



Family and the Bildungsroman Tradition in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*.

Ima Usen Emmanuel

Department of English

University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State

imaimman@yahoo.com

Abstract

The paper examines family and the bildungsroman process in Maya Angelou's *I know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. The study is carried out mainly through Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytical critical theory. The paper notes that the nuclear family's responsibility at grooming the child (positively or negatively) is a choice, and that bildungsroman is a type of novel that is concerned with education, growth and maturity of a young protagonist from innocence to adulthood. Both protagonists are displaced and estranged from the parents at their pre-Oedipal periods. And because the children did not separate successfully from their primary unity with the parents, they could not initially build self-boundaries and appropriate mental representations. Consequently, Maya and Kambili in *Caged Bird* and *Purple Hibiscus* respectively, became cold, distant and frustrated. They therefore encountered challenges in their new milieus: Maya's natural instinct for a father-figure, at the stage of Oedipus complex lures her into being raped by Mr. Freeman. Kambili on the other hand, goes through introjections; she begins to split her father into binary oppositions of good and evil and not just the aptness she previously envisaged. The ego compels her to flee from the initial relationship with her father that threatened to overwhelm her fragile self-boundaries. Both protagonists are controlled by the id as they yearn for fusion with objects that never fully satisfied their cravings: Maya's desire for sexual intercourse with an adolescent boy results in teenage pregnancy, and similarly, Kambili aspiration to covet, dominate and possess Rev. Father Amadi but for his Priesthood, wrecks her emotionally. Finally both protagonists ruled by the superego and guided by Momma and Auntie Ifeoma, in *Caged Bird* and *Purple Hibiscus*, enter their symbolic orders and pass into adult gender identities to take responsibilities for themselves and within their societies. The paper recommends that the family unit which is the closest of human relationships

should be guarded jealously to forgo divorce and violence, in other to save the future generations from the uncanny and traumatic situations so that children can enter their symbolic orders in peace and harmony and affect humanity optimistically.

Key Words: Id, Ego, Super-ego, Pre-Oedipal periods, Fragile self-boundaries.

Introduction

On my reading through Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (*Caged Bird*), and Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, I realize that the works have so much in common: they have the themes of family and bildungs, both focus on two young strong-willed heroines who have solid relationships with their brothers but from violent nuclear families. The works portray the importance of family and community life, physical and psychological development of the protagonists, written in the tradition of political protest. Equally, the stories are told in the first person point of view and the authors' use simple language in their narrations. With the several journeys from and back home, the protagonists mature to take responsibilities of their worlds respectively. The works vary in settings: while Angelou's is set in towns and cities in the United States of America during the Depression; Adichie's is set in towns and in a village in Nigeria during the civil war. The forms of the novel also differ in the processes of identity formation of the protagonists.

In *Caged Bird*, Maya, the protagonist feels castrated by her nuclear family and the church society in Stamps sets her aside for her ugliness. Kambili the protagonist in *Purple Hibiscus* likewise feels castrated by her father and by society in school where she is known by her mates as a 'backyard snob' (51). Both protagonists suffer from what Gloria Anzaldua calls "homophobia: fear of going home" (890), to meet family members. Maya fears to face her mother: the cause of her trauma and Kimbili prefers to remain in Nsukka rather than go back to their melancholic palace and her obnoxious father. Both Maya and Kambili are caged as Angelou's title suggests, which represents confinement resulting from racism and oppression in *Caged Bird* and oppression and abuse in *Purple Hibiscus*. The "Caged Bird" metaphor also evokes the supposed contradiction of the bird singing in the midst of the struggle, both protagonists work out their identities in the midst of their struggles. Mutually the protagonists move from helpless rage and indignation to forms of subtle resistance, and finally to outright and active protest and self-fulfillment within their families and societies.

The concept of family is very important both in the theological and physical sense. The physical family is the most important building block in the human society and as such, should be nurtured and protected, since it is not an institution designed by man; but created by God for the benefit of man. Basically the family unit comprises the man – as the head of the family, the woman – as a help-mate, not inferior to the man (who are joined together in holy matrimony or joined together by the Native law, customs and traditions of their people, and before witnesses), and they become husband and wife. One of the primary principles of the family unit is a life-time commitment as ordained by God: “God hates divorce between the husband and wife” (Malachi 2:16). God also enjoins children to obey their parents and to honour them and that parents should not provoke (your) children (Ephesians 6: 1-4). Children are gifts from the Lord (Psalm 127:3-5), they should be brought up with integrity. The family therefore should be a place of succor, of rest, of comfort, of care, of healing, of sharing, of bearing each other’s burden, a place of bonding. Sigmund Freud argues that “our mental lives derive largely from biological drives, the highest achievements and ideas of civilization are inseparable from instinctual urges toward pleasure, constancy, and the release of excitation and energy (Bressler:91), as such a child grows and integrates first into the family and then society. But in both texts the nuclear families are places of alienation and fear; families where parents provoke their children and show scant filial relationships, thus both protagonists formative years are dented with one form of mal-adjustments or the other.

