

**FEMALE *BILDUNGSROMAN* IN SELECTED FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN  
WOMEN'S NOVELS**

**BY**

**TITILADE MEDINAT OMOYEMI AHMED  
B.A (Hons), French (Ilorin), M.A French Studies (Ibadan), M.P.A Akungba-Akoko  
Matric No: 141441**

**A Thesis in the Department of European Studies  
Submitted to the Faculty of Arts  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**of the**

**UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN**

**MARCH, 2019**

## **CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this work was carried out by Titilade Medinat Omoyemi AHMED in the Department of European Studies, University of Ibadan, under my supervision.

.....  
**Date**

.....  
**Supervisor**  
**Professor Olalere OLADITAN**  
(BA, PhD (Ibadan) LLB, BL, FCI Arb  
Department of Foreign Languages,  
Obafemi Awolowo University,  
Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to Almighty God, and to those who would transform silence into voice.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank God Almighty for keeping me alive. I sincerely express my profound gratitude to my Supervisor, Professor Olalere Oladitan, for his unfailing support and commitment to this work. I thank him for constantly encouraging me. He patiently provided helpful suggestions and criticisms that helped in shaping and enriching this thesis. The Almighty God will continue to strengthen him. God Almighty will continue to shower his tender mercies on him and his entire family.

I am also indebted to Professor Aduke Adebayo for her wonderful support and encouragement. I remain grateful to her, for her valuable contributions, suggestions and guidance. I pray that God Almighty will give her long life to reap the fruits of her labour.

To Professor Tunde Ayeleru, whose words of encouragement brought me to the University of Ibadan, if not for his advice, I would not have had this opportunity. God Almighty will reward him. Dr. Nwando Babalobi, whose prayers had done wonders in my life, deserves my gratitude. I also appreciate the wonderful assistance of my erudite lecturers and brothers, Prof. R.A. Sanusi and Dr. M.A. Tijani, Dr. Adeyefa, Dr. Eke and Dr. Iyiola, I also express gratitude to all my lecturers and several colleagues in the department for their academic advice and inspiring suggestions. I thank them all for sharing their knowledge with me.

I will not forget M. Bello, who gave me the assurance slogan: 'I can do it'. I remain grateful to M. Jaques Wende for his contributions to my academic progress. I also thank my sisters, Mrs Toluwa Ayeleru, and Mme Comfort Chioma for their wonderful words of encouragement. I also express my appreciation to the innumerable friends and my loving Sister Nike, who assisted, supported and encouraged me.

Words are not enough to express my appreciation to my husband, Dr Ahmed Ilyas Adeagbo, for his financial support, calmness, words of encouragement and constant reassurance that, one day, I would finish. My children, jewels of inestimable value: Temitope, Temitayo and Ayọọmọtọla, their efforts and contributions cannot be quantified towards the realisation of this work. God Almighty will see them through in all their endeavours.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	i
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vi
Abstract	ix
<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 Background to the study: women in African society	1
1.1.1 The status of Algerian women from the colonial period to the post-colonial era	3
1.1.2 The status of Ivorian women from the colonial period to the post-colonial era	8
1.1.3 The status of Senegalese women from the colonial to the post-colonial periods	13
1.2 Definitions of terms	18
1.2.1 Gender	18
1.2.2 Oppression	18
1.2.3 Patriarchy	18
1.2.4 Exile	19
1.2.5 Bildungsroman	19
1.2.6 The genre of female bildungsroman	19
1.3 Statement of the problem	19
1.4 Aim and objectives of the study	19
1.5 Research questions	21
1.6 Significance of the study	21
1.7 Scope of the study	21
1.8 Organisation of the study	22
<b>CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE</b>	
2.1 Women and gender-based oppression	24
2.2 Deconstruction: an overview	27
2.3 The place of the deconstruction in Francophone African women literature	29

2.4	Female writings: deconstructive arms to oppression	41
2.5	The concept of patriarchy	48
2.6	Representation of francophone women in patriarchal society	51

### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

3.1	Methodology	56
3.2	Theoretical framework	57
3.2.1	Historical overview of bildungsroman	59
3.2.2	The genre of female bildungsroman	62
3.2.3	Difference between the male and female bildungsroman	64
3.2.4	Rites of passage in francophone women's novels	65
3.2.5	Diversity of end results	

