to forgive them. She admits, "It was hard to be angry with my grandmother. After all she was only doing something that made her feel like a good

mother. My mother too" (*Breath,* 208). Later, when Rena talks about Martine in crudely sexual terms, Sophie advocates for her mother to such an extent that Rena accuses her of having a "Madonna image" of her mother.

What emerges from Sophie's social affiliation is that she engages with people from different cultural horizons, while remaining strongly rooted in her own cultural heritage. Her refusal to hate her grandmother and mother can be assimilated with a refusal to reject her roots that the mother symbolizes. Moreover, the restriction of Sophie's social network to these few women suggests beyond ethnicity and race, a sense of belonging that also includes gender and sexuality.

As for Mugezi, like the typical male protagonist of the *Bildungsroman*, he has more independence than his counterpart in *Breath*. While Sophie's social network is based on commitment to a cause, Mugezi's social relationships seem to be random, loose and often times very short lived. He does not seem to identify with any group in particular and his relationship with women can be summed up as a test of his manhood. His relationship with Eva, which could be primarily interpreted as racial solidarity, ends in disappointment. Mugezi ends up being annoyed by the fact that Eva has internalized so many misconceptions that make her talk about Africa with generalization and contempt. Eva's comments and assumptions on Africa arouse Mugezi's instinct to defend his people and his homeland. He ironically catches himself in the position of "ambassador of Africa" after having taken a strong resolution to turn his back to the continent.

Unlike Sophie, he appears to be more daring and reaches up to the white mainstream society. In so doing, he puts himself in the position of a migrant without border, crossing boundaries at his ease. Contrary to Sophie, Mugezi is not attached to any

specific people or land and does not care about community identity. His critiques of Europe and the international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF can be understood as a belief in his rights as a citizen of the world. Therefore, he does not seem to have the mindset of the migrant subject who longs for an actual or imaginary home. For him home is wherever the wind or his whims take him.

In addition to social affiliations, another area where these protagonists negotiate a sense of being and belonging is the acquisition of the language of their respective host countries. As Chambers notes, a language "speaks for someone and from a specific place, habitat, a sense of belonging and being at home" (24). This means in other words that language is not just a means of communication. It is above all, a means and a symbol of cultural belonging and identity construction. However, the controversial debate surrounding the cultural implication of the adoption of a foreign language is beyond the scope of this study. At any rate, acceptance within a community seems to be one of the reasons why Sophie and Mugezi learn a foreign language.

Sophie is excited by the progress she is making in English because of the prospect of embracing the American way of life. Rather than thinking of the opportunities that knowing English can provide her with in the United States, she is mesmerized by the language that she associates with full membership in the American society. This passion for the English language has much to do with her desire to cross the linguistic barrier that limits her space in mainstream American society. Along the same lines, Martine warned her early on about the importance of the English language in securing social acceptance. She observes: "My mother said it was important that I learn English quickly. Otherwise, the American students would make fun of me or, even beat me" (*Breath*, 51).

However, even though she is eager to learn English, she wants to keep her creole by any means. On this specific point, Sophie differs from those who, in Jo Collins' description, "adopt English as their primary language and reject traditional or parental values" (28). Quite the contrary, she affirms her Haitian heritage along with her will to embrace the American dream. She seems to be aware of the close relationship between language and ethnic identity. Chambers alludes to this relationship in the fifth chapter of his book, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*. Quoting Gloria Anzaldua, he writes: "I am my language. Until I can take pride in language, I cannot take pride in myself" (76). Because language is essential for a sense of self and belonging, the fact that Sophie tries to preserve her creole, while making tremendous efforts to improve her English implies a desire to secure space in both places. This fact also denotes an inevitable process of transformation – culturally and linguistically – that sets her on liminal ground between English and creole, between the United States and Haiti.

On the other hand, when Mugezi spoke the "Lugandanized English" with one of those he refers to as "our people" in Amsterdam, "[he] felt like jumping up and knocking [himself] out on the booth ceiling" (*Chronicles*, 422). His spontaneous pleasure can be associated with the desire to find a place where he really belongs. And the Lugandanized English seems to offer that opportunity. The fact that he refers to the speakers of that dialect as "our people" gives insight into the close relationship between language and ethnicity, and ultimately between language and belonging. It can also be recalled here that the language barrier made hard his effort to reach out to the African diaspora, which is obviously linguistically diverse.

However, Mugezi's goal in learning the Dutch language is very nebulous and complex. Does he learn Dutch to get full membership in the Dutch society? That is the question. Although he puts money and effort into learning the language, it is clear from the outset that he does not feel genuine excitement about it. On the contrary, his zeal to learn the Dutch language hides malefic intentions that are apparent in his declaration that: "I was near where words were beaten into weapons, and I was gradually forging mine" (*Chronicles,* 461). Even though he shares the belief that it is necessary to learn the language in order to survive, his lack of genuine excitement and his suspicious zeal translate resistance or at least skepticism regarding integration or assimilation into Dutch society and culture. His desire to learn the language is probably motivated by more practical short-term goals.

Given his ambivalence vis-à-vis the Dutch language, it becomes pertinent to ask the question: what do people lose or gain when they take a new language? To be sure, the fear of social exclusion that inhabits Sophie leaves Mugezi almost indifferent. The way he lives his daily life suggests that for him, home is "nowhere and now here." Although critics like Cooper believe that he will overlay his English with the acquisition of the Dutch language (Cooper, 108), the fact still remains that he is already bilingual, which means in other words that he is already between and across two cultures, even though he does not acknowledge it.

In the same vein, marriage can also be considered as a means by which transnational migrants get to join new webs of belonging. Critics of culture seem to agree on the saying that who takes a language also takes a culture. But is the same thing true about someone who gets married in a new culture? Getting married with a citizen of a

host country can be rightly interpreted as acceptance of that culture, but it does not necessarily mean renunciation of one's original culture. Therefore, marriage becomes one of the most obvious instances where identities are negotiated and reconfigured.

Martine objects to Sophie's connection with white boys, and seems to be more favorable to her supposedly love affair with a Haitian man, for the obvious concern of preserving cultural roots. As for Sophie's marriage with Joseph, it can be interpreted in various ways. First, it functions as a strategy to emancipate herself from the Haitian tradition that gives parents the prerogative to choose a husband for their daughters. But at the same time, Joseph provides Sophie with a sense of place by acknowledging her as part of his "cultural horizon" (Fortier, 8). By choosing Joseph, Sophie definitely chooses to overcome her feeling of estrangement and to belong both in America and in Haiti, as common heritage seems to bind them together. As clearly pointed out by Collins, "Joseph assumes an intimate connection with Sophie on the basis of their shared African heritage" (28). The following conversation lays the foundation of a would be ethnocentric union:

> I am not American," he said. "I am African-American.
> What's the difference?" (Sophie asked)
> The African. It means that you and I, we are already part of each other.
> (*Breath,*72)

With the conviction that white mainstream culture is unattainable to her, Sophie sees in Joseph a shortcut to "Americanness". Her marriage with Joseph puts her in a position whereby she gets anchorage in both (African) Haitian and American cultures. Now, for her, Haiti is home and Providence is home too.

As for Mugezi, marriage worked differently since the material comfort that Magdelein provides him with does not result in his psychological comfort. Being the result of a random meeting at the cemetery where he works as a caretaker, his marriage

with Magdelein seems to be based on a mutual sentiment of empathy and not on real love. Mugezi's confession that "[t]he winds of the dead bound us to each other with fearsome intensity" (*Chronicles,* 157) conforms the fortuitousness of their meeting.

Moreover, what Mugezi tells Magdelein about himself is suggestive of his lack of sincerity and his unwillingness to engage in a long-term enterprise like marriage. Mugezi states: "[she] asked me about my passport, and I told her that I was born in Britain before my parents migrated to Uganda when it was still a Garden of Eden" (*Chronicles,* 458). This statement that is meant to cover up the fraud about his passport and validate his status as a European citizen, reverses the migration pattern, which is more commonly from Africa to Europe. It could be more realistic if put the other way round, to have him be born a British citizen as a result of his parents' migration to Britain. He purposefully puts it the way it is, in order to eclipse his Ugandan heritage and convince Magdelein about his supposedly long-term relationship with Europe.

If Mugezi counts on fabricating lies to maintain space beside Magdelein, Magdalein relies on her possessiveness to keep Mugezi. Unfortunately, Mugezi's sense of belonging is challenged by the visibility that Magdelein causes him. He laments:

> She decked me out in fine clothes, which made me uncomfortable, and shoed me off. I had never liked formal dress, stiff suits and hard leather shoes, and now I had to put them on at parties. In places where people dressed informally, I was turned into a fish in a bowl. I was being watched instead of watching. (*Chronicles*, 458)

These words prompt reflection on what belonging really means. Is it enough to get accepted in a group or community to properly belong? Are documents sufficient indicators of belonging? Mugezi's attitude proves the contrary. Belonging is about feeling and anything else is subordinate to this feeling. Despite his British passport and

his Dutch wife, Mugezi still feels he does not belong because of his sentiment of being visible, of being the odd one. His feeling of self-consciousness as black, and African in a white dominated neighborhood led to the breaking up with Magdalein. (*Chronicles,* 461)

Moreover, in the course of using Magdelein to negotiate space, Mugezi also resolutely decides to sacrifice his stance as a self-styled ambassador of Africa, at the altar of those he sees as his European benefactors. He admits: "At parties, I started to resent having to defend the whole African continent, or the whole of Uganda, or the entire black race. (…) after all, hadn't I been taken in by these white people at this or that party?" (*Chronicles,* 459).

Negotiating space does not only take place at a social level. In fact, cultural belonging is to some extent subordinate to political recognition and legal membership. To take citizenship is naturally a legal act of allegiance to a nation-state as well as a way of breaking the border between 'Us" and the "Other". In other words, this status opens up space for the migrant to claim rights, but also to share values of a community organized around the nation-state. Stephen Castles et al suggest: "if the other shared or accepted our public values, they were not Other for what were strictly citizenship matters" (*Chronicles,* 45).

Sophie and Mugezi respectively get American and British passports. It goes without saying that a passport is closely linked to the concept of citizenship for which it represents a piece of material evidence. At a different level, it symbolizes movement, border crossing and an unsettling sense of place. However, what does it mean for an immigrant to hold a passport issued by a country, which is not his/her country of origin? In other words, what does such an act imply in terms of cultural identity?

Despite the fact that Sophie holds an American passport, she is apparently more emotionally committed to Haiti, even though America means a new tomorrow for her. This situation that can be considered of dual citizenship, allows her to easily cross physical borders between Haiti and the United States, but also to manage multiple identities that arise from this condition. In other words, adopting American citizenship is not equivalent to renouncing her cultural heritage, but represents an act that positions her as a hyphenated subject whose space in both locations is taken for granted.

When Sophie takes "I love New York" tea-shirts to her aunt Atie as a gift, and returns to America with a statute of Erzulie – which is a symbol of ethnicity – she shows continuous emotional attachment to both places. She is however, a privileged migrant with the possibility of crossing borders easily, despite the challenge of having to face some form of estrangement in both places. Her experience is comparable to that of Mam in Calixthe Beyala's novel – if Ayo Coly is to be believed – who is "more at home in France than in Africa. (…) She enjoys the many possibilities that France offers her; however, she has to face racism that does not allow her to call France home" (Coly, 43-44). Sophie starts referring to Haiti as home after her first visit there.

If home is where your heart is, as many people tend to believe, then where is home for Sophie? If home is where your family live, again where is home for Sophie? Throughout the story, while staying in America Sophie takes pride over the fact that she and her daughter belong to the Caco family in Haiti. By owning land in Haiti, she materializes her will to belong to Haiti, and claims her right as a full citizen of Haiti. With this double connection to Haiti, along with her love for Joseph and her affection for her daughter, Brigitte – who is by the way Brigitte Ifé Woods, named after Granme Ifé –

there is enough evidence for one to argue that Sophie geographically inhabits a space at a time, but is emotionally and simultaneously attached to multiple spaces at the same time.

Sophie takes a short vacation in Haiti and returns there on the occasion of her mother's funeral, leaving both her husband and daughter in Providence. This recalls once again Appadurai's concept of "new condition of neighborliness" that we have discussed in the previous chapter. She is simultaneously inside and outside both spaces. She matches Chambers definition of the migrant who has "[o]ne foot here and the other always elsewhere, straddling both sides of the border" (17). Her attitude is that of a person sitting at the crossroad of two cultures with the moral duty to reconcile them.

Contrary to Sophie whose citizenship is an outcome of her mother's permanent residence in the United States as an exile, Mugezi achieves British citizenship based on treachery and transgression of conventions. The following passage reveals many things including the fact that by taking a British passport, he is not interested in cultural belonging per se, or full membership. Rather, by holding a British passport while having never resided in that country, he just seeks to become a free citizen of the European Union, with freedom of movement, and with the possibility to undo the supposed act of allegiance to the nation state whenever he wishes. He declares:

> I needed a good passport in order to start infiltrating Dutch society. I was already thinking about getting a job in order to practice the language and earn a little money as I worked out my next moves. Chicken shit offered me a choice of becoming a British, American, Spanish or Portuguese citizen! A few months in the country and, and by the power of money, I had qualified to become a European! (…)
>
> First I had to choose which nationality I wanted. I chose to become British. (…) I had been reborn: my new name was John Kato. My new surname was a common name for the second male twin back home in Uganda. Somewhere in Britain there was an ant going by the same name, unaware of the existence of a twin brother negotiating the wetness of the Dutch polders. (*Chronicles,* 453)

A good passport here as it can be imagined is the EU passport. It declares you as an insider, contrary to the Non-EU passport that declares you as "Other". Such a privilege attached to *EU passports* in contrast to *Non-EU* is criticized in the works of Fatou Diome, in *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* mainly, as a modern form of apartheid (*Ventre,* 217). Diome's protagonist shares with Mugezi the observation of the hierarchy that exists in relation to passports, which Diome presents in *Ventre* as a contradiction regarding the freedom of movement intrinsic to the concept of globalization.