Bildungs is the growth process of the child from infancy to adolescence; from inexperience to maturity where he/she can develop self-image and take responsibilities for his/her actions in the light of societal needs. Joseph Buckley says Bildungsroman has its origin from ‘Bildung’ meaning formation and ‘Roman’ meaning novel (12), so it is about the novel of formation. Buckley further structures the growth of the protagonist under four stages:

the protagonist who is adorned with all good qualities leaves home, the different environment creates dilemma in him/her where the growth process is nurtured, his/her growth process is tested by critical conditions and in love affairs and ultimately he/she reaches his/her pinnacle of growth when he/she can take the best decision of life (15).

The two protagonists of *Caged Bird* and *Purple Hibiscus* rightly fit Buckley's description. Maya gains the above experiences in her several movements from home in Long Beach, California, to racist Stamps Arkansas, to St. Louis back to Stamps, to San Francisco, California. Kambili too moves from Enugu to Abba back to Enugu, then to Nsukka back to Enugu then to Nsukka again then back to Enugu. Hagan Lyman says that "Maya's journey is to establish a worthwhile self-concept" (44), the same comment goes for Kambili.

Wikipedia also depicts Bildungsroman as "a novel of formation/education/culture or a novel of coming of age story. ... that focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood (coming of age), in which character change is extremely important." The two novels portray the lives of both protagonists' emotional and ethical growth from childhood to maturity within and outside their respective families and cultures.

Examining the attributes of the female bildungs which is the concern of this paper, Ogaga Okuyade says:

... the realization of the character about her condition, a boundary is created around her to curtail development, the protagonist develops awareness of creating contact with women who help her to achieve self-realization, the protagonist discovers her femininity and finally the protagonist gets her maturity to take her own decisions as her journey of self realization ends (5).

For both protagonists, limiting boundaries are set by their families, but their awareness came in their new environments. Okuyade further avers that "mentoring helps bildungsroman progress as a successful one" (8), Maya in *Caged Bird* surmounts her restrictions through the mentoring and grooming of Momma and in *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili attains maturity under the guardianship of Aunty Ifeoma.

Many researchers have examined both works independently and under numerous topics, but the paper seeks a comparative study of the works under the themes of family and bildungs with a focus on (1) family and children's displacement, (2) challenges and nurturing in their new environment, (3) love, infatuation and societal demands, (4) self-image and self-actualization. The work will be interrogated mainly through Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis as a critical theory. This theory dwells on the

psychological growth of the child from infancy to adulthood guarded by what Freud identifies as the “id, ego and superego.” He classifies “the id as the site of energy of the mind, energy that Freud characterizes as a combination of sexual libido and other instincts, such as aggression, that propels the human organism through life. ... Otherwise uncontrolled and potentially harmful to the biological drive” (Rivkin&Ryan:121), “the rational, logical, waking part of the mind, ego, the superego acts like an internal censor, causing one to make moral judgment in the light of social pleasure. The ego’s job also is to mediate between the instinctual desires of the id and the demands of social pressure issued by the superego” (Bressler:89-90). Freud categorizes the rite of passage from childhood to adult gender identity as Oedipus Complex (Rivkin&Ryan:122). Both protagonists react according to these three levels of the psyche and they go through their rites of passage to attain self-actualization.

Synopsis of the novels

In *Caged Birds* Angelou relays the story of her life from age three to age fifteen and the struggle she faces in a dysfunctional family and in a racist society in the Southern United States. Maya and her brother Bailey four years of age are abandoned by their parents and sent to live with their grandmother (Momma) and the crippled uncle Willie in Stamps, Arkansas. They travel alone and are labeled like baggage (23). This experience haunts them though out their teenage years. Maya is aware of the displacement and she is very pained. She feels forgotten unloved, and unwanted. She lives in a hostile world that defines beauty in terms of whiteness and rejects her simply because she is Black.

Although Momma is relatively wealthy because she owns the general store at the heart of Stamps’ Black community, the town is notoriously racist. The Whites harass the Blacks from time to time. For instance, one of the ‘powhitetrash’ girls, reveals her pubic hair to Momma in a humiliating incident. Momma hides Uncle Willie in a vegetable bin to protect him from Ku Klux Klan raiders. Maya’s name is changed to Mary by a racist employer, a white speaker at her eighth grade graduation ceremony disparages the Black pupils and audience by suggesting that they have limited job opportunities. A white dentist Dr Lincoln, refuses to treat Maya’s rotting tooth, even when Momma reminds him that she loaned him some money during the Depression. The Black community of Stamps enjoys a moment of racial victory when they listen to the radio broadcast of Joe Louis’s championship fight, but generally they feel the heavy weight of racist oppression.