### **CHAPTER FOUR: SURVIVAL STRATEGIES: THE PROTAGONISTS AS *BILDUNGSROMAN* HEROINES**

4.1	Malika Mokkedem's <i>L'interdite</i>	68
4.1.1	Summary of <i>L'interdite</i>	68
4.1.2	Analysis of <i>L'interdite</i> : Sultana	70
4.1.2.1	Awakening	70
4.1.2.2	Exile	71
4.1.2.3	Education	72
4.1.2.4	Self-discovery	73
4.1.2.5	Career plan	74
4.1.2.6	Self-identity	74
4.1.2.6 (i)	Marriage or love	75
4.1.2.6 (ii)	Religious bigotry	76
4.1.2.6 (iii)	Dress code	77
4.1.2.6 (iv)	Sexuality	78
4.2	Fatou Keita's <i>Rebelle</i>	82
4.2.1	Summary of <i>Rebelle</i>	82
4.2.2	Analysis of <i>Rebelle</i> : Malimouna	83
4.2.2.1	Awakening	83
4.2.2.2	Rites of passage	84
4.2.2.2 (i)	Female genital cutting	84
4.2.2.2 (ii)	Forced marriage	86

4.2.2.2 (iii) Authentication of virginity	86
4.2.2.3 Exile	88
4.2.2.4 Love or marriage	89
4.2.2.5 Self-identity	93
4.2.2.6 Education	93
4.2.2.7 Self-discovery	94
4.2.2.8 Career plan	94
4.3 Khady's Mutilée	99
4.3.1 Summary of <i>Mutilée</i>	99
4.3.2 Analysis of <i>Mutilée</i> : Khady	101
4.3.2.1 Awakening	101
4.3.2.2 Rites of passage	102
4.3.2.2 (i) Female genital cutting	102
4.3.2.2 (ii) Forced marriage	104
4.3.2.2 (iii) A knock on the head	106
4.3.2.2 (iv) Authentication of virginity	107
4.3.2.3 Self-identity	109
4.3.2.3 (i) Marriage	110
4.3.2.3 (ii) Sexuality	111
4.3.2.3 (iii) Polygamy	113
4.3.2.4 Self-discovery	117
4.3.2.5 Career plan	117
4.3.2.6 Role model or mentor	119
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: EPIPHANY: WOMEN'S SECOND CHANCE STRUGGLES, WITH LARGER VICTORIES</b>	
5.1 Aminata Sow Fall's <i>Douceurs du bercail</i>	126
5.1.1 Summary of <i>Douceurs du bercail</i>	126
5.1.2 Analysis of <i>Douceurs du bercail</i> : Asta Diop	127
5.1.2.1 Awakening	129
5.1.2.1 (i) Racial discrimination	129
5.1.2.1 (ii) The female body	132
5.1.2.2 Self-identity	135
5.1.2.3 Marriage	135

5.1.2.3	Education	140
5.1.2.4	Self-discovery	141
5.1.2.5	Career plan	142
5.2	Regina Yaou's <i>Le prix de la révolte</i>	146
5.2.1	Summary of <i>Le prix de la révolte</i>	146
5.2.2	Analysis of <i>Le prix de la révolte: Affiba</i>	147
5.2.2.1	Awakening	147
5.2.2.1 (i)	Widowhood practice	147
5.2.2.1 (ii)	Inheritance	149
5.2.2.2	Self-identity	150
5.2.2.3	Polygamy	153
5.2.2.4	Education	154
5.2.2.5	Self-discovery	156
5.2.2.6	Career plan	157
5.2.3.	The world of harmony	160
<b>CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION: RESISTANCE TO AND VICTORY OVER OPPRESSION</b>		162
<b>References</b>		174



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

**1.0** Chapter one comprises the background to the study, it includes the definitions of terms, statement of problem, aims and objectives, research questions and the significance of the study. This Chapter also includes the scope and organisation of study.

### **1.1 Background to the study: women in African society**

The problems of women's oppression and subordination have been underscored as the major preoccupation of African women's literary works in the last few decades. Female writers believe that African women are subjected to control, domination and humiliation of colonial policies, traditions and socio-cultural myths in their societies. From the foregoing, Francophone African women writers are preoccupied in the 21st century to redeem the dignity of African women that had been reduced to servitude status from colonial to post-colonial times. It is therefore deducible, that, the reason why Francophone African women novelists consciously still write to interrogate colonialism and racial prejudices against African people in the contemporary era.