For Mugezi, a European passport is just a means to an end, and not something inherently valuable. His idea that acquiring citizenship is simply a stratagem, a sneaky and opportunistic action, appears in his use of the phrase "infiltrating Dutch society". Moreover, by adopting the name John Kato, he is acting deceitfully like a person who readily assumes his double heritage. Despite all this, the fact still remains that he manages to carve space for himself that allows him to navigate through the Dutch society. Having come to Europe to stay, his British passport does not really signify an act of national or cultural loyalty but a means to facilitate his life as a wanderer or a nomad. As it is clearly pointed out in the following passage, after having reached Europe, Mugezi has no desire to return to Abyssinia, which would, mean regression, falling from the hilltop down into the abyss. By declaring that: "Abyssinia was on my mind; so was my new foothold on this precipitous hilltop. It has always been a Herculean task for Abyssinians to get their foot in the door, but once in, they never budge. I was in" (462), Mugezi is decidedly marking his territory.

This quotation is reminiscent of Manthia Diawara's text, *We Won't Budge,* with which *Chronicles* shares a lot of things. In *We Won't Budge,* Diawara recounts his life as an African in the West and debunks the idealized promise of life abroad. This quotation, through sophisticated metaphors, contrasts Abyssinia which stands for Uganda, and by extension the whole suffering postcolonial world on the one hand, and the hilltop which is a beautiful rendering of how Europe is highly regarded and idealized as a destination for those people rushing out of their countries for survival. This statement encapsulates the geopolitical situation of the world today, which is marked by flows of migrants and refugees towards the West. Moreover, it confirms to some extent, the claim made at the beginning of this study about the new trend in transnational migration. "Once in, they never budge" is plain language for the absence of return.

However, it must be noted that both Mugezi and Sophie's access to citizenship does not guarantee full social acceptance and participation in the public sphere. With rampant racism in both stories, Mugezi and Sophie are alienated and are virtually resigned to their lot. Sophie's current confinement does not promise a future brighter than that of being Joseph's wife and Brigitte's mother. On the other hand, Mugezi is on the brink of degeneration with his British passport in his "pocket." Their respective situations indicate that their membership has never been complete and may not be expected to be any better.

In summary, it can be argued that the various strategies to negotiate belonging operated differently for Sophie and Mugezi. Through her marriage and social affinities Sophie can be read as a complex character. Her social circle, which is predominantly composed of black people, reflects some kind of ethnocentrism. However, her multi-

ethnic sexual phobia group works as a counterexample that presents her as a person with a propensity to promote ethnic friendship. Her linguistic hybridity allows her to maintain multiple belongings while pursuing her American dream. The fact that she assumes multiple identities and commits herself to multiple social groups is a good reason for thinking of her as a cosmopolitan migrant.

Mugezi on the other hand, turns out to be an emotionless person, without attachment to any place and even deprived of the capacity to give true love. By taking a British passport instead of a Dutch one, he simultaneously turns his back to Uganda and refuses to pledge allegiance to his host country, the Netherlands. Given his refusal to belong, or the fact that he does not seem to envision fixation in a specific place, Mugezi also resists categorization. What is he? A migrant, an exile or a nomad? Edward Said describes the exile as one who "jealously insists on his right to refuse to belong" (182). If this is to be admitted for Mugezi, then he is a self-imposed exile who holds the idea that the whole world is home. And still, the belief in the world as home intersect with Chambers description of the nomadic experience which basically consists in "wandering without a fixed home, dwelling at the crossroads of the world, bearing a sense of being and difference" (4). Rosi Braidotti adds insight to the effort of locating Mugezi by providing a more detailed discussion of the nomadic state. According to her, it is not the literal act of travelling that makes the nomadic state, but it is the subversion of conventions that defines it. She maintains that the nomad is "a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity" (Braidotti, 5).

To the difficulty of reconciling these views adds Brenda Cooper's description of Mugezi as "a street-wise Ugandan and ultimately a cosmopolitan migrant living in

Amsterdam (Cooper, 105). Cooper's argument seems very debatable due to the fact that Mugezi seeks detachment rather than attachment; he erases the other in order to construct a sense of self rather than engage with them. Cooper's positioning of Mugezi as a cosmopolitan migrant conflicts with commonly known definitions that describe the cosmopolitan subject as one who is "attached to a home of his or her own but taking pleasure of other, different, places that are home to other, different, people" (Appiah, 91).

In the end, all these views converge towards the conclusion that by refusing to inhabit a particular space, Mugezi resists categorization. Thus, assigning him the position of a nomadic subject, rather than a migrant or exile, seems to settle the controversy. Nevertheless, with his blurred sense of self, it would be also relevant to talk about him as a postmodern nomad.

Mugezi's proclivity to speak for the postcolonial world and for the African continent in particular, albeit in an ephemeral and inconsistent manner, gives some insight about where he wants to locate himself in a world of inequality, violence and political injustice. By contrasting a fed up Europe with a starving Africa, and attributing the poverty and instability of the postcolonial world to the intervention of the West, Mugezi exhibits an inclination towards "Third-Worldism."

On various occasions he shows sympathy for the postcolonial world, and on other occasions tries to speak for Uganda, Africa and the Africans. However, this apparent expression of "nationalism" does not suggest longing for Africa or Uganda. It is more about continuous mourning of the wound that Europe has inflicted to the African continent, which, in his sense represents remote causes for the conflict in Uganda. In other words, his sympathy towards the African continent or even Uganda does not mean

attachment to a specific place in Africa. For that reason, he can be reasonably accorded the status of a self-imposed exile who, to paraphrase Said, has cut himself off from his roots, his land, and his past (177).

By and large, this chapter has examined the implications of border crossing in the identity formation of the young protagonists in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Abyssinian Chronicles*. Both Mugezi and Sophie are confronted with the omnipresence of their homeland in their new locations through its material manifestation and cultural reproduction. This presence of the homeland stimulates memories that Sophie and Mugezi experience differently. While memories represent a source of empowerment for Sophie, conversely, they become disempowering for Mugezi.

With her desire to remember, Sophie is aware of the importance of the past in her struggle for voice and freedom. Her knowledge of the past allows her to rehabilitate the present and save the future. By contrast, Mugezi who strives to forget occupies a "nowhere and now here" position that makes him go against the current in a world that operates according to a set of laws and regulations. His attempt to leave the past behind along with his disregard of Christian and western values can be summarized as a refusal to bind himself to specific location.

Eventually, Sophie assumes her cultural hybridity despite her difficulties to integrate the American mainstream society. She aspires to a sense of home that may be similar to that described by author Edwidge Danticat as "a mix, the café –au-lait, which we make of it" (Haiti, 8). This appears as a perfect metaphoric rendering of Gilroy's concept of double consciousness. However, its difficulty lies in the fact that the harmony

and balance that "café-au-lait" suggests is hard to achieve in real life. The gap between the theory and the practice of this concept is exposed in Sophie whose social interactions are limited to black people, which may be interpreted as a sign of imbalance and bias. In any case, to put it in Saidian terms, Sophie lives a "contrapuntal life" which is a life with the simultaneous awareness of two homes and two or more cultures (186). This idea coheres with her ability to double, which is the capacity to have figuratively the body in one place and the mind in another in an effort to reconcile contradictory feelings and experiences.

Mugezi on the other hand, chooses homelessness and a nomadic life-style because he "is already constituted as at home in the world" (Ahmed, 335). To put it differently, Mugezi occupies a territory, which is characterized simultaneously by belonging and "unbelonging". Like the stone on which he lays his head, "an enchanted hilltop made of boulders from all corners of the globe" (462), Mugezi resists identification and fixation to any specific place, and aspires to a status of citizen of a borderless world that exists only in his imagination. However, this position of "unbelonging" is not synonymous with pessimism since as Said explains: "there is also a particular sense of achievement in acting as if one were at home wherever one happens to be" (Said, 186). In short, what both Mugezi and Sophie have in common is ambivalence and lack of attachment to a specific place, even though they completely differ in their respective sense of place.

This study sparks off from an observation about the paradigm shift that has occurred in migration and its representation in literature. It has been observed that "contemporary transnational migration differs significantly from previous migration experience" (Zeleza, 12). In the literary representation of migrant experience, it has also

been noted that earlier transnational texts were more about cultural self-affirmation, whereas later representation of transnational experience seeks to build bridges between third and first world (Mardorossian, 17). We can also agree with Mardorossian that "in many postcolonial novels today, the country of destination to which the protagonist moves is no longer, as it used to be, the old colonial metropole (London, Paris) but the new world power, the United States (19).

With this in mind, the aim of this analysis has been to highlight some of the postcolonial concerns in *Abyssinian Chronicles* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. Through Mugezi, Isegawa deconstructs a system of domination, including questions of West/Rest power relations, as well as issues relating to what Black Studies critics like Peggy McIntosh and George Lipsitz have referred to as white privilege. Although foregrounding the ambivalence of the postcolonial subject, Danticat's text also touches upon matters of race and ethnicity in a context of globalization.

Based on the assumption that the border between home and abroad is gradually getting blurred, this chapter has provided details about a multicultural condition whereby the concept of cultural attachment is highly problematic. Due to the fact that attachment connotes a sense of hierarchy, it becomes fairer to talk about multiple connections that overlook any binary opposition between cultural poles. With the lack of demarcation between home and abroad, and the lack of hierarchy between local and global cultures, the complexity of the question of socialization that is central to the Bildungsroman is carried to extreme lengths.

Chapter Four: The Voyage of Socialization in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*

> The Bildungsroman (…) relates characters to their community by chronicling their voyages of socialization that lead to the inside of the community's signifying structures. Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World*

This chapter is built on the premise that in the postcolonial migrant text, homecoming or simply returning home means trial, a decisive moment in the experience of the transnational subject. Many classic migrant texts represent this moment as the end of the journey of self-discovery, because the protagonist, who is usually a male, "visits his old home, to demonstrate by his presence the degree of his success or the wisdom of his choice" (Buckley, 18). In other words, he goes home into a male dominated culture or society where he finally finds his place and role. For new transnational texts, especially those featuring a female protagonist, the return to the community of origin is simply a moment in the process of self-discovery, a stage in the ongoing quest for happiness.

Research on migration and gender inequalities has demonstrated that migration is one of the most gendered areas in human experience. That is to say that gender determines who migrates, and how (Sinke, 97). Lindah Mhando whose research focuses on the interplay between gender and social movement highlights this reality in an essay about Sudanese women. In that essay, she perfectly describes the common pattern of women's migratory experience when she writes: "Women are relegated to subsidiary positions as dependent variables, which only move as part of the family units" (430). To put it differently, while men are allowed to trek the path of migration alone, "the notion of women travelling alone is not only unimaginable; it is seen as an alarming threat to the

wellbeing of the community" (Mhando, 430). Thus, migration becomes the domain par excellence of the male, the public space where female presence is censored unless sponsored and chaperoned.

In *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, Abel et al write: "women in the 19th century fiction are generally unable to leave home for an independent life in the city" (8). This idea is echoed by feminist critic Rita Felski, author of *Beyond Feminist Aesthetic: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (1989), who argues that contrary to the male protagonist who leaves home in search of an independent life in the metropolis, "the 19th century female protagonist's trajectory remains limited to the journey from the parental to the marital home" (125). Both statements are in line with Caroline Brettell's claim that "A son's departure is consistent with norms of masculine behavior, while it is counter to expectations for a daughter" (145).

A powerful illustration of this restriction regarding the mobility of the female protagonist is found in Virginia Woolf's classic novel, *The Voyage Out.* Woolf's heroine Rachel Vinrace, a twenty-four-year-old woman, cannot travel to South America alone and is chaperoned by her father and aunt in her journey. By the same token, tropes of women being bound to the homestead are very common in African and Caribbean literature.

However, a recent trend in migrant literature by women writers emphasizes the transgression of the supposedly public or male domain. Many African and Caribbean women writers fictionalize this controversy surrounding women's transnational migration. Works in this category include Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* and *Lucy*, Ken Bugul's *Baobab fou*, Calixthe Beyala's *Asséze l'Africaine*, Yanick Lahens's *La maison*

du père, Seffi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come,* Maryse Condé's *Le cœur à rire et à pleurer,* Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, and Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* to give but a few examples.

This reversal of the paradigm in the postcolonial world, according to Mhando is due – beyond poverty and political instability – to issues of kinship, polygamy, single parenting and the spread and outcome of HIV/AIDS (Mhando, 431). This sociological reality constitutes the backdrop of many postcolonial migrant texts. Often written by migrants, such texts offer powerful insights into the process and the experience of transformation and self-discovery, the attitudes towards return, and much more. Such insights as Russell King et al argue, "are often infinitely more subtle and meaningful than studies of migrants which base themselves on cold statistics or on the depersonalized, aggregate responses to questionnaire surveys". (x)

To add more insight to the interplay of gender and migration this study focuses on two novels. In *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, although Salie travels frequently between France and Senegal, her initial journey to France was possible only because of the "escort" of her French husband. Sankèle, another female character in the same novel, was only able to leave her native village by being disguised as a male. In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Sophie is sent to New York to reunite with her mother who left Haiti with the help of a rich mulatto family after having been raped by a Macoute in Haiti. Both Diome's and Danticat's texts simultaneously re-inscribe and subvert the traditional paradigm regarding female migration. Nevertheless, they cohere with the recent trend that challenges traditional stereotypes that associate femininity with fixity.