Unexpectedly Daddy Bailey comes to Stamps and takes Maya and Bailey back to their mother in St. Louis, Missouri. At age eight Maya is sexually abused and raped by her mother's boyfriend, Mr. Freeman. He is found guilty during the trial but escapes jail time but is murdered presumably by Maya's uncles. Maya feels guilty and withdraws from everyone but Bailey. Their mother Vivian bundles them back to Stamps. There Maya remains reclusive and mute until she meets Mrs Bertha Flowers, "the aristocrat of Black Stamps (24), who encourages her through books and communication to regain her voice and soul.

To protect her grandchildren from the dangers of racism in Stamps, Momma takes them back to their mother in San Francisco, California. Maya studies dance and drama at California Labour School. She becomes the first Black female streetcar conductor in San Francisco. She visits her father in Southern California and drives a car for the first time when she transports her intoxicated father from an excursion to Mexico. She experiences homelessness for a short time after a fight with her father's girlfriend Dolores. In her final year at High school, she is worried that she might be a lesbian and initiates sexual intercourse with a teenage boy. She becomes pregnant and on the advice of her brother, she conceals the pregnancy from her family until her eighth month in order to graduate from high school. Maya gives birth at the age of fifteen.

The story in Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* narrated by fifteen-year old Kambili Achike recollects the past life of her family in South-Eastern part of Nigeria, during the Nigerian civil war. Kambili's world is circumscribed by high walls and frangipani trees of her family compound. Her wealthy catholic father Eugene Achike, under whose shadows, the whole household wallows, while generous and politically active in the community, is fanatically religious and repressive at home. He imposes his extreme and confused religious dogmas on them. He condemns the military dictatorship in his 'The Standard Newspaper' but he brings gruesome violence on his family: he frequently brutalizes his wife Beatrice causing the loss of two pregnancies and she is almost always nursing a black eye or one bruise or the other. As a consequence she mopes around the house with vacant eyes "like the eyes of those mad people who wandered around the roadside garbage dumps in town ..." (34). Unwittingly she ends up polishing lifeless figurines to handle her pains, subjugations and humiliations. Eugene kicks Kambili into stupor for being in possession of her grandfather Pa Nnukwu's image and he deforms Jaja's fingers for not coming first in catechism's class. He ritually pours boiling water on Kambili and Jaja's feet inside a bathtub for

inadvertently sleeping under the same roof with a “heathen”, his father who lives in rags and tatters. He seeks to impose his draconian rules and regulations on his sister Auntie Ifeoma a widow, and a University Lecturer, who is hard on cash (because of the industrial action by the students for University authorities’ mismanagement and fraud), before fulfilling his promise of buying her a car or assisting her with material and financial resources.

Auntie Ifeoma invites Kambili and Jaja to Nsukka where she lives with her three children Amaka, Obiora and Chima. Kambili and Jaja breathe an air of relieve from the suffocating atmosphere of their home where they are governed by time-table and morbid silence. Though Auntie Ifeoma lives in a small apartment, it resounds with chatter and laughter as compared to Eugene’s lifeless castle. The relaxed environment offers Kambili and Jaja an alternative model to that of fear and anxiety that pervade theirs. Here they experience a new sense of serenity, symbolized by Auntie Ifeoma’s experimental hybrid purple hibiscus “rare, fragrant with the undertones of freedom” (16). Beatrice poisons Eugene, to put an end to his colonial brutality, but Jaja takes on the blame and goes to prison on her behalf, since he has grown to the realization that he should shoulder the responsibility of his family as his cousin Obiora does. Kambili matures from an introverted acquiescent girl to a more self-assured young woman, planning the future of the whole family.

Family and children displacement

The nuclear family which should be a place of succor is a reverse in *Caged Bird*, where the innocent and naive children are assaulted and thrust out of the family to a different environment. Maya and her brother Bailey are caught in the cross-fires between their parents’ separation and divorce. They travel alone and are labeled like baggage (23), Maya is devastated. This ugly experience is stored up in the unconscious or the id. Dolly McPherson believes that the concept of family or what she calls “kinship concerns”, in *Caged Bird* must be understood in the light of the children’s displacement at the beginning of *Caged Birds* (53). McPherson further comments that: “Being sent away from their parents was a psychological rejection, and resulted in a quest for love, acceptance and self-worth for both Maya and Bailey” (54). The children suffer from what Freud tags “repression, a repository for all that cannot be expressed or realized in civil life” (Bressler:90). Maya’s father, Bailey (snr) looks on while Maya and Dolores engage in a bloody fight. Maya observes that her father “seem positively

diabolical in his enjoyment of the discomfort" (228). A family is a place of shelter and shielding, and place of peace and rest, but here Daddy Bailey, controlled by his id wears his amused and impenetrable face, watching his daughter whom he invites on holiday being maimed. Eventually when the children returned to their mother Vivian, she is also too tied up in the weave of her own life to pay attention to them, she only notices Maya "out of the corner of her existence" (285). She is too busy making money so much so that she has no time to think about Maya's academic career (265). Under her loose security Maya goes through the trauma of rape, teenage pregnancy, and watches her revolve from one relationship to another. Ruled by the id Vivian again exposes young Maya to the same situation that made room for the child to be raped at age eight: she travels to Alaska "to open a new night club" (286), again Maya becomes vulnerable in the company of another step-father Daddy Clidell.

Also in *Purple Hibiscus*, quiet and obedient Kambili and Jaja are caught in the cross-fires between their father's religious fanaticism and trickles of his insanity as he frequently brutalizes them and panel-beats them into his reality and what he deems religiously and socially appropriate behaviours. At the instance of Auntie Ifeoma Kambili and Jaja are invited to Nsukka and they are relieved of their grave-like home where "the silence was broken only by the whir of the ceiling fan as it sliced through the still air" (7). Commenting on the bildungsroman, Suzanne Harder says: "The hero or heroine is spurred on their journey by some form of discontent which take them at an early stage away from home or family setting" (www.victorianweb.org). Here the two heroines are prompted on their journeys by some forms of discontent, namely divorce and gruesome violence within the two families respectively. In both families the parents are controlled by the id and they cannot take rational decisions concerning their children, their future.

In five years in Stamps Vivian neither wrote or called on the children., Maya who should be enjoying what Freud calls "pleasure principle'- wherein all decisions are based on immediate gratification of pleasure" (Bressler:91), thinks of herself as an orphan. Her feelings for and relationship with her, whom she blames for her desertion, express themselves in ambivalence and "repressed violent aggression" (62). For example the id directs Maya and Bailey to destroy the first Christmas gifts sent by their mother. Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* also shows some signs of aggression when she refuses to pick up her father phone call while in Nsukka. She obstinately disobeys her father's orders to give up Papa Nnukwu's painted image and to get off the floor as her father kicks and brutalize her into unconsciousness. Papa

Nnukwu's image represents her root and culture which her father knowingly denies her. Jaja initiates revolts against his father: he will not come down for his meal or prayers with the other family members; he demands the keys to his room from his father and refuses his father's entry into his room and Kambili concurs. His id spurs him to walk up to his father to inform him of Kambili and his intent to spend their Easter in Nsukka. He says "we are going to Nsukka. Kambili and I. ...We are going to Nsukka today, not tomorrow. If Kevin will not take us, we will still go. We will walk if we have to" (261). Jaja and Kimbili's irrational reactions spring up from the id where the painful memories of many years of their father's spitefulness are stored.

An exemplary family life can be seen in the affiliation based on mutual love, respect, and understanding between Okonkwo and his wife Ekwefi in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. When Chielo the priestess of *Agbala*, comes for Ezinma, Ekwefi's only daughter, Ekwefi courageously follows her in the thick of the night ignoring the inherent dangers and the priestess' admonitions that *Agbala* might strike her in anger: an incident that is likely to also affect Okonkwo and possibly his entire household. Okonkwo is very anxious " ... when Ekwefi had followed the priestess" (80), the maternal and paternal connections move them as Okonkwo too trails the trio with a machete in his hand. The family nurtures, shields, and protects its members.

Challenges of nurturing in a new environment

In *Caged Birds*, Maya learns strength from Momma's reactions to events and situations. Whereas in Maya the id causes her to react to the 'powhitetrash's incident with rage, indignation, humiliation, and helplessness, but through the ego and the super-ego in Momma, Maya learns how her race can maintain their personal dignity and pride while dealing with racism. Pierre Walker calls Momma's way a "Strategy of subtle resistance" (22), and McPherson says it is "the dignified course of silent endurance" (73). Maya also watches Momma's reaction to the white dentist Dr, Lincoln, who once sought and got financial assistance from Momma but will not give some medical treatment to alleviate her grand-daughter's severe toothache. He emphatically declares: "Anie, my policy is I'd rather put my hand in a dog's mouth than in a Niger's" (189). Momma is resolute and extracts extra interest from him on the borrowed money. Oppression and personal history are so interrelated. Maya cries "It seems terribly unfair to have a toothache and a headache and have to bear at the same time the heavy burden of Blackness" (187). The racist doctor operates under his id. He operates under the "object relation theory," which psychoanalysts perceive in pre-Nazi

literature that locates the origins of Nazism in a particular psychological formation that perceived women, communists, and Jews as external equivalents of internal boundary - threatening urges that had to be either violently expelled or regimented" (Rivkin&Ryan:123), he see Blacks as boundary-threats that should be violently excluded or strictly controlled. Similarly, in *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili watches Auntie Ifeoma sit over her household "like a football coach who has done a good job with his team and is satisfied to stand next to the eighteen-yard box and watch" (120-1). She also observes Auntie Ifeoma shun her brother's wealth; she will not bend to his whims and caprices in spite of her lack. Kambili furthermore watches Auntie Ifeoma stand up to, and speak up against the University Authorities for accusing her falsely; Kambili too gathers strength and begins to speak up against evil. For instance, she initially keeps her father's physical abuse cloaked in secrecy but she later admits to the extent of his gruesome maltreatment to Amaka. She constantly yearns for her father's approval and attaches profound importance to being a source of pride to him. She totally identifies with him in every aspect of life. "Identification is known in psycho-analysis as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person" (Rivkin&Ryan:175). Directly linked to this compulsion to please Eugene is the fact that, for a long time Kambili embraces the thought that any standards which are not her father's are invalid. In this respect, Karen Bruce opines that "Kambili has internalized her father's authority to such an extent that it has become an unquestioned part of the way she experiences and interacts with the world" (9). Kambili's deviant behavior can be compared with Auntie Ifeoma's "experimental purple hibiscus: rare fragment with the undertone of freedom, a different kind of freedom ... A freedom to be, to do" (16), she comes to what Freud refers to as "'reality principle'— her moral development and consciousness begin to appear because of the message from the super-ego." (Bressler:91), the process of becoming self-actualized is painful, long and difficult but absolutely necessary, as reflected in the lives of the two protagonists.