Therefore, it can be anticipated that the same discrimination that marks the departure of the female protagonist still plays an active role in her reception as a returning émigré. The socio-economic ascension that male returning émigrés expect, and do obtain most of the time, is not guaranteed to women, and worse still, the sense of independence associated with mobility is put into question in a society where the female is perceived as an index and power supplement to the man. Therefore, the task of interrogating literary texts with a view to unpacking the reality about the return and reception of female transnational migrants becomes appealing in more than one respect.

Breath, Eyes, Memory and *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* are good examples of texts that highlight women's attempts to come to terms with their communities. Their reconciliation, if any at all, is expressed or manifested in virtually symbolic terms. In addition to the fact that both authors identify with island culture, which is said to be of migration, they present scenarios in which patriarchy is in control and where political instability or domestic violence are prevalent. In other words, both novels present the motherland as a site of oppression from which the protagonist escapes for self-discovery in a foreign land. While it is easy to grasp the cause for their departure, it is extremely delicate as an attempt to account for their return to their old homes.

In order for returning to be complete, fulfillment must be reached at the physical, psychological and ideological levels. In other words, a complete and successful return means accepting and being accepted by the group or community one is returning to. Since socialization is accepting and sharing the norms of the community, Sophie's and Salie's respective returns are extremely complex due to the enormous gap between their multicultural consciousness and the local traditionalism. Assuming that they are well

aware of the social or political system they have left behind, it becomes legitimate to ask: what really motivates their return back home? What choices and possibilities do they have that lend to the reconciliation of such antagonistic positions? How do these texts contribute to the articulation of new identities and to the redefinition of gender relations in a transnational context?

By examining Sophie's and Salie's respective journeys back home, this chapter makes the claim that their attempts to integrate their communities as returning émigrés are marked by inconsistencies as they seek recognition while simultaneously resisting the gender norms defined by what they see as patriarchal hegemony. While social integration depends on the respect of customs and acceptance of gender roles, the kind of privilege that male returning émigrés have is unattainable for their female counterparts despite their wealth and education. In other words, with everything else being the same, women remain less visible than their male counterparts, even in a context where returning migrants are looked at with envy and taken as role models. Feminist theorist Kate Millett, in her seminal work *Sexual Politics* (1990), addresses the precedence given to the male over the female concerning class mobility. She argues in more or less generalizing terms that: "Thrown upon their own resources, few women rise above working class in personal prestige and economic power, and women as a group do not enjoy many of the interests and benefits any class may offer its male members" (38).

By attempting to analyze women's migration in a patriarchal society and a matrifocal[65] one – which *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* and *Breath, Eyes, Memory*

[65] A social system based on "the marginal nature of the husband-father role" (Smith, 1996, 13), and conversely on the mother as the head of the family or household.

respectively portray – this chapter enlarges the perspective on the causes of departure and the push and pull factors associated with returning home. What is the driving force behind their desire to return to a place that is hostile to their development? Does their return to the site of oppression represent an interruption of their growth or a failure of their development? With these questions in mind, the chapter will highlight the motives or the driving force behind Sophie's and Salie's journeys back, as well as the outcome of their respective attempts at socialization.

1- Blood is Thicker than Water: The Social and Psychological Forces of Women's Journey Back

To begin with, it is crucial to clarify that the use of the phrase "blood is thicker than water" does not associate women with the exclusive role or capacity to take care of kinship relationships. Such categorization has been rendered obsolete early on by feminist criticism. According to Krista E. Van Vleet "feminist anthropologists had already begun to question universal categories and naturalness of particular relationships when they debated both the universality and the origins of women's subordination to men in the 1970s" (7). Rather, my contention is that while social mobility, which represents in most cases the driving force behind the return of the male migrant protagonist is denied to his female counterpart, the quest for psychological comfort remains the only explanation, the irresistible source of attraction for the returning of the latter.

A close analysis of *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* shows the extent to which the notion of kinship is central to the journey back of the female migrant. It appears very significant in the overall experience of Sophie and Salie as

transnational subjects. Both of them repeatedly remind the reader about family members who are particularly important to them. Sophie's memories of Haiti are full of images of Ati and Grandmè Ifé, whereas Salie's narration puts the spotlight on Madické and her grandmother. Their descriptions romanticize their family members who stay back home, in a way that reveals both pride and longing, as well as an almost vital need to reconnect with them.

These exalting descriptions exist alongside representations of the homeland as a hostile and oppressive place. According to Professor and (feminist) critic Carole Boyce Davies, such a negative depiction of the homeland is symptomatic of women's autobiographical writing. She argues that "home is often portrayed as a place of alienation and displacement in autobiographical writing [and] the family is sometimes situated as a site of oppression for women" (21). This statement prompts us to ask the question, why do women return home after having "made a hole in the fence and crossed the river" (Davies, 16) to escape enforced domesticity and ignorance?

Danticat's portrayal of Haiti gives a bleak picture of the Haiti of Duvalier. In addition, through the stories of Atie, Grandmè and Martine, the place is depicted as both barbaric and ghostly. With commonplace manslaughter, rape, poverty and superstitions, Danticat's Haiti appears to be at opposite poles of enlightenment, infested with Macoutes who "roamed the streets in broad daylight parading their Uzi machine guns (*Breath,* 138). Having escaped from such an infernal "Heart of Darkness", and having found refuge in Providence, "a town named for the Creator, the Almighty" (*Breath*, 70), Sophie returns to Haiti and leaves the reader wondering: why?

The same interrogation can be made about Diome's heroine who manages to break free from a hermetic and chauvinistic community, which is facing a difficult transition from a communitarian past, to a nascent, yet unapproved modernity. On her native island, the female body and mind are the property of the male who controls them meticulously. Being excommunicated since her birth as an illegitimate child, adolescent Salie takes a liberating move by migrating to France where she is relatively free. Thus, the motivation of her frequent visits to a community that rejects her becomes something that quite rightly deserves investigation.

All these interrogations point to the obvious paradox surrounding the return of the female migrant who, contrary to her male counterpart, does not expect either class mobility or emancipation from the yoke of patriarchy. In the traditional Bildungsroman, the male protagonist returns home to integrate and take advantage of a system after having acquired wealth and the proper kind of education. For the returning female migrant, such privileges are out of questions. Rather, her socialization resides in her respect and capacity to adjust to gender hierarchies.

Sophie returns to Haiti when almost everyone is seeking to leave due to poverty and political violence. Therefore, she is welcomed home by people who envy her good fortune. She is regarded as someone who is able to leave, and more precisely as someone who has escaped. Louise exemplifies the strong desire to leave at the expense of one's own life. It is this illegal mass movement of Haitian to the United States that has given birth to the "Boat People" label. Henceforth, it can be argued that Sophie is navigating counter-current. And an obvious fact in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* that cannot escape the reader's attention is the quasi-total absence of males in La Nouvelle Dame Marie. This is

perhaps because most of them have left and are probably not envisioning returning to Haiti. The fact that Sophie returns to a place where the men are not even willing to return hides some truth about the significance of home and family to the female migrant.

On the other hand, Salie is very much aware of the fact that her money and education will not improve her social status. She cannot aspire to the same privileges as El Hadj Wagane Yalitgué or *l'homme de Barbès* who have become the heroes of the islanders. Despite the fact that in Niodior, belonging gradually ceases to be a birthright, Salie's socialization, if possible at all, only resides in her acceptance of the role assigned to her by tradition, which is to find herself a place among her fellow women. A position in which, to borrow Millett's words, she is expected "to be passive, to suffer, and to be a sexual object (194). However, critics of the so-called female *Bildungsroman* offer some insight about the mystery surrounding the return – through thick and thin – of these female protagonists.

Writing about the 19th century young heroine Abel et al problematizes the significance of harmonious social relationships as traditionally female traits. They argue that women do not sever family ties as easily as men. They support their argument by evoking the example of Jane Austen's Emma Woodhouse in *Emma* (1815), who even after marriage "insists that they live in her father's house so that she may continue to take care of him" (8). Along the same lines, citing Jean Baker Miller, they suggest, "women's sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then maintain affiliations and relationships" (10). As it is apparent in the following statement, they emphasize the overpowering of longing over the sentiment of separation. They argue that "the heroine encounters the conviction that identity resides in intimate relationships,

especially those of early childhood" (11). Though family is not referred to explicitly in their argument, it can be inferred that normal childhood implies the presence of family in a place called home. Henceforth, their overall analysis suggests the attachment of the female protagonist to family and kinship. Such a relationship to family is demonstrated in Eileen Julien's *Travels with Mae: Scenes from a New Orleans Girlhood* (2009) where the closeness of female members of the family is synonymous to mutual support that almost borders on connivance.

The assumption about the special significance of "home" or family for the female migrant seems to find a supporting argument in Davies's various examples of the female transnational migrants who always return home in their quest for fulfillment. With the example of the heroine in Marita Golden's *Long Distance Life* (1989), she offers glimpses about the magnetic attraction of home to the female migrants. Golden's heroine, Naomi Reeves Johnson, escapes a sharecropper's farm in North Carolina and finds refuge in Washington DC where she becomes a self-made woman. She returned home when she was about to have her second child. She confesses that "home was where you come from, and it was natural to go home to do something as important as having a child" (Cited by Davies, 147-148). If Naomi returns home for a social reason such as giving birth to a child, for Sophie and Salie the relation with home can also be explained in social and psychological terms.

The fact that Sophie leaves their marital home in Provence for an expedited trip to Haiti, has something highly symbolic. The note she leaves to Joseph that reads as follows: "Sorry I needed to go somewhere and empty out my head" (*Breath*, 184) gives little clue as to what the real purpose of her trip is. However, this statement seems to have

an undertone that reveals some sort of therapeutic value that she attaches to the journey. Her word choice implies a psychological or mental state that requires urgent action. We learn with Martine, Sophie's mother, how a mental condition can be connected with location. Even though she gets nightmares in New York, as a result of her rape several years earlier, those get worse when she is in Haiti. Thus, to some extent, Haiti functions as "a site of trauma" from which she needs to stay away. Therefore, it can be assumed that Sophie's urgent desire to leave has to do with a difficult state of mind for which, a therapy that she believes is not available in her surrounding is necessary. She confesses:

> After Joseph and I got married, all through the first year I had suicidal thoughts. Some nights I woke up in a cold sweat wondering if my mother's anxiety was somehow hereditary or if it was something that I had "caught" from living with her. Her nightmares had somehow become my own, so much so that I could wake up some mornings wondering if we hadn't both spent the night dreaming about the same thing: a man with no face, pounding a life into a helpless girl. (*Breath,* 193)

Though, to a lesser extent, Sophie presents similar mental and psychological symptoms as Martine. They are both haunted by the idea of rape. While Martine's nightmares result from her actual rape by a Tonton Macoute – which gave birth to her daughter – conversely, Sophie's nightmares are caused by her own mother, who by analogy raped her through the practice of virginity test. This practice and Sophie's subsequent act of self-defloration have culminated in her sexual phobia that makes sexual intercourse with her husband feel like rape. The use of the phrase "pounding a life into a helpless girl" denotes that in her subconscious mind, sexual intercourse is associated with the violence of rape and the violence of using a pestle to break one's own hymen.

While this passage confirms the similarities between Sophie's condition and Martine's, it gives at the same time a hint about what is implied in Sophie's succinct

excuse to her husband that she needs to empty out her head. It also suggests the reason why she does not go home to her mother's, a place according to Joseph, she has always referred to as home. Thus, it can be argued that Martine's home in New York is to Sophie, what Haiti is to Martine. The fact that she chooses to go to Haiti, especially where her grandmother and Atie live, and not to her mother's, tells something about the symbolic and therapeutic value of her journey. By going to Haiti she is going "home", to the place of her childhood, "where she really belongs, and the refuge that gives her stability" (Mardorossian, 31). In a word, going to Haiti is going to the source that has been governing their lives, practices and rituals in America.

By having Sophie return to Haiti, Danticat creates a pretext for a possible gathering or unification of the family. While she is there with her daughter Brigitte, her mother visits from New York. This sudden unification of the four generations of Caco women signifies an unprecedented meeting of the past, the present and the future. While Haiti can be understood as a "site of oppression", it also represents the source to which Sophie needs to return in order to reconcile the past, the present and the future. Finally, this meeting serves as a catalyst for Sophie's psychological healing, as it will be addressed later.

In Haiti, Sophie confides to her grandmother and gives details about the purpose of her trip: "I hate my body. I am ashamed to show it to anybody, including my husband. Sometimes I feel like I should be off somewhere by myself. That is why I am here" (*Breath*,123). Sophie's statement implies physical and psychological oppression that are related to her commitment as a wife. In that sense Joseph's home can be analogized with Martine's where Sophie's body experienced violence and humiliation as a consequence

of the patriarchal ideology. The fact that she leaves the house of her husband that she loves so dearly, for "just a short vacation" (*Breath,* 122) invites the reader to consider a psychoanalytic approach.

At surface level, the fact that Joseph is an itinerant musician exacerbates Sophie's need for social connection. The need for such a social relationship is suggested by the phrase "to empty out my head", which can be rightly interpreted as a need for confession, a means to "get the poison out of [her] system" (Hymer, 139). She arrives in Haiti as a patient harboring both physical and moral ailment. As such her confession to her grandmother is of paramount importance.