In St. Louis Maya in *Caged Bird* faces peculiar challenges within the family which raises issues of trust, truth and love. The naturalness of a child's craving for human contact, language, understanding, and the confusion engendered by the power disparities that necessarily exist between children and adults constantly play up in the family, what Sigmund Freud calls "'Oedipus Complex' – a rite of passage to adult gender identity. Desire for and attachment to the mother or father the boy child and the girl child see both parents as sexual objects, after which he or she identifies with father or mother" (Rivkin&Ryan:122). Mr. Freeman Vivian's live-in man-friend, over-

taken by his id takes advantage of Maya's innocent growth state - Oedipus complex – a wish to identify with a father-figure, but he slowly and knowingly rapes eight year old Maya and threatens to kill Bailey (her object of identification), if she tells anyone about the rape. He escapes jail but he is murdered (presumably by one of Maya's uncles) thus creating the 'uncanny', according to Freud "deamonic," (sic) "gruesome" (Freud:155). Since Maya feels her testimony at the court causes the death of Freeman she sees her words as bringer of death, consequently with the id she says: "I thought if I spoke, my mouth would just issue out something that would kill people, randomly, so it was better not to talk" (82), therefore she speaks to noone other than Bailey for about five years, until she meets Mrs Flowers in Stamps. Thus, Maya suffers feeling of the "'uncanny:' frightening precisely because it is not known or familiar" (Freud:155), this uncanny effect sets her aside from her mother and maternal family and they throw her back to Momma in Stamps. Maya laments the challenges of lack of care:

To be left alone on a tightrope of youthful unknowing is to experience the excruciating beauty of full freedom and the threat of eternal indecision. Few, if any, survive their teens. Most surrender to the vague but murderous pressure of adult conformity. It becomes easier to die and avoid conflicts than to maintain a constant battle with the superior forces of maturity (271).

The youths in this dilemma are victims of dysfunctional families. They are perpetually confronted by the id as they grope for direction. Bailey falls a victim trying to compete with his mother's heroes and friends "who were big men in rackets" (257). In the process he acquires "a withered white prostitute" which brings bitter wrangling between his mother and him. And with aggressive inferiority and arrogance he moves out of the family home at sixteen without the required education to face the excruciating beauty of full freedom and the threat of eternal indecision. Ironically he hands over his books to Maya (261). Maya's ego supports her strong determination to break all restricting traditions and be relevant helps her positive growth. She has come to understand that "life is going to give you just what you put in it" (269), she therefore follows a noble determination to succeed in spite of her challenges.

In *Purple Hibiscus* Kambili is likewise physically and spiritually raped by her father's frequent viciousness so she suffers low self esteem to the extent that she becomes idiotic in her presentations. Prior to their visit to Nsukka, Kambili never laughs except in her dream world where she is startled. She confesses: "... although I was not sure what my laughter sounded like. It was cackling and throaty and enthusiastic like Aunty Ifeoma's" (88), "Laughter floated over my head" (120). Kambili and Jaja are so intimidated that they communicate with their eyes and maintain tomb-like silence at home and everywhere. She comes under the "uncanny - also morbid anxiety - something which ought to have been kept concealed but which has nevertheless come to light" (Freud:163), as she lets the cat out of the bag on her father's frequent assaults and atrocities on all members of the family. At the death of their father the ego and the super-ego bring to her awareness the reality principle, and she is sad. This change in Kambili's life is indeed highly relevant to the analysis of the bildungs' character evolution.

The protagonists' new environments serve as plat-forms for literacy. Both heroines and their families are ruled by their ego and super-ego as they come to know the demands of the social pressure in their recognition of the worth of education. Like Firdaus in Nawal El Sadaawi's *Woman at Point Zero* who says she "developed love for books ... I read about the crimes committed by kings and rulers..." (26), and she becomes very aware of the tyranny of kings and resolves to be mean to the bourgeoisies as they solicit her services. Maya and Kambili develop love for books and education generally as the only way out of oppression, suppression and their dilemmas. Examining bildungsroman, Mary Jane Lupton states that "the term in recent years has been applied to very different novels, but originally met for a novel of formation of character, of an individual personality in interaction (including conflict) in society. It was like the novel "of education (Erziehungsroman) – a sub-genre of the novel of development" - (Entwicklungsroman)" (9). Maya takes to reading William Shakespeare and his works have strong influence on her life, especially his identification with the marginalized people. Maya says she "met and fell in love with William Shakespeare"(89) Angelou believes "Shakespeare was a black woman" (86). She is also influenced by other writers like Edgar Allan Poe Bertha that Flowers induced to her during her self-imposed muteness. Lupton remarks that "Angelou's quest for learning and literacy parallels the central myth of black culture in America" (88). She believes that the myth of freedom and literacy are connected. Mrs Flowers impresses on Maya that "language is man's way of communicating with his fellow man and it is language alone which separates him from the lower animals" (98). Psychoanalysts also agree that "language give us identity"

(Rivkin&Ryan:123). Maya is shaken by the knowledge that it is the human voice that infuses word and gives personality, The “superego moves Maya to her positive end, and the silence begins to lift. Hagen likewise believes “that: Angelou’s years of muteness provided her with this skill” (96), the talent of reading widely.

Mary Vermillion says: “Maya finds novels and their characters complete and meaningful, so she uses them to make sense of her bewildering world. She is so involved in her fantasy world of books that she even uses them as ways to cope with her rape” (91). According to Walker King, “the power of words is another theme that appears repeatedly in *Caged Bird*. For example, Maya chooses not speak after her rape because she is afraid of the destructive power of words but Mrs Flowers, by introducing her to classic literature and poetry, teaches her about the positive power of language and empowers Maya to speak again (91). McPherson states “if there is a one stable element in Angelou’s youth it is {a} dependence upon books” (6). The public library is “quite a refuge” to which Maya retreats when she experiences crisis (91). Lyman Hagen describes Angelou “as a natural storyteller, with an ear for dialogue that reflects someone who is a good listener with a rich oral heritage” (96). Hagen also maintains that:

... Angelou is also powerfully affected by slave narratives, spiritual, poetry and other autobiographies. She read through the Bible twice as a young child, and memorized many passages from it (96).

For a people whose history and future are threatened each day by extinction, they consider knowledge and education as the sole weapons on which to survive and over-come their challenges. Mrs Flowers advises Maya “to be intolerant of ignorance but understanding illiteracy” (161). Maya internalizes the fact that: “it was awful to be Negro and have no control over my life. It was brutal to be young and already trained to sit quietly and listen to charges brought against my color with no chance to defense ...” (180), she prefers dead than be non-literate and her sense of education makes her feel: “loved and respected not as Mrs. Henderson’s grandchild or Bailey’s sister but for just being Marguerite Johnson” (101), intelligent and strong-will. She objects to being defenseless in the face of provocations even many years after slavery.

Additionally, Maya is greatly influenced by African-American spirituality, Momma’s activities in the church community, sermonizing and scripture

reading she first experiences in Stamps. Hagen says that “in addition to being influenced by rich literary form, Angelou has also been influenced by oral traditions. Mrs Flowers encourages her to listen carefully to “Mother Wit” (100), which Hagen defines as the collective wisdom of the African-American community as expressed in folklore and humor” (99). Hagen calls them “a community of song and laughter and courage” (101). The use of African-American oral traditions, in the words of Hagen “creates a sense of community in her readers, and identifies those who belong to it” (103), this gives the people the air of collective identity.

In *Purple Hibiscus* Kambili is as well literate and very clever. She studies at Daughters of Immaculate Heart, Enugu. Rev. Sister Clara her Form-Mistress writes of her: “Kambili is intelligent beyond her years, quiet and responsible. The Principle, Mother Lucy says of her: “A brilliant, obedient student and a daughter to be proud of.” But her father intimidates and harasses her for coming second position in class after three years of consistently coming in the first position, yet the environment at home is hostile and not conducive for learning. She is always absent minded (35). She laments: “The words in my text books kept turning into blood each time I read them,” (35), She is psychologically traumatized since she witnessed her father beat out the unborn child from her mother and dangles her out with blood spilled all over the floor. For her daring to delay the driver a few minutes longer at school, she grieves: “Papa slapped my left and right cheeks at the same time, so his huge palms left parallel marks on my face and ringing in my ears for days” (51). For Kambili, school is a ‘horrid-pleasure.’

Aunty Ifeoma tenderly educates her on domestic chores; such as neat home-keeping and the cooking of different kinds of Igbo traditional delicacies since she is socialized outside such domestic duties in her home. She learns the art of gardening, singing, running, laughing, and speaking: since they speak on purpose at home (120). The young Father, Amadi, a friend of Aunty Ifeoma’s family, is also an agent of goodness in Kambili’s life. He brings her out of her silence. He encourages her to smile, run and sing even to enjoy singing Igbo songs, which mark her journey from silence towards gaining her voice. She now seeks identification with someone else other than her father. From her grand-father Papa Nnukwu, she learns the folklore of her people.