Sharon Hymer addresses the value of confession in the organization of identity and a stable sense of self-esteem when she writes: "The initial embarrassment of confessing is frequently outweighed by the relief that comes with the verbalization of the darker, secretive aspects of self" (131). Through her confession Sophie manages to empty out her head, which means in psychoanalytical terms to get rid of the "obsessive ruminations" (Hymer, 131). Hence we can talk of the redemptive nature of her confession. Further analysis allows a perception of Sophie's marital home as a site of oppression. First, Sophie is bound to loneliness and fixity while she is waiting for Joseph to return from his multiple tours. Second, when Joseph is present at her side, his expression of sympathy and love culminates in lovemaking. For these two reasons her movement from Providence to Haiti is no less than a new escape from the oppressive nature of her marital life, and by extension, from a system based on male privilege. She thus seeks refuge in the protective and therapeutic power of the matrifocal system in Haiti.

The same urge to return to the source explains Salie's frequent visits to Senegal. Despite her relatively independent life in France, Salie considers going home as the only way to escape from her cold and mechanistic existence in Strasbourg. In fact, in Strasbourg, Salie is shown always indoors, locked in with Senegalese food and music, tea and television. The narrator succinctly makes reference to her outdoors activities as a housemaid. As if returning generates relief and liberation, she confesses: "Irrésistible l'envie de remonter à la source, car il est rassurant de penser que la vie reste plus facile à saisir là où elle enfonce ses racines" (*Ventre*, 166).

While Sophie's trip to Haiti is interpreted as a quest for wisdom to reconcile the body and the mind, Salie's trip is purely emotional. It is an expression of longing for socialization, a temporary flight from the cold and asocial atmosphere of Strasbourg, where she is completely deprived of human warmth. This statement combined with the multiple instances where she expresses excessive happiness for hearing her brother's voice on the phone, or receiving a parcel from her grandmother demonstrates that Salie associates happiness only in relation to family. Despite her relatively independent life in France, she envisions happiness particularly in relation to her grandmother who raised her.

In light of Sophie's and Salie's relative independence in their respective locations abroad, one can conclude that their respective journeys back have no materialistic motivation. Rather, they seem to reflect a sort of existential dilemma. The fact that they constantly make reference to their respective families signals a longing for tenderness and human warmth that their respective homes seem to promise. Thus, it could be argued that their living conditions are acceptable for a prolonged stay away from home. Salie for

instance, lives in much better conditions in France than her countrymen like *l'homme de Barbès,* and the other immigrant that she nicknames *Monsieur Sonacotra*. Salie's success in France as a writer allows her a respectable life standard, which is far from the humble material existence on her native island. On the other hand, with a loving husband, a baby and a house of their own, Sophie's material conditions seem to be ideal for an immigrant of her social background. What I seek to demonstrate by pointing to this is that it takes more than material properties to make these women happy. And since their material existence does not compel them to return, their urge to return can only be explained by the need for social affiliations and relationships, with family for that matter.

Contrary to Sophie who returns to a matrifocal society, Salie returns to a highly patriarchal community where in her own words, "a man's hand is placed over every woman's mouth" (*Belly*, 89). This difference is important in the sense that even though in the matrifocal system women do not have power in the larger community, the husband-father "is usually marginal to the complex of internal relationships of the group" (Smith, 14). In such a system, with limited intrusion of the male in women's affairs, and the enhancement of the mother's role, women's economic independence is more likely to be acknowledged. In Niodior, for instance Salie's wealth and education do not raise her social status higher than that of the absolutely subservient women. In Sophie's case, even though she doesn't get to finish college, her professional achievement is highly valued by her family in the same way as Martine's financial support is considered as a blessing.

Despite this slight difference in the functioning mode of the two societies, both texts, outstandingly portray what can be called the figure of the matriarch. This representation of the matriarchal figure is a powerful signal regarding the principal

motivation of the female protagonist's journey home. In other words, by putting the spot light on the figure of the grandmother, both narratives stress consanguinity as the principal pull factor governing the return of the female transnational protagonist. These matriarchal figures function as a magnet with an extraordinary power of attraction and a particularly remarkable sense of authority. They simultaneously incarnate wisdom and enduring love, tradition and female agency, which represent an added value to the attraction of blood ties.

Each of these elderly women is romanticized for her heroic action and unconditional love for the protagonist. They also incarnate ambivalence as they simultaneously challenge and confirm patriarchal norms. In other words, they represent hyphens between the past and the present as experienced victims of the traditions, and eye witnesses of the present day contradictions. To various degrees they project themselves into the public domain of decision-making. Therefore, they are essential references in the development of the female protagonist who seeks role models to build their female agency for a better future. To put it differently, they play a critical role in the process of the female's self-discovery, especially the transnational female subject who seeks balance between multiple cultural references.

In *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Grandma Ifé and Martine are equally responsible for Sophie's sexual phobia as transmitters of an age-old tradition. However, the fact that Sophie returns to Haiti and addresses her problem with her grandmother means attacking the root of the problem that her grandmother symbolically represents. In this sense, she simultaneously represents the life-giving source as well as the repository of the traditions. She is the source Sophie needs to return to in order to understand the essence of her

predicament and get the "magic potion" that will revitalize her. What is more, the goal for Sophie's journey to Haiti seems to be completely attained when she has both her mother and grand-mother admit and apologize for the pain they have caused her through the practice of testing.

Grandmother Ifé's pathetic words, "My heart, it weeps like a river …for the pain we have caused you" (*Breath,* 157) along with Martine's straightforward admission: "I did it because my mother had done it to me. I have no greater excuse" (*Breath,* 170) are enough to heal and revitalize Sophie. By offering her a statue of Erzulie, the family's goddess of love, Grandmè makes a highly symbolical but controversial gesture. According to Helen Scott Erzulie carries with her multiple layers of association. She is described as the embodiment of slavery and sexual domination, the splitting of women into objects to be desired or feared (465). Therefore, through this gift, Grandmè Ifé makes a symbolic declaration of unfailing love and support to Sophie, and simultaneously ties her back to their roots and invites her to tolerate and accept the contradictions of their traditions. Sophie is thus simultaneously equipped to tolerate and accept those contradictions, and armed to choose between love and hate. She eventually chooses love and forgiveness. This emotional moment of communion seems to satisfy Sophie's initial goal to empty out her head. She returns to the United States not entirely "healed" but sufficiently empowered with knowledge and the determination to forgive and forget.

In Diome's very poetic and philosophical narrative, the island of Niodior presents a beautiful and refreshing décor composed of mangrove and palm trees where, relatively speaking, life is affordable. The following passage describes the self-sufficiency and self-

reliance of the islanders: "Nichée au coeur de l'océan Atlantique, l'île de Niodior dispose d'une nappe phréatique inépuisable (…) cultivateurs, éleveurs et pêcheurs, ces insulaires sont auto-suffisants et ne demandent rien à personne" (*Ventre,* 51)[66]. As a matter of fact, for people like *l'homme de Barbès*, it's a haven of peace given his financial power, which is significantly above the average of the locals. Diome describes his self-consciousness about his material well-being in the following terms: "En se mordillant la joue, l'homme de Barbès se jetait dans son lit, soulagé d'avoir réussi, une fois de plus, à préserver, mieux, à consolider son rang" (88)[67]. This passage describes a state of mind of a person who not only belongs, but also is utterly privileged by the local system. Like El Hadji Wagane Yaltigué, he is more than welcome in the village and in the circle of dignitaries where he is treated with respect and deference.

However, each individual character in Diome's tableau is portrayed with some shortcomings, to the exception of Ndétare who is the most rational one, and Salie's grandmother who is romanticized beyond imperfection. Presented as the ideal woman, she is in fact the main object of Salie's memories and longing. She is the hero to whom Salie owes her life and success. Salie expresses her gratitude in the following terms:

> Trahie par ma grand-mère, la tradition, qui aurait voulu m'étouffer et déclarer un enfant mort-né à la communauté, maria ma mère à un cousin qui la convoitait de longue date. A défaut de se débarrasser de moi, les garants de la morale voulurent me faire porter le nom de l'homme imposé à ma mère. Ma grand-mère s'y opposa fermement : "Elle portera le nom de son vrai père, ce n'est pas une algue ramassée à la plage, ce n'est pas de l'eau qu'on trouve dans ses veines mais du

[66] Lying out in the Atlantic, the island of Niodior has seemingly inexhaustible ground water (…) these islanders – growers, breeders and fishermen – are all self-sufficient and ask nothing of anyone. (*Belly*, 31)
[67] Biting the inside of his cheek, the man from Barbès threw himself into bed, relieved that once again he'd succeeded in perceiving, even consolidating, his status. (*Belly*, 58)

> sang, et ce sang charrie son propre nom", répétait-elle obstinément aux nombreuses délégations qui la harcelaient. (*Le Ventre,* 74)[68]

Diome's portrayal of Salie's grandmother is reminiscent of *La Grande Royale* in C.H. Kane's *L'aventure ambigue*. Like *La Grande Royale*, this old woman is the only powerful woman in the novel. She steps out of her place in the periphery and resists the tradition that would commit infanticide and declare a stillborn baby. She also insists that the child take the surname of her father. Her influence in Salie's development as a whole, just like that of *La Grande Royale* in Samba Diallo's education is central to the novel. Salie pays tribute to her in a more or less hyperbolic language, lending her attributes that clearly transcend motherly love:

> La mère à la maternité perpétuelle, ma grand-mère : madre, mother, mamma mia, yaye boye, nénam, nakony, maman chérie, ma mamie-maman, ma mère pour de bon !
>
> Des douces mains qui ont coupé mon cordon ombilical, qui caressaient ma tête – quand, petite, je tirais la sève de son sein et m'endormais repue dans ses bras -, ma grand-mère n'a jamais cesser de tisser le fil qui me relie à la vie. (*Ventre,* 75-76)[69]

The quest for psychological or emotional comfort are recurring tropes in both stories and are presented as the sole pull factor for the female migrant. Both Sophie's and Salie's experiences demonstrate how the pursuit of happiness can be absurd without connection

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[68] Betrayed by my grandmother, tradition – which demanded I be suffocated and a stillborn child announced to the community – married off my mother to a cousin who had always his eye on her. If they couldn't be rid of me, the guardians of morality wished me to bear the name of the man forced on my mother. My grandmother was firmly against it: "she will have her real father's name, she's not some bit of seaweed puck up on the beach, she doesn't have water running in her veins but blood, and that blood carried its own name", she'd repeat obstinately to the numerous delegations that pestered her. (*Belly*, 48)

[69] My grandmother, mother of perpetual maternity: madre, mother, mamma mia, yaye boye, nenam, nakony, beloved mama, mammy-mummy, my real mother!
With those soft hands that cut my umbilical cord and stroked my head – when, as a baby, I sucked the sap from her breast and fell asleep, replete – my grandmother never ceased spinning the thread that bound me to life.

with family. Their pursuit of happiness that leads them to United States and France respectively, takes them back home simply because they are convinced that they cannot be happy without love and tenderness. To put it differently, if they have to return to the place of oppression in the pursuit of their dream for happiness, it means that family cannot be dissociated from the very concept of self-fulfillment. Given that both Sophie and Salie are relatively free in their host countries, this movement back raises the question about the fine line between happiness and freedom. In *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, Diome problematizes this existential dilemma when she writes:

> La liberté totale, l'autonomie absolue que nous réclamons, lorsqu'elle a fini de flatter notre égo, de nous prouver notre capacité à nous assumer, révèle enfin une souffrance aussi pesante que toutes les dépendances évitées : la solitude. Que signifie la liberté, sinon le néant, quand elle n'est plus relative à autrui ? (*Ventre,* 190)[70]

By contrasting total independence with solitude, this statement poses a Cornelian dilemma in which, what is lost through the protagonist's course of action is equally valuable as what is secured. This feeling of being torn between the attraction of freedom and the repulsion of subordination is at the core of both Danticat's and Diome's narratives.

Moreover, Diome emphasizes family relationship, which is sometimes given precedence at the expense of individual freedom. Salie longs for signs of affection from her family, especially her grandmother. Even though she is free and independent in France, she needs family relationship to restore her emotional balance. Her grandmother

[70] While the total freedom and absolute autonomy we demand flatter our ego and prove our ability to be independent, they ultimately reveal a suffering as oppressive as the dependency we have escaped: solitude. When it's no longer in relation to others, freedom means nothing more than emptiness. (*Belly*, 134)

primarily and Madické to a lesser extent serve as the anchor for her emotional tribulation as she confesses in the following statement: “Sédentaire, elle est l’ultime port d’attache de mon bateau émotionnel, lancé au hasard sur l’immensité effrayante de la liberté” (*Ventre,* 191).

The same dilemma inhabits Sophie’s conscience. Despite her sexualphobia she is determined to stay within the bonds of marriage with a man she considers the only person watching over her. She confides:

> Joseph asked me several times if I really wanted to go through with it. He probably would have understood if I had said no. However, I felt it was my duty as a wife. Something I owed him, now that he was the only person in the world watching over me. (*Breath,*130)

By returning to Providence after her short vacation in Haiti, she sacrifices her peace of mind, her sense of sexuality, and her freedom of choice on the altar of matrimony. Her love for Joseph and her responsibility as a mother seem to overweigh the stress free condition that she enjoys at Grandmother Ifé’s compound. Her situation therefore, becomes a good example of the existential dilemma that obliges the female transnational migrant to return to her family despite the various forms of oppression she sometimes faces.

Henceforth, transnational women’s movement back and forth, can be simply understood as a quest for temporary relief from two equally difficult extremes: the psychological and emotional weight inherent to estrangement, and patriarchy’s power of control. The idea that migration offers temporary escape from social constraints is rendered in a more metaphorical manner in Grandmé Ifé’s proverb according to which “The bird, it always returns to the nest” (142). While the bird as a symbol signifies

freedom, the nest as another symbol, can be interpreted as both confinement and familiar/familial space.

Thus, transnationalism is a privilege for the female subject who is looking for freedom, but it only constitutes a temporary alleviation of the social burden. As such, the female transnational migrant is confronted with the day-to day need to find balance between freedom and emotional stability that comes with social integration.

2- Ni Pute, Ni Soumise: Transnationalism as a Site of Resistance

This section is based on the assumption that women's transnationalism represents a form of agency while immobility is synonymous with confinement, control and oppression. Put differently, the fact that the female transnational subject has the privilege to leave and return as she wishes, saves her from systematic control of the patriarchal system in many ways. First of all, her reckless condition precludes the entrenchment of gender hierarchies and active participation in the performance of gender roles in her home community. Secondly, the transient space that she often occupies between two locations is devoid of cultural purity, to such an extent that gender roles are sometimes blurred or subverted. Moreover, the stay abroad provides a platform for dissidence and insubordination. In this sense, we can talk about a deterritorialization of the gender struggle in a way that opens up space for its internationalization.

Sophie of *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and Salie of *Le Ventre de L'Atlantique* are heroines that perfectly fit into this framework. With such a split between the protagonist and the group, this new trend in the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* resists a good part of the traditional criticism of the genre organized around the notion of reconciliation. For

instance, a good number of critics including Joseph Slaughter argue that the *Bildungsroman* as a narrative form reinforces the dominant order. In his attempt to compare the *Bildungsroman* to human rights he claims: "Both human rights and the *Bildungsroman* are tendentially conservative of prevailing social formations" (135). According to him, both Human Rights and the *Bildungsroman* are "extensions of the enlightenment project to modernize, normalize, and civilize (…) the individual and society" (5). By extending the conflict in the global arena, Sophie and Salie resist normalization or in other words, incorporation in the prevailing social formations.

As female *Bildungsromane*, *Breath* and *Ventre* also somehow resist the vision held by Abel et al who envision three types of outcome for the female *Bildungsroman*. They contend that female novels of development "typically substitute inner concentration for active accommodation, rebellion, or withdrawal (8). By refusing to compromise their individuality at a local level they also seek to escape the position of outcast associated with the rebel by seeking recognition at a global level. Metaphorically speaking, instead of standing in firm opposition with their communities, these unyielding protagonists carry the seed of their revolution with them in search of fertile ground, wherever it can be found.

Both Slaughter and Abel & al envision the end of the journey of self-discovery in terms of success (accommodation, assimilation, integration), failure or withdrawal (rebellion, death, insanity) of the protagonist. However, with the transnational *Bildungsheld* the "either/or" pattern is subject to revision. Hence, by integrating gender with genre, this chapter investigates the value that the experience of the transnational female protagonist adds to the perspectives on the *Bildungsroman* in general and the

postcolonial *Bildungsroman* in particular. Unlike the protagonist who returns home to stay, the transnational protagonist has the choice or privilege to return, stay abroad or to be constantly going back and forth. Such is the case for both Sophie and Salie whose salvation is not limited to either assimilation or destruction. In other words, they are not caught between acceptance in the mainstream society and social degradation. Contrary to Samba Diallo in *L'Aventure ambigue*, Nyasha in *Nervous Conditions* and Ken in *Le Baobab fou* who withdraw in madness or death after realizing their incapacity to integrate the social order of their community of origin, these protagonists benefit from a "third choice".

The Transnational *Bildungsroman* specifically, offers the protagonists the possibility to construct their lives across borders, and maintain membership in both their countries of immigration and their countries of origin. This state of affairs in fiction mirrors a sociological reality that Ruba Salih addresses when she argues that migrant women are "no longer caught between either assimilation or nostalgia and the "myth to return" (76). For them, the transnational space functions as a site of resistance, a rear base where subjectivities and agencies are defined by codes emanating from their multicultural consciousness. In more plain terms, the transnational female subject is in perpetual movement between various sites in an attempt to escape oppression, control and domestication.

Therefore, such a transitory state of existence implies continuous negotiation within and away from their own communities. Things that the returning transnational female subject is compelled to negotiate include her reputation. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, most societies do not condone women's migration except under very limited

circumstances. Consequently, as Caroline Brettell declares: "Being a migrant can stigmatize a woman" (146). This is true in many postcolonial *Bildungsromane* where, while the male protagonist is more concerned with upgrading his socio-economic status, his female counterpart is more concerned with her recognition and reputation, causing her to oscillate between the will to please and the urge to right the wrong.

Hence the moment of return is crucial in the development of the transnational heroine who is torn between the desire to be accepted and the fear of stigmatization and subjugation. *In Breath, Eyes, Memory,* Sophie's transition is made smooth by the fact that she has lived with her mother in New York for six years, surrounded by Haitian culture and traditions. However, what appears as active involvement when she returns to Haiti, occurs simultaneously with her strong inner concentration. She is happy to visit her Grandmother's home after being away in New York for six years. Despite her commitment to Haiti – she loves her Aunt Ati and Grandma Ifé, she appreciates the warmth of Haitian culture, and she displays a sense of community – she is devastated by the cult of virginity as an integral part of the local customs. This combination of outward accommodation and inward resistance makes Sophie's development continuous even after she leaves Haiti.

Sophie undergoes her first "admission test" with the taxi driver who drives her to La Nouvelle Dame Marie. By being able to speak creole perfectly, she marks a turning point in the direction of her integration. Upon arrival in La Nouvelle Dame Marie, the taxi driver makes the following remarks to her:

> "I find your Creole flawless," he said.
> Sophie replies: "This is not my first trip to La Nouvelle Dame Marie. I was born here."

> The taxi driver continues: "I still commend you, my dear. People who have been away from Haiti fewer years than you, they return and pretend they speak no Creole." (*Breath,* 95)

By emphasizing that she has not forgotten her creole, Sophie proves that despite a long absence, Haiti is still part of herself. She seems to be aware of the extent to which language serves as a factor of integration, especially in the Caribbean context. Sophie seizes this occasion to demonstrate that she has not lost the local culture for which the language is a reliable barometer. In *Black Skin White Mask,* Frantz Fanon addresses language as a marker of cultural self-identification where he writes: "And the fact that the newly returned Negro adopts a language different from that of the group into which he was born is evidence of a dislocation, a separation" (*Breath,* 14). In their short conversation Sophie manages to convince her interlocutor that she has neither broken from her original culture, nor does she look down at it as a whole, which is a good start for her journey of socialization.

At her grandmother's house, she naturally merges with the tradition as if she has never been away from home. As it is often the case with returning immigrants, Sophie does not seem to have any trouble readjusting to the life standard of her family in Haiti. The way she uses the leaves to bathe denotes respect to what looks like a traditional therapeutic bath. She narrates: "I raised a handful of leaves to my nose. They were a pot-pourri of flesh healers: catnip, senna, sarsaparillas, corrosol, the petals of blood red hibiscus, forget-me-nots, and daffodils" (*Breath,* 112). In addition, as if to prove that her journey to America was only physical, and has never really taken her away from their culture, Sophie displays her culinary competence by cooking "rice, black beans, and herring sauce" (*Breath,* 149). Therefore, at a superficial level, it can be argued that

Sophie has succeeded in getting along with the Haitian system of values, well enough to keep a good reputation.

Despite this apparently successful reception, she is not completely exempt from public gossip, even though it does not harm her integration in a context where almost all young people are leaving the country. Her obsession with weight - which is an expression of her adoption of an American sense of body image – led her to set out jogging. This apparently minor instance sets her apart as the "other" for the normal Haitian girl who is supposed to have no control over her body, as Atie informs her (*Breath,* 20). Sophie narrates: "Along the way, people stared at me with puzzled expressions on their faces. Is this what happens to our girls when they leave this place? They become such frightened creatures that they run like the wind, from nothing at all" (*Breath,* 157).

It is true that these people seem to manifest a degree of self-valorization in the way they look at Sophie, but their remarks seem to be random, rather than ill-intentioned. However, even though they actually don't seek to ruin her reputation, they seem to send a reminder that the female body is not destined to such an activity. The gossipers seem to reserve this activity to the male and see Sophie's act as a transgression of the domestic sphere that they associate with femininity. However, the fact that the remark is not personalized ("our girls", instead of specifying Sophie), denotes some sort of aloofness and a lack of serious intention to harm. From a different angle, it merely suggests a naive sense of dichotomy or a binary mindset of this community where migration (including that of women) has almost become a routine.

However, Sophie's almost irreproachable attitude does not mean that she accepts every single value in this society. The attention and interest she gives to Ati's and

Gandmé Ife's folktales and discussions, represent a critical moment in her introspection. She listens more than she speaks, and as a consequence, she manages to grasp the place of women in Haitian public imagination. Though Sophie seems to be looking for a compromise, she clearly rejects the treatment of the female body in public discourse and folklore. The song she hears from a group of young men in the cane fields, about "a woman who flew without her skin at night" and whose husband peppered her skin and ended up killing her (*Breath,* 150), is one instance of objectification and strict control of women. By simply evoking this song and refraining from adding further comments or interpretation, Sophie creates a moment of reflection and opens up the possibility for readers' response. Henceforth, she shifts from the role of narrator to align herself with the reader who is engaged as a witness. This is an instance of introspection for both narrator and readers who are obviously expected to condemn what appears as a metaphor for ruthless control of women's mobility. The abrupt conclusion that "Her husband had done it to teach her a lesson. He handed up killing her" is a strong interpellation for the reader that she implicitly invites to witness, feel and judge.

Her refraining from being judgmental about the stories that Gandmè Ifé and Atie tell also opens up space for critical reflection that has allowed her to grasp the degree of the entrenchment of the cult of virginity in Haitian culture. Grandmè's story about Ti Alice, and the story about the girl who did not bleed on her wedding night (*Breath,* 155), have led Sophie to the conclusion that the practice of testing is done for the sole pleasure of the would-be husband. She privileges asking questions in order to provide the reader with first hand evidence about the contradictions of the patriarchal system, which remains extremely strong, even in the absence of males. To her grandmother's argument as to the

reason why she tested her daughters, she retorts: "But they don't have husbands" (*Breath,* 156). This state of affairs, along with her inability to have a fulfilling marital life points to the limits and contradictions of this practice. Eventually, as Mardorossian argues, "[Sophie] learns to acknowledge and come to terms with the contradictions of the cultural heritage" (31).

In *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique,* Salie's negotiation is made in completely different terms. Two reasons that make her re-integration difficult are the overwhelming presence of the male figure and her literal lack of subordination to gender hierarchies. Niodior presents a traditional form of patriarchy, which, to borrow Millett's words, "grant[s] the father nearly total ownership over wife or wives and children, including the powers of physical abuse and often even those of murder and sale" (40). The story of Sankèle in this novel, for instance, is a good illustration of Millett's point. The Fisherman, Sankèle's father, throws her newborn baby in the ocean after she rejected an arranged marriage, and got impregnated by her lover. To put it more metaphorically, in Niodior, "Big Brother's Eye" is always watching the woman. And Salie specifically becomes the center of surveillance, and gossip.

In this community, as Kristen Stern describes, émigrés "return either wildly successful to bestow gifts of wealth on their family or are shunned when they return in economic failure" (88). Despite her successful adventure and her efforts to please, Salie is put in the dock and accused of being a westernized woman and an individualist. She is well aware of the ceremonial that represents the first test or almost the rite of passage that retuning émigrés must undergo. She recounts her experience of this ritual: "Je devais nourrir mes convives autoproclamés sans broncher, sous peine de passer pour une

individualiste occidentale, une dénaturée égoïste" (167). These words clearly indicate that she is only mimicking a tradition that she condemns in its most minute details.

The fact that she returns as a divorcée makes things worse for her since she is looked at as "a social and cultural failure" (Coly, 112). People appreciate her gifts but those are secondary to what they expect from her as woman. Her money and education are reduced to almost nothing in front of the role this extremely male dominated society expects her to take. She is indeed expected to actively participate in a system where she should make both her body and wealth available to the male.

Salie's situation can be analogized with Maiguru's in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Condition*. Maiguru's financial support to Babamukuru's family is kept unacknowledged and overshadowed by the generosity of her husband (Babamukuru) who is hailed as the magnanimous patriarch. The only thing acknowledged for her is her position as senior wife within her husband's extended family. Such a position entails household chores for the entire family, including fellow women like her sisters-in-law. Millett addresses this attitude of patriarchy that bans women from visibility. She argues that "In traditional patriarchy, women, as non-persons without legal standing, were permitted no actual economic existence as they could neither own nor earn in their own right" (39).

Unlike Yaltigué and *l'homme de Barbès*, Salie's social status does not improve at all. Coly observes,

> The local cultural norms about masculinity and femininity shape the receptions of the male and female emigrant bodies. Through emigration, the two men have accumulated cultural symbols of masculinity that clear for them a social location of privilege. (112)

Since her gender disqualifies her for such privileges, one potential source of credit and respectability for her is to arrange and finance her brother's trip to France. This question is in fact the main bone of contention between her and the young men surrounding Madické, and who believe that she is being selfish for refusing to help her brother.