Love, infatuation and societal demands

Buckley asserts that among others the bildungs growth process is tested by critical conditions and in love affairs. The two heroines in this study undergo this critical test or what Freud also refers to as: ‘the uncanny’:

the feeling of doubleness that consists of sense of something strange co-exists with what is most familiar inside ourselves. It also explains why we compulsively repeat certain gestures, desires, experiences and self induced situations that might be quite distressing but also compellingly unavoidable. They are brought by forces and drives within ourselves over which we exercise very little conscious control because they arise from something or somewhere beyond our control – the unconscious (Freud:179).

The compelling force of the uncanny in Maya leads her to believing she is a lesbian, which she equates with being a hermaphrodite (274)). She confides in her mother, who advises her to disabuse her mind of such thoughts. But the instinctual id that strives for immediate satisfaction pushes her on and she becomes pregnant and on the advice of her brother, she lives under cover until after her graduation from high school. She gives birth and begins her own family, which portrays the growth of the bildungs from innocence to age.

In *Purple Hibiscus*, Kambili's sexuality activated through the id impulse, she develops an uncanny feelings towards Father Amadi; she confesses her love for him and seeks identification with him. The super-ego makes him decline with an advice "you are almost sixteen, Kambili. You are beautiful. You will find more love than you will need in a life time" (276). Observing Kambili's display of deep affection for Father Amadi, Amaka teases: ' ... You will join me in agitating for optional celibacy in the priesthood. ... Or maybe fornication should be permitted to all priests once in a while. Say once a month?' (281). The id controls Kambili, having moved her identification from her father to Rev. Father Amadi she seeks to consummate her love for him. The ego deems this sexual desire unacceptable, and suppresses it and deposits it in the unconscious. This repressed feeling of rejection saddens her and she reacts rudely to him. Ultimately, the superego cautions through the ego to id the societal prohibition of such relationships and she enters into what Jacques Lacan calls "the Symbolic Order" (Lacan:184), where she must learn to renounce the imaginary moment of fulfilled desire with the Priest and accept separation; though she carries about the Priest's letters to her but her libido is not patronized or compromised. Both protagonists become obsessed with different men but the ego projects the reality principle expressing the societal demands: for Maya marriage between two teenagers

makes mockery of the institution of marriage, and for Kambili, her union with a Priest will be scandalous.

Positive Self-image and self-actualization:

Buckley believes that ultimately the bildungsroman reaches the pinnacle of growth when he/she can take the best decision of life (10). Both protagonists find their voices and properly integrate into their cultures. Again to Header, the term bildungsroman denotes

a novel of all round self-development. Used generally, it encompasses a few similar genres; the Entwicklungsroman, a story of general growth, rather than self-culture, Erziehungsroman which focuses on training and formal education; and the Kunstleroman about the development of an artist. Most generally the story of a single individual's growth and development within the context of a defined social order. The growth process, at its roots is a quest story, has been described as both an apprenticeship of life and a search for meaningful existence. www.victorianweb.org.

Header's genres: the Entwicklungsroman, Erziehungsroman, Kunstleroman are all applicable to the two protagonist under study. Maya in *Caged Bird* rebuffs the racist habit of renaming African Americans, as shown when Mrs Cullinan insists on calling her "Mary'." Maya understands that she is being insulted and rebels by breaking her favourite dish, but feels vindicated, as she leaves her employer's home, Mrs Cullinan finally gets her name right (57). Angelou describes the employer's renaming as the "hell of horror of being 'called out of one's name" (*Caged Bird*:55). Debra Walker King calls it "a racist insult and an assault against Maya's race and self-image" (56). The renaming emphasizes Maya's feelings of inadequacy and denigrates her identity, individuality, and uniqueness. Her reaction is predicated on her grandmother's strong will-power. Kambili and Jaja in *Purple Hibiscus* remember how their lives changed with the visit to Nsukka. They are awestruck at Auntie Ifeoma's garden especially at the experimental purple hibiscus - that began to lift the silence - the silence which encased the dreadful secrets of

the family's long years of mistreatment. "This entwines the image of purple hibiscus with language, with the finding of a voice out of the silence. This voice is ... the liberation of Kambili, who is silent, or stutters and whispers ..." (Cooper:8), the blossoming of the purple hibiscus also reflects the bloom of the bildungs. Both protagonists having come of age, with would education now write their stories,

Header again asserts that "The process of maturity is long, arduous and gradual consisting of repeated clashes between the protagonist's needs and desires and the views and judgments enforced by an unbending social order (www.victorianweb.org). Again Maya consolidates her identity in the trip to Mexico with her father, when she drives a car for the first time. She defends herself against Dolores' assault and moves in with other homeless at the junk-yard until her mother comes to her rescue. In the junk-yard she learns order and discipline and communalism even from these wretched of the earth, a relationship and experience that erodes her family members. Once more Maya breaks the race barrier to become the first black Streetcar Operator in San Francisco. She is finally "in control of her fate" (59). These incidents are central to Maya's growth and give her knowledge of self-determination and confirm her self-worth.