In the eyes of the community, as a male, Madické holds the right to leave home. Therefore, objecting to his plan to travel is an offense to his male pride and prerogative. Moreover, given that dignity is dependent on the capacity to leave (and returning with wealth), discouraging their effort to migrate is synonymous with trampling under foot their chance to buy their dignity. As a consequence, Salie and women at large are out of the picture in the talismanic slogan of the young *Niodiorois: "Every scrap of life must serve to win dignity!"*

For that reason, Madické and his friends sense a threat to their male dignity. As if recovering from a state of castration, they quickly react to their feeling of offense. Madické's reaction displays the sexist view that society at large holds about migration per se: " On est capables de trouver du boulot et d'assurer comme de vrais mecs. Regarde, t'y arrives, toi, et t'es qu'une nana" (175)[71]. This statement reveals not just their sense of emulation, but also the overall idea of the exceptionality of women's success in a space traditionally associated with masculinity. Implicitly, Madické is saying that he is more deserving than his sister.

Despite her attempt to live up to their expectation by following the tradition carved by her male predecessors, which consists in distributing consumer goods and

[71] We're capable of finding jobs and holding on to them like real men. You managed it, and you're only a girl. (*Belly,* 123)

catering for almost the whole village, Salie's social capital in the village gets thinner and thinner. This situation confirms the argument that by following such a tradition, Salie is only seeking to build up and maintain a good reputation, rather than expressing active participation or reinforcement of the dominant order. Such obsession with good reputation results in a very ambivalent, even contradictory attitude whereby she simultaneously reproduces and subverts the local social codes of conduct.

Her lack of complete subordination to the system is reflected in her refusal to join the women's circle. Her attitude represents an act of contestation against existing forms of domestication of the female body through limitation of their vital space. The condition of these women, who stoically carry out their role as housewives is a powerful illustration of Millett's argument that "the position of women in patriarchy is such that they are expected to be passive, to suffer, and to be sexual objects; it is unquestionable that they are, with varying degrees of success, socialized into such roles" (194). And as Coly contends, "the multiple images of gender oppression in the novel define the place that Salie refuses to occupy" (112).

Everything considered, Salie fully understands her place in this community, which is "*no-place"*. That is to say, she tries to resist – to borrow Bourdieu's term – the *habitus* that reduces her counterparts to passivity and fixation. If she is capable of resisting the so-called *habitus,* it is because of her knowledge. And as Millett eloquently argues, "If knowledge is power, power is also knowledge, and a large factor in their subordinate position is the fairly systematic ignorance patriarchy imposes upon women" (42).

Because of her level of education, Salie becomes the "unmelting" and dangerous presence that threatens the community. Henceforth, her words and gestures are scrutinized and monitored. This situation, which is also part of the trial to which returning migrant women are routinely subjected, creates a feeling of unease for Salie. Turning to Ndétare as the only person who seems to understand her, only adds fuel to the fire as malevolent rumors start circulating about their companionship. She decides to leave when her reputation starts fading away: "La rumeur se récoltant plus vite que la fleur de sel, on s'en servit pour assaisonner les dîners. L'atmosphère du village devenant irrespirable, je m'éclipsai" (*Ventre,* 191)[72].

The fact that Salie is pushed to the very edge does not coerce her to cooperate or capitulate in front of a system that she convincingly condemns. Her feeling of inadequacy and self-consciousness does not curb her determination to pursue her dream for freedom and her struggle for the liberation of her gender as a whole. Thus, returning home is not the end point of her development, but a stage in the ongoing process of self-discovery and self-fulfillment. And as suggested by the quotation above Salie has a third option, a place to go when things become unbearable. As such, she can be in constant flight, in search of refuge from a system that makes integration possible only through acceptance of gender hierarchies. This ability to be immune from control and enforcement of the patriarchal system translates the idea of mobility as a form of agency. Such a capacity to slip through the cracks of the dominant system is present in both *Breath Eyes Memories* and *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*.

[72] Since rumours are harvested faster than salt crystals, they were used to spice up the diners. The atmosphere in the village became suffocating, and I slipped away. (*Belly*, 135)

Since in a patriarchal system femininity is equated with fixity, there is no doubt women's mobility will be perceived as defiance and resistance. Salie who is aware that her stay in Niodior is just temporary, does not therefore bother to take any role. Her resolution and capacity to stay away in a hotel in the city of Mbour, in order to take a break from constant surveillance and gossip, clearly translates the idea of mobility as a form of resistance. According to Coly "Her movement away from her family to the hotel represents her nonoccupation of the place of the national daughter" (Coly, 113). If the "national daughter" is understood as the potential stay-at-home woman, who is accustomed to domestic duties, then Salie has failed, or should we say escaped?

At any rate, her economic independence and her freedom of movement as her retreat at the hotel showcases, marks her difference with other women who are home-bound because of marriage and children. Even though she is homeless in Niodior, her migratory potential saves her from having to surrender to oppression, and allows her to challenge and circumvent the role ascribed to her gender. The hotel provides a space for the subversion of power relations and the redefinition of gender roles. At the hotel, Salie is confronted with a situation in which she has to identify with either the "national daughter" or the *Francenabé* (the transnational lady). The hotel is a space banned to the national girl except for the prostitute, who, having trespassed the domestic space is looked at as a disposable sexual commodity. And the fact that the receptionist mistakes Salie for a prostitute comes from that public understanding. This perception reinforces the idea that ill reputation is often associated with women who venture into the public space. Salie as a transnational is assigned an upper class standing that she would not have enjoyed in Niodior. Her status as *Francenabé* opens doors for her and puts her in a

position of power and control, even over some males. She earns both the respect and the courteous service of the male receptionist who even offers to carry her luggage: "Ah, *Francenabé*! Excuse-moi, madame. Bienvenue chez nous. Donne-moi ton sac, je vais te montrer ta chambre" (197)[73].

The courtesy of the receptionist towards Salie, although one may consider it as being a politically correct behavior, is only acceptable in that context and may be judged as unworthy of a male in the larger society. Henceforth, the condition at the hotel– to borrow Donato et al's words – demonstrates that "gender is relational and contextual, power-laden and also dynamic" (Donato et al, 13).

Thus, the hotel functions as an unconventional home for the subject who straddles over two or more cultures and who eventually belongs nowhere. In this space new social transactions and transitions take place away from the restrictions associated with mainstream societies. Ultimately, Gloria Anzaldua's concept of "borderlands" captures fairly well the space constituted by the hotel, in that it functions as home to the transnational subject who "does not feel completely at home in any of the many communities in which she holds membership" (Yarbro-Bejarano, 13). It is also a site of constant transition, which is both safe and unsafe (Davies, 66).

Equally metaphorical is her act of writing, which can also be understood as an imaginary journey towards a site of resistance, contestation and safety, but also a step into the public sphere. With writing, she occupies a space where she resists the gendered expression that holds back her fellow women in Niodior. In the following statement, she

[73] Ah *Francenabé!* My apologies, madam. Welcome to our country. Give me your bagand I'll show you to your room. (*Belly*, 139)

associates writing with movement and distance: "Mon stylo continuait à tracer ce chemin que j'avais emprunté pour les quitter. Chaque cahier rempli, chaque livre lu, chaque dictionnaire consulté est une brique supplémentaire sur le mur qui se dresse entre elles et moi" (171). Consequently, her level of education and her career as a writer have raised her up to a social class that the uneducated masses of the village find difficult to accept.

Her decision to stay in France can also be interpreted as a source of empowerment and an act of resistance. From her location in France she is able to confront her brother Madické and voice out her opinion in a way that might not have been acceptable in Niodior. By analogy, if knowledge is power as Millett argues, money is also power. In the following telephone conversation Salie clearly has both the upper hand and the final word vis-à-vis her brother:

> Je ne veux surtout pas entendre parler de billet d'avion! La boutique ou un autre projet équivalent, sinon je garde mon argent et tant pis pour toi. Maintenant je vais raccrocher, réfléchis et rappelle-moi quand tu auras fait ton choix… [74] (*Ventre*, 223)

Similarly, in *Breath*, Sophie is invested in the same kind of journey for liberation and self-rehabilitation. When Sophie leaves her mother's house to elope with Joseph, she poses an act of resistance. This takes home Emilia Ippolito's discussion about transnational movement as an opportunity for the Caribbean girl or woman to reinvent an identity independent from the maternal one (Ippolito, 2000).

However, Sophie's journey from her marital home to Haiti bears a more complex meaning. While it is possible to read it as a therapeutic journey, it can also be interpreted

[74] I don't want to hear any talk of a plane ticket! The shop or a similar project, on Niodior, otherwise I'll hold on to my money and it'll be too bad for you. Now, I'm going to hang up. Think about it and let me know when you've made up your mind…. (*Belly*, 159)

as an act of resistance and transgression. As a male, Joseph is the one who can leave, whereas Sophie is the one who is expected to stay. As a matter of fact, the marital house symbolizes fixity and subjugation. Thus, by taking her trip to Haiti of her own accord, without prior consultation and approval from her husband, Sophie breaks and trespasses a major gender boundary. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Sophie breaks the patriarchal code that would have her journey authorized and chaperoned by her husband or preferably another male member of her family.

Moreover, Haiti represents some sort of "un-masculinized" space that gives free vent to Sophie's thought and voice. Responding to her grandmother's inquiry about why she is in Haiti, Sophie states that she hates her body and that she is ashamed to show it to anybody, including her husband. More precisely, she justifies her presence in Haiti as a result of her uncomfortable feeling that stimulates her desire to be off somewhere by herself. What she refers to as "somewhere by myself", can be understood as a substitute "home" where she can temporarily escape from the oppression that she has come to associate with her marital home.

At another level, after having come to terms with her family she goes back to the US refreshed and empowered, with a firm determination to interrupt an age-old tradition that the practice of testing represents. Given that her struggle to put an end to the chain of transmission of the cult of virginity is not possible on Haitian soil, the United States functions as a site of resistance and struggle. Like France for Salie, America represents a rear base for Sophie in her struggle to improve the future of Haitian women in general and the future of Caco women in particular.

Even though she has achieved self-understanding, her full autonomous subjectivity begins after her mother's death. By shouting *Ou libéré!,* (Are you free?) to her after the burial of her mother, both Ifé and Atie acknowledge her as having achieved freedom. In this regard, Danticat writes: "There is a place where women are buried in clothes the color of flames, where we drop coffee on the ground for those who went ahead, where the daughter is never fully a woman until her mother has passed on before her"(234). This scene marks reconciliation with her Self and with her identity as Haitian, but it is not the endpoint to her development since another project is lying ahead. The fact that she hysterically attacks the sugar cane at the closure of the novel symbolizes the beginning of a life long struggle. Since the sugar cane field represents a *lieu de memoir* for the devastation of her family as a whole, she is symbolically waging a battle against the tradition, patriarchy, and specifically against her mother's rapist. Her struggle symbolically starts there, but with her husband and daughter in America, another move that will ultimately give the struggle an international dimension is soon to take place.

At this point, it can be noted that both Sophie's and Salie's returns home do not mean either the end or a failure of their development. In other words, for both protagonists, maturity has come to mean awareness of new challenges and the realization that life is a continuous struggle. Henceforth, they see themselves as being vested with the lifelong undertaking of freedom and justice. Since such new aspirations do not lend to a "here and now" resolution, their struggle has to be deferred and deterritorialized in order to continue in what can be considered a "borderland."

Transnationalism provides a platform for contradictory performances. As such, it opens up space where expectations and behaviors ascribed to gender are subverted. It

becomes a terrain of resistance and contestation of fixed boundaries, as well as a space for the prolongation of the development of the female subject. This new paradigm does not restrict the outcome of the *Bildungsroman* to integration, rebellion or withdrawal. Rather, as Salih argues,

> With no doubt, transnational migration represents a challenge to the models of "integration" which are based on the classic rationale that nationality, culture and territory would eventually overlap and should constitute the basis upon which citizenship is granted. (76)

Thus, transnationalism offers a third space, which corresponds to what Anzaldua refers to as "borderland". In more specific terms, the so-called borderland is not a geographically limited space, but it alludes to a consciousness and a reckless condition in which the female subject enjoys temporary escape and counter-stereotypical attitudes. Both Sophie and Salie have the privilege to evade, albeit temporarily the control of patriarchy, the constraint of capitalism as well as racial alienation. Because of this possibility, they both powerfully illustrate Davies's idea of "(…) being homeless with the privilege and ability to move in relation to being homeless because of abuse, oppression or exploitation" (114).

In the first section of this chapter, my attempt has been to demonstrate that the gender discrimination that characterizes migration, also informs the motivation to return home and the reception of the returning migrant. Taking *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* as examples, the study reveals that the motivation for the return of the female protagonist is in most cases related to the quest of psychological comfort through the family nurturing power. At a surface level, this conclusion seems to bring home the stereotype that assigns "domestic service and attendance upon infants to the

female, (…) and interest and ambition to the male" (Millet, 26). Even though this is not my contention, the irony is that this stereotype emanates from the same source as the gender prejudice that I have been discussing throughout this chapter. In other words, reducing women to the role of homemaker and child-care is literally based on the same ideology as the notion that promises socio-economic mobility to the male migrant, and limits the expectations of the transnational female to kinship relations as the only capital to regain and maintain.

Salie's experience is a telling example about how, in the context of migration, patriarchy allows social mobility to the male migrant and denies it to his female counterpart. Both Sophie and Salie have illustrated the power of memories and the critical place of kinship in the pursuit of happiness. Henceforth, travel writer Pico Iyer's definition of home as "the place of which one has memories but no expectations" (472), is particularly relevant to both Sophie's and Salie's experiences.

For both protagonists, the journey to their families occurs at a time when their emotional and psychological needs find no answer in their foreign location. In this sense, their journeys back can be seen as having a therapeutic or redemptive value. However, while family seems to be endowed with some healing power, its socializing function confronts and curtails the passion of the returning transnational female subject. As Millett puts it, "the chief contribution of the family in patriarchy is the socialization of the young into patriarchal ideology's prescribed attitudes toward the categories of role, temperament, status" (35). This idea is in line with Davies's argument that home is often a site of "compulsory domesticity and the enforcement of specific gendered relations"

(65). These two arguments allow the prediction of a new departure as a consequence of a failed attempt of socializing the transnational female.

The second section of this chapter has emphasized the possibilities that transnationalism offers to the female migrant who seeks to optimize her freedom and happiness. If, in many *Bildungsromane* returning home corresponds to the end of the development of the protagonist, for the transnational female subject, returning home is a fresh start in her pursuit of self-fulfillment. Danticat's *Breath* and Diome's *Ventre* have also been proven to be good examples of this trend in which the development of the transnational subject is a continuous process.

Sophie of *Breath*, escapes the hardship of her marital home by taking a short vacation in Haiti. While this short stay allows her to get education about her ancestral customs, she leaves Haiti again with her firm condemnation of the practice of the test of virginity. Thus, we witness a deterritorialization and internationalization of a local cause, when Sophie returns to the United States and joins a sexualphobia group. On the other hand, in *Ventre,* Salie straddles over three spaces, neither of which she really belongs to. Because belonging implies responsibility and commitment, permanent mobility between spaces annihilates any compelling feeling of bondage. Since Salie chooses to spend her life crossing borders, her transnationalism becomes a site of resistance, a refuge from normative hierarchies. From another vantage point, her transnational/transitional space, allows her to assume the kind of power and authority, which are inaccessible to a female in Niodior.

What has been at stake in this section is how the foreign space functions as both a refuge and a battleground for the protagonist who is no longer condemned to conform to

the local culture. In short, for the female subject, transnationalism serves both as a shield and a weapon against gender domestication and hierarchies. Therefore, this situation poses the question of the return of the transnational migrant that no longer coincides with the end of the journey of development. Maturity ceases to correspond with a specific moment characterized by acceptance or complete rejection of the social values of the community the protagonist is returning to.

Both novels emphasize the impossibility of return of the protagonist whose development across borders opens up possibilities for occasional escapes from the enforcement of patriarchal hierarchies. In other words, even if maturity and awakening actually take place, integration is never complete because the protagonist is not bound to two options only (integration or destruction). Rebellion takes a new meaning given the fact that there is always the possibility to visit home occasionally or to keep contact with family from outside national borders.

In addition, while the traditional *Bildungsroman* ends with reconciliation and active participation of the protagonist (mostly the male) in the social system, or marriage for the female protagonist, *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, seem to end on a "No retreat, No Surrender" note. Salie marks the impossibility of her socialization by confirming her choice to inhabit the transnational space. She sends the following message: "Je cherche mon pays là où les bras de l'Atlantique fusionnent pour donner l'encre mauve qui dit l'incandescence et la douceur, la brûlure d'exister et la joie de vivre"[75] (*Ventre,* 255). On the one hand, this passage clearly indicates that Salie

[75] I seek my country where the arms of the Atlantic meet to form the mauve ink that tells of incandescence and sweetness, the passion for existence and the joy for living. (*Belly*, 183)

continues her pursuit of happiness at a discursive level. In other words, if Salie the protagonist is unable to identify with the way of the world, Salie the writer is determined to find a way beyond the ordinary world. Thus, the pursuit of freedom and happiness becomes a timeless and placeless undertaking when extended into the realm of fantasy. This statement suggests Salie's incapacity to compromise and bring herself into harmony with a world founded on a close-up binary system.

Unlike Salie, Sophie has not said her final word. After attacking the sugar canes as symbols of oppression, her grandmother asks her "Ou libéré?" but does not allow her to reply. She (her grandmother) quickly pressed her fingers over Sophie's lips and said, "you will know how to answer" (*Breath,* 234). The use of the future in Grandma Ifé statement indicates that Sophie's maturation, far from being complete, remains a project underway. Both Sophie's battle with the sugarcane and Grandma Ife's command leave the reader looking ahead for Sophie's next move and her potential role in society. Again, we witness a complex ending that diverges from the traditional pattern.

Finally, what seems to emerge from my analysis of these two *Bildungsromane* is that they represent a conscious attempt to teach, in the sense that they both prompt a critical look on several societal issues by adopting a more or less open-ended outcome. Henceforth, one can agree with the many critics who hold the belief that the *Bildungsroman* is an elastic genre, which, besides integration and harmony, conflict and rebellion also includes more complex and more ambiguous forms of socialization.

Conclusion

This dissertation has set out to analyze factors that contribute to the extension, or disruption, of the *Bildungsroman* form in postcolonial literature. It has mainly emphasized the transnational and multicultural dimensions as fundamental to the transformation of the *Bildungsroman* genre. Focusing on the African and Caribbean appropriation of the genre, it has attempted to demonstrate how transnational mobility, exposure to multiple cultures through media outlets, communication technology and social networks complicate identity formation as adolescents find new ways of socializing within and across national borders. The analysis of this expansive connectedness has shown the emergence of a new sense of selfhood marked by multiple allegiances (or lack thereof) and a new type of *Bildungsroman* that accommodates such controversies.

As stated throughout this work, the historiography of the *Bildungsroman* indicates that the genre had been an instrument of legitimization and initiation into bourgeois social values during the nineteenth century. Its socializing function had been based on the portrayal of the individual who comes to terms with the community after a life of adventure prompted by misguided ambitions. In this type of *Bildungsroman*, the role of mediating between the individual and the mainstream society mainly relies on a happy ending that legitimizes cultural codes with a view to socializing both the protagonist and the reader into values that used to be seen as cardinal and immutable. The Victorian version of the *Bildungsroman*, especially those authored by female writers, with their routinely happy endings, is a good example of this mission of legitimization of communal values.

This trend had been challenged early in the twentieth century, especially in the postcolonial world, including Ireland with James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.* At the end of Joyce's novel, the ambitious and rebellious Stephen vows to leave Ireland, his friends and family behind to pursue his artistic dream. Postcolonial writers henceforth appropriate the *Bildungsroman* as an instrument of de-legitimization, decolonization and cultural self-affirmation. This tendency to challenge systems of power through the *Bildungsroman* becomes still more current in the twenty first century where migration, media and communication technology allow new forms of socialization and escapism.

This dissertation has largely discussed the implications of the traversing and trespassing of boundaries as a factor for the introduction of new themes, new motifs and new narrative patterns that add to the appeal of the *Bildungsroman* genre. Even though most of the classic characteristics of the *Bildungsroman* have been and are still persistent throughout the history of the genre, in the transnational *Bildungsroman* identity formation and socialization take more complex forms as they engage the individual, not just with his/her social group at a local level, but also with other communities at a global level. This interplay between the local and the global generated by the protagonist's journey of self-discovery represents one of the major points of contrasts of this sub-category with its nineteenth century European counterpart, in which the itinerary of the protagonist is invariably from a provincial location to an urban setting and vice versa.

Throughout this study, the question of how multiple allegiances circumvent the traditional notion of *Bildung*, and challenge conventions of the classic *Bildungsroman* has been explored. It has been noted that the extension of the "Contact Zone" and the

expansion of the social platform result in a new type of *Bildungsroman* which is in line with current issues in the postcolonial debate. This new *Bildungsroman* illustrates very well the emerging concept of "decentering the center" which represents the buzzword or favorite topic of what is known as "Interstitial Postcolonialism". Based on the belief in the gradual demise of a binary mindset that opposes center and periphery, this new trend in postcolonial theory and criticism pays special attention to this new *Bildungsroman*.

The positive critical reception of works by new generation writers is good evidence for this assumption. The list of writers who occupy center stage in this debate includes Alain Mabanckou, Thierno Mononembo, Fatou Diome, Chris Abani, Moses Isegawa, Calixthe Beyala, Dani Laferrière, Edwidge Danticat, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie etc. Also referred to as "les enfants de la postcolonie" (Waberi) or "third generation writers," their literary production inaugurates a break in postcolonial literature and criticism tradition. As Brenda Cooper reminds us, this new generation of writers "see Africa (…), through the lenses of their experience far from home" (7). In other words, she argues that the site of production has a great impact on the act of representation. While this argument is true for many of them, it can also be noted that the critical glance does not exclusively concern Africa, but the world as a whole. For that reason, this new literary production anchored on dislocation influences many aspects of postcolonial theory and criticism, which used to be built around concepts such as Eurocentrism, center and periphery.

It is this new configuration that constitutes a base for the transnational *Bildungsroman*, which, contrary to the classic form that emphasizes a center that the *Bildungsheld* is expected to acknowledge and return to, interrogates and deconstructs

binaries. As a consequence, in the transnational *Bildungsroman*, what we witness is multiple allegiances or lack thereof. Both cases imply protagonists who see the world as home, and either actively celebrate their sense of multiple connections or passively assume their condition as hybrids. Henceforth, the notions of hierarchy and center are challenged and the quest of identity becomes an ongoing process fuelled by the unquenched thirst for freedom. Thus, this lack of a legitimate center translates into ambivalence and the lack of a unified self.

While many studies of the *Bildungsroman* "focus exclusively on the linear and forward-moving dimensions of the protagonist's development" (Boes, 34), the transnational *Bildungsroman* introduces new elements into the debate. The traditional gender, ethnicity, sexuality or ideological pattern is supplemented by new forces that pit nations against one another in a way that display contradictions that govern the protagonist's search for truth. Therefore, the search transcends subjectivity and brings geopolitical questions into the picture. As such, this new type of *Bildungsroman* represents a unique example of emancipation from the old paradigms. The analysis of the selected texts show the extent to which the respective authors contribute to the re-conceptualization of the genre by introducing new structures and motifs, in a word, contributing to the postmodernization and decanonization of the *Bildungsroman* genre.

With varying degrees, each of these narratives depicts an unstable subject who straddles two or more cultures. They reject fixed moral codes and face the difficulty of choosing between diverse subject positions. More precisely, these novels without exception portray a generation in limbo. Such a condition suggests a transition between local-oriented identity formation and complete openness to foreign influence or global-

oriented consciousness. In brief, by privileging both geographical and cultural mobility, the transnational *Bildungsroman* becomes open to formal and thematic transformation and even opens avenues for fantastic imagination.

The introduction to this dissertation has demonstrated the potentials of the *Bildungsroman* to respond to various ideological, social, political and cultural situations. It sets the tone for the rest of the dissertation by making the argument that the recent trend in the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* represents a gigantic leap, a great "heresy" at both formal and thematic levels, in the development of the *Bildungsroman* genre. It emphasizes the fact that mobility, intensive and expansive social networks challenge the classic pillars of the *Bildungsroman,* conformism and conservativeness.

The first chapter has demonstrated the pertinence of the application of the concept of transnational *Bildungsroman* to the new postcolonial coming of age narratives which are best described through transgression, and trespassing of geographical, cultural and literary boundaries and conventions. This new *Bildungsroman* features the search for identity in an era of multiculturalism and provides more possibilities for emancipation and escape. This chapter has shown how the transnational *Bildungsroman* represents a vivid illustration of the elasticity of the genre, as well as ways in which the fast pace of technological advance, and the porousness of national borders contributes to its development.

Bringing together *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* and *Graceland* the second chapter has addressed the complexity of the search for identity by raising the question of the demise of cultural fixity as a result of intensive and expansive exchange between the local and the global. The analysis of the experiences of Salie and Elvis respectively, has led to the

conclusion that this new type of *Bildungsroman* marks an important break with the past. It has highlighted the social and cultural condition that constitutes the bedrock for multiple attachments and multicultural consciousness. Henceforth, these two novels become representative of a new literary sensibility that de-legitimizes the discourse of hierarchy and binaries and with various degrees of militancy, celebrates cultural diversity and hybridity. In other words, the fact that the protagonists in these novels are "lifted out of their tie to place" (Tomlinson, 148) indicates transformation in the traditional form and function of the *Bildungsroman* which is built around a center of reference, and the belief in pureness of values. As such, they ultimately challenge the concepts of center and margin and emphasize a cultural blend, thus making identity search an open-ended enterprise.

The third chapter has focused on the paradox that confronts the subject involved in a journey of discovery. It has pointed out the significance of home and memory in the quest for identity across borders and has problematized the concept of cultural attachment. Since every choice is renunciation, Sophie's and Mugezi's attitude makes it problematic to talk about attachment in the context of cultural globalization. Rather, multiple connections seem to translate better their crossroad condition whereby the local and the global coexist, and are equally reclaimed and contested. If Sophie is an advocate of the "Both Here and There," Mugezi is conversely the partisan of the "Neither Here nor There." Both subject positions signify a de-legitimization of a given center and an emphasis on the vision of the world as a home.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation has offered further elucidation on the significance of the notion of home in the *Bildungsroman*. It has examined the return of

the protagonist to his/her home as one of the most fundamental aspects of the *Bildungsroman*, as well as one of the principal points of contention between the classic and the recent *Bildungsroman*. It has focused on push and pull factors that influence the return to a home, which is in essence, constituted as a center of socialization or a site of domestication. The chapter has shown the extent to which the issue of return, which is persistent in coming of age stories, especially in postcolonial literature, has been more prominent in transnational *Bildungsromane*, by female writers. *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* have been chosen to illustrate the nonconformist, and ambivalent attitude toward the notion of return. Both texts exemplify the idea of the ending as a fresh start.