On self-actualization, Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* who once had speech impediment and intimidated with low self-esteem because of many years of melancholic stillness at home, now feels liberated, rediscovers herself and asserts her individuality. She also learns her native Igbo language thus, setting herself within their culture. As a token of freedom and to replicate the peace in Auntie Ifeoma's home Jaja plants some purple hibiscus in their home in Enugu while Kambili has the incomplete painting of Papa Nnukwu. To Heather Hewett "the picture symbolizes the growth of Kambili's world which includes her grandfather" (5). Kambili's desperation at preserving the image shows her recognition of and integration with her root and culture.

Eventually, the spirit and the values of social order become manifest in the protagonist, who is then accommodated into society. At the end Maya, in *Caged Bird* reassesses herself and her new place in society: she learns that Momma's approach in coping with racism serves as a basis for actively protesting and combating prejudice. Momma is as a realist whose patience, courage, and silence ensure the survival and success of those who come after her (74), is always controlled by the ego. She knows that life gives to you what you put in it. Maya who once wished she were white, now rule by the

ego and super-ego is fully integrated in society. She joyfully says: "I was no longer simply a member of the proud graduating class of 1940; I was a proud member of the wonderful, beautiful Negro race" (184). She feels fulfilled as a mother and with gladness she says of her child: "He was beautiful and mine ... Totally my possession" (288), she is proud of womanhood and motherhood. Unfortunately another dysfunctional family sets in what Freud calls "'Relational dynamics' that assign psychosexual development of children's relations to their mothers in patrocetric cultures, that assign child-rearing work to women" (Rivkin&Ryan:126), since the child has come out of wedlock, the onus falls on Maya for nurture of the child.

Kambili in *Purple Hibiscus* recognizes another kind of silence after the death of Papa – a type of silence "that lets me breathe ... I have nightmares about the other kind, the silence of when Papa was alive" (305). The type of silence during Papa life time sets the household adrift in horror and terror; he was a time-bomb that explodes at the least provocation. Heather Hewett says of Kambili

Her transformation contains more than a share of sadness and the novel ends on a mixed tentative note. Having extricated herself from the trauma of her past, Kambili finally has the strength and self-possession to bear witness to all that has happened. Like Nigeria itself, she now must find her way forward slowly, resolutely, indefatigably into the future (32).

The id once dominated her ego and saw her father to be infallible as Rev. Father Benedict did., but her journey unveils the mask of his tyranny and fundamentalism; that her father is not the guardian of democracy as he professes in his *The Standard Newspaper*, where he criticizes the undemocratic state of affairs in the nation, yet his home represents Nigerian corrupt politics (society), and religion (church) which need immediate reformation. Under Aunty Ifeoma's tutelage, Kambili establishes her humanity. She brings smiles, laughter and fun to the family. She wishes to conquer new heights with the entire family. She expects new rains. Her anticipation of new rains is very symbolic: for cleansing, rejuvenation, revitalization, growth, greenness, fruitfulness, hopefulness, transformation and freshness. She becomes a positive young lady who confidently maps out a future plan for the family that involves sun-shine, travels and cultivation. In Richard Rycman's *Theories of Personality* avers that "the superego is the

construct Freud used to describe the individual's internalization of societal values" (42), for both heroines, these values are instilled in them primarily by their mentors Momma and Aunty Ifeoma who groomed them into appropriate behaviours.

Conclusion

In conclusion, family and bildungsroman tradition as examined in this paper portray the two works as set in the families and written in bildungsroman tradition. As bildungsroman Maya and Kambili in *Caged Bird* and *Purple Hibiscus* respectively, go through the processes of development from childhood to adolescence. Both authors present protagonists who are displaced as they are estranged from their parents at "pre-Oedipal periods" they could not initially build self-boundaries and appropriate mental representations. They therefore encounter some challenges in their new milieus. Both protagonists go through what Freud calls introjections or projection and the splitting between good and bad feelings: Maya projects some violent feelings towards her mother and Kambili, revolts against her father's inherent evil. Both protagonists controlled by the id yearn for fusion with objects that never fully satisfy their yearnings: Maya's craving for sex with another adolescent boy results in teenage pregnancy. On the other hand, Kambili desires to dominate and possess Rev. Father Amadi but for his Priesthood, breaks her heart. Led by the ego and super-ego both heroines appreciate the value of education, Maya goes from being a victim of racism with an inferiority complex to a self-aware individual who responds to racism with dignity and a strong sense of her own identity, she accepts the implications of her pregnancy - and becomes a fulfilled mother at fifteen. Kambili's journey from insecurity to self-worth is gained when she accepts her language and culture. She overcomes her strong sexual emotions for Rev. Father Amadi. She takes charge over her folks and sets forth their holiday plan. Finally both protagonists enter into the symbolic order, and pass into adult gender identities and become self-actualized and take responsibilities within their families and societies.

To scholars who are interested in tracing relationships between African and African-American works, this paper recommends research into the areas of Motherhood, Symbols, Journey Motif as seen in Angelo's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* and Adiechi's *Purple Hibiscus*. Scholars should also analyse these works using other critical approaches..

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