Conclusively speaking, this dissertation discloses new perspectives on the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* at thematic and formal levels as well as at the level of appropriation. First of all, the increasing appropriation of the genre by underprivileged groups, including women, has brought more attention to the various antagonistic forces that confront the protagonist, despite the argument that emphasizes the symbolic value and antiradicalism function of the genre. In fact, with the transnational female subject, patriarchy and heteronormative systems are given a significant proportion among other systems of power in the postcolonial novel. Moreover, with apparently more female writers in the genre than male writers – an unexamined assumption that requires more investigation – the concept of female *Bildungsroman* has unquestionably imposed itself in contemporary literary criticism.

Secondly, it can be noted that most postcolonial *Bildungsromane* represent an integral part of migrant literature, particularly as a celebration of global identities. In this

category, transnational migration occupies center stage and could be even perceived as a new rite of passage. Growth becomes attached to the experience of crossing national borders as a moment through which the young adolescent learns the way of the world in the larger sense. However, if a rite of passage in the traditional sense of the word represents a moment of initiation resulting in the empowerment and integration of the individual within the group, migration provides a rich experience that allows multiple choices that include figuratively speaking, "None of the above" as well as "All of the above." In other words, the transnational *Bildungsroman* is not just the narrative of transformation but also the narrative of deconstruction and reconstruction. Given the decentered existence of the protagonist, cultural terrains intermingle and dislocated elements from different cultural backgrounds are appropriated, disputed and questioned.

Thirdly, the protagonist who takes the road of adventure initially because of his/her dissatisfaction with the home is confronted with the reality that his/her frustrations and aspirations do not end with his/her journey. In other words, migration is not represented as a solution to a local problem, but as a peephole or a window to global problems. Henceforth, contrary to what some critics claim, the writers of this new *Bildungsroman*, don't just write about a dislocated Self, indeed they write about the world. Rather than looking at their land of origin from the outside alone, the transnational *Bildungsheld* is armed with a "body camera" and "a memory" as he/she journeys through the world, or often times as he/she travels back and forth between the homeland and the host land. What I mean by this image is that the transnational *Bildungsroman* allows penetrating the local that the protagonist transports into the global and witnesses how both respond to each other.

The mobility of the protagonist allows him/her to relate the causes of the departure, questions of integration in the host country, but also to evaluate several types of power relations. Because of the constantly changing décor, the transnational bildungsroman provides insight on a range of issues rarely combined in a single novel of any other kind. In *Chronicles* and *Ventre* for instance, the narratives seem to be well balanced between depictions of local predicaments and commentaries on issues as varied as racism, border control, NGOs, multinational corporations, international organizations and so on. Therefore, the transnational *Bildungsroman* easily accommodates social, political, and economic criticism using a variety of narrative techniques from the most basic to the most allegorical, it can be considered as multifaceted and eclectic in nature.

This inclusive and dialectic potential aligns the transnational *Bildungsroman* with what Cazenave conceptualizes as World Literature. This concept refers to the writing by the new generation of authors who explore the complex thematic of "Here and There," or maybe "Neither Here nor There."[76] The *Bildungsroman* born from the literary production of this new generation of postcolonial writers articulates identities within and beyond national boundaries, and represents subjectivity as a result of multiple connections. This type of narratives reflects hybrid subjectivities that are built around the idea of the existence of an alternative world, a second choice, and the growing transition from the concept of "Either Here or There" toward two other concepts of equal complexity i.e "Neither Here nor There" and "Both Here and There." To put it differently, by assuming multiple identities and rejecting any sort of provincialism there is a disruption of the notion of cultural superiority, legitimacy or hierarchy. Hence, these texts, as much as the

[76] (…) l'écriture de cette nouvelle génération (…) et son exploration complexe d'une thématique d'ici et de là-bas (ou peut-être, ni d'ici ni là) (*Cazenave*, 25).

identity of the protagonist that they depict, illustrate a worldwide phenomenon that consists in challenging norms.

At a formal level, by fictionalizing multiple connections the transnational *Bildungsroman* represents a narrative that challenges the narrative structure and meaning of the classic bildungsroman. Since the notion of center and periphery are contested, reconciliation and integration that defined the traditional *Bildungsroman* become virtually impossible. Such a perspective raises connotations of speculative narratives. In other words, the *Bildungsroman* becomes an avant-garde narrative with an attempt to make the impossible possible. This vision allows contrasting the traditional *Bildungsheld* who grows into maturity by accepting the codes and values of their group with a different set of protagonists who never grow up, and others who outgrow the world.

The first case refers to protagonists whose trajectory is spiral or open-ended rather than circular. Their journey of education leads them back to their homes only to face new frustrations and new challenges. Henceforth, the return to the home represents a fresh start for another quest of self and home. The failure to come to terms with the norms of society or to rise to the expectations of their social groups could be figuratively interpreted as lack of growth. This perspective relies on the idea that maturity in the classic *Bildungsroman* is associated with integration and role taking. Therefore, perpetual quest of the Self, and the inaptitude to reintegrate the group or to adopt the monolithic norms of society could be interpreted from a conservative point of view as narcissist and egocentric. Such a personality type can be attributed to immaturity or emotional disorder.

Elvis in *Graceland* and Sophie in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* are good examples of this type of protagonist. In both novels the protagonist neither withdraws nor rebels.

Rather, he/she is up to a new quest that the reader is invited to imagine beyond the ending. Such an ending lends itself well to the writing of sequels, which is a clear indication of an incomplete growth. For Sophie, Martine's death seems to function as a rite of passage, therefore a starting point of her real adventure through the world. However, the symbolism of the ending suggests a battle that starts at the sugarcane field. This non-social space, which is in reality a site of production symbolizes oppression and exploitation for Sophie's family. Henceforth, Sophie's attack of the sugarcane stalks with bare hands indicates that she is not ready to make concessions despite the fact that she is not culturally and intellectually well equipped to confront reality.

On the other hand, the fact that Elvis's story ends when he is about to leave represents a more patent illustration of the idea of the protagonist who does not grow. The airport where he is waiting for boarding represents a connecting point of multiple cultural entities, and also symbolizes one instant in the ongoing journey. It serves as a good metaphor for the idea of the end as a fresh start, given the fact that at the airport, neither boarding nor landing is synonymous with the end of a journey. Moreover, there is reversal of the classic pattern of the *Bildungsroman* when the return is not even envisioned. Elvis's lack of growth is all the more true that he is still uncertain about himself and his plan. Better still, the fact that he never gets a chance to have direct encounter with the object of his childhood fantasy indicates that awakening in the traditional sense of the word does not actually occur.

The second type of dénouement concerns Salie and Mugezi who seem to be more culturally and intellectually equipped. Their agenda for social justice seems to be too surrealist for a world that still carries some relics of the past. In that regard, Salie's

growth rather than ending with her failure to integrate her community in Niodior, is extended into the coming of age of Salie the writer. In other words, her search for Self is extended through her writing. In the final chapter of *Ventre*, Salie's continued quest is indicated through the repetition of the phrase "Je cherche mon pays…," "I seek my country…" It can be inferred from this that her country is neither her country of origin nor her country of adoption or any other country she knows of. The description she makes of her imagined country as one where "the fragmentation of identity blurs", "where they appreciate people with complex identities", "where there is no need to disentangle their various strands" (*Belly*, 183) clearly corresponds to "no-place" in this world where skin color and passports still play a significant role in people's mobility. Obviously, pessimistic but neither defeatist or fatalistic, Salie continues the quest of her selfhood and seeks to make the impossible possible. Unlike Sophie or Elvis, she seems to have a clear picture of the world she is seeking, even though it belongs to an imagined realm. She uses the metaphor of the mauve color in order to detach herself from the distinctiveness of the French and Senegalese tricolor flags, and to celebrate at the same time mingling and métissage. Such a sense of social justice clearly transcends the reality of the world her protagonist lives in.

Similarly, Mugezi's conception of a borderless world that transcends racial prejudice and national affiliation simply derives from his sense of wonder. As an individual, his incarnation of such idealistic values marks him as the odd one. Thus, he becomes the eulogist of a type of freedom, justice and social integrity that the world in general, and fortress Europe in particular, is not ready to accommodate. With such idealism and inclination to bend the way of the world, and not to bend to it, Mugezi

becomes the prototype of the protagonist who outgrows the world. His attitude as an uncompromising challenger is persistent through his defiance towards his parents, the Seminar and his encounter with other institutions along his trajectory throughout the novel.

By attempting to challenge reality, many postcolonial coming of age narratives open doors to magical realism and thus, violate the traditional realistic agenda of the *Bildungsroman*. With best sellers, such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Isabelle Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Ben Okri's *The Famished Road,* magical realism has becoming a prominent trend in the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*. The use of fantastic elements into the coming of age story is a narrative strategy that draws attention to the contradictions and the absurdity of the modern world, and suggests resistance by opening doors for "an impossible escape." The fact that the interrogations of the unrepentant protagonist only find answers in the supernatural world, denotes an impasse in the search for selfhood in a world characterized by political and social tensions and contradictions. Therefore, the introduction of supernatural elements serves as a powerful narrative device to point out shortcomings of systems of power in a way that prompts critical reflection toward the emergence of a free and equitable world.

Despite their difference in thematic and narrative structures, the only thing that brings these texts together seems to be the celebration of difference. With the decentered existence of the protagonist, they all account for a condition of fragmentation and advocate a sense of universalism and cosmopolitanism. The identity malaise that characterizes coming of age in the transnational *Bildungsroman* is not presented as an

obstacle to self-development but as a path to a positive look at diversity and mixture. By challenging various systems of power and laying a strong emphasis on hybridity, fragmentation and deterritorialization, these texts make a statement that self-fulfillment and social justice resides in the acceptance of difference and the celebration of interstices.

The transnational *Bildungsroman* contributes a great deal in giving new directions to the postcolonial discourse that gradually privileges the concept of interstitiality to the detriment of the binary approach found in affirmative postcolonialism. It provides increasingly provocative subject matter for this new postcolonial category that emphasizes the collapse of state borders and transculturation, cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, detachment rather than attachment. Therefore, the concept of national culture or the search for cultural roots is receding with the advance of the cultural landslide whereby deracination and blending are celebrated.

Finally, this study has demonstrated the value of a number of theories and concepts including Pratt's "Contact Zone," Appadurai's "New Condition of Neighborliness," Bhabha's "Unhomeliness" and Hall's "incoherent Self." However, with both the local and the world as arenas of the new postcolonial novel, cosmopolitanism understood as a "commitment to a deracinated existence outside the fold of any particular ethnic or cultural community" (Boes, 31) may find its best illustration in the transnational *Bildungsroman*. In addition, Edouard Glissant's theory of the rhizome[77] provides a theoretical framework for the analysis of the universalizing discourse found in the transnational *Bildungsroman*. At present, one nagging question is where does the popularity of the transnational *Bildungsroman* leave national literatures?

[77] Adopted from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

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E D U C A T I O N

YEAR	DEGREES AND QUALIFICATIONS	INSTITUTION
Dec 2016	• PhD Degree	Indiana University, Bloomington
2008	• Senior ESL/ EFL Teacher Certificate	Teachers' Training College (FASTEF), Dakar
2007	• Master's Degree in English Language, Literature and Civilizations of English Speaking Africa	Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar
2003	• Junior ESL/EFL Teacher Certificate	Teachers' Training College (FASTEF), Dakar

W O R K H I S T O R Y

YEAR	POSITION	WORK PLACE	EMPLOYER
2016 (Fall)	• Adjunct Lecturer, Course: *Identity, Community and Social Justice*	Butler University Indianapolis, INDIANA	English Department
2016 (Spring)	• Assistant Instructor, Course: *Science Fiction, Fantasy and the Western Tradition*	Indiana University Bloomington, INDIANA	Department of Comparative Literature
2015 (Fall)	• A.I, Course: *Introduction to Popular Culture*		
2015 (Spring)	• A.I, Course: *Intro to Pop Culture*		

2014 (Spring)	• A.I, Course: *Intro to Pop Culture*		
2013 (Fall)	• A.I, Course: *Intro to Pop Culture*		
2013 (Spring)	• A. I, Course: *Culture and Modern Experience*		
2012 (Fall)	• A. I, Course: *Culture and Modern Experience*		
2010	• Part Time ESP (English for Forestry and Agriculture)	UNIVERSITY OF THIES	SENEGAL'S MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
2009	• Part time ESP (English for Public Health)	UNIVERSITY OF BAMBEY	
2008	Senior ESL/EFL Teacher	BAMBEY HIGH SCHOOL	

A C T I V I T I E S A N D A W A R D S

2016

- "ESL Students in the Mainstream Classroom: Needs, Strengths and Challenges", Workshop for FYS Instructors at Butler University, Nov 2016

- "Engaging the ESL Student in the Writers' Studio: Issues of Motivation, Integration and Feedback", Workshop for BU Writing Tutors, Oct 2016

- Paper Presentation at
  42nd Annual Conference of the
  African Literature Association (ALA),
  April 2016, Atlanta, GA

2015

- Paper Presentation at
  The Indiana University
  Department of French & Italian
  Graduate Student Conference, April 10-11, 2015

2012

- Paper Presentation at
  38 th Annual Conference of the
  African Literature Association (ALA),
  April 2012, Dallas, TX

2011

- Certificate of completion 2011 Fulbright Enrichment Seminar, Greening the Planet: Global Challenges, Local Solutions, April 2011, New York, NY

2010

- Certificate of Completion of Fulbright Pre-Academic Program at Drexel University Philadelphia, PA
  July – Aug 2010

L A N G U A G E S K I L L S

- Fluent in Serer, Wolof, French and English.
- Reading knowledge of Arabic and Russian.