African literary works of the colonial era were certainly engrossed with racial apartheid and discrimination, which Francophone male writers, such as Sembène Ousmane, Ferdinand Oyono and Camara Layé among, others deal with in order to restore the dignity of the Black race. Thus, the theme of colonialism is still cyclical, and that is the focal point of contemporary female writers that is represented in their literary works. The revelation of colonialism and racial prejudices in post-independence African literature is to conscientise the African race about their cultural identity. Writers like Aminata Sow Fall, Malika Mokkedem and Fatou Kéïta foreground the recurring themes of colonisation and racial discrimination in their post-colonial literary works.

The general consensus on the status of African women is complicated owing to different cultures and ethnicities among others. Thus, this Chapter investigates the status of Francophone African women with specific reference to Algeria (North Africa), Ivory Coast and Senegal (West Africa) respectively. The roles and positions of the Francophone African women from colonial period to the 21st century are examined. The three purposively selected countries share similar variables, especially the colonial invasion which has gone a long way in influencing their ways of life.

Critics, especially feminist writers globally, have argued the causes of female oppression in Africa, tracing it to tradition, male chauvinism and restrictions that colonisation placed on women. This is aptly put by Ogundipe-Leslie, (1994:30):

The colonial systems negatively encouraged the traditional ideologies [...] of male superiority which originally existed in African societies. Thus, colonialism has brought out the basic sexist tendencies in pre-capitalist Africa.

Colonialists, rather than destroying indigenous African male authority entirely, strategically maintained some semblance of law and order by allowing African men to retain varying degrees of authority in their homes and villages. (Schmidt 1991:732-756)

Thus, Ogundipe-Leslie's assertion strongly suggests that the male dominance which had been in existence for a long time was encouraged by the colonialists, arguing that, the colonialists built their systems on African men's hegemony and marginalised womenfolk. Consequently, by their reasoning, women were restricted to the home front to engage in childrearing and other domestic chores. Thus, African societies in comparison with the Europeans, considered women as subordinates because women were viewed as being "unable to hold positions of responsibility". (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994:30).

As products of Victorian mores, "Most European men did not view women of any race as equal to men". (Schmidt 1991: *ibid*). This was because of the social hierarchy created during the Victorian period where men were regarded as superiors and women as subordinates in the household. "Thus, their racial bigotry only compounded their low opinion of African women as they quickly replaced African versions of patriarchy with their own". (White, 2008:144). Studies of the colonial era have revealed that the economic and political policies made by colonial administrators did not favour women. This is because the quintessence of colonial administration was twisted to suit the status of men in the society politically, economically, educationally, socially and culturally. Ogundipe-Leslie (1994:29), further substantiated the oppressed condition of women during the colonial era in her seminal book, *Re-creating ourselves: African Women & Critical Transformations*. She averred that:

Women in the labour process became the "proletariat" of the proletariats, becoming more subordinated in the new socio-economic scheme and often losing their old and meaningful roles within the older production processes. Women became more marginalized in the production process, for the cash crops became the main crop leading to new economic arrangements between men/women and new attitudes of male social and economic superiority. These economic changes in Africa, following the intrusion of the West, were extricably linked to political changes in the society, which again affected cultural attitudes towards women.

To buttress Ogundipe-Leslie's assertion, African women had been active before the advent of colonialism, but the arrival of colonial administrators put women's rights in total disarray because gender inequity became well defined during the era of colonialism. Consequently, women could not enjoy their commercial autonomy with the emergence of cash crops. This economic disruption in Africa led women to be marginalised and eliminated from the international market scene.

### **1.1.1 The status of Algerian women from colonial period to postcolonial era**

Algeria is the second largest Francophone country in the world in terms of French speakers. (Senat.fr, 2006: par. 1). The country is situated among the Maghrebian countries, (Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya) in the Arab world. The original citizens of Algeria are the Berbers and the society is highly influenced by Islamic patriarchal laws. In spite of this, Algeria was deeply affected by one hundred and thirty years of French colonial rule. (Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, 2017)

In 1830, Algeria was captured and colonised by the French, and ruled as part of metropolitan France from 1848 to 1962. Algeria resisted the French colonisers in a war between 1954 and 1962. This war of independence claimed the lives of up to 1.5 million people. From independence in 1962 until the late 1980's, Algeria was a one-party socialist state run by the National Liberation Front (FLN). (UK Border Agency, 2011:13)

History submits that, the coming of colonisers to Algeria was premised on a 'civilisation' mission (Ruedy, 2005:103). Africans generally believe that the rationale behind the coming of the French was solely for economic and political motives. The French saw Algerian culture as conservative and barbaric, specifically the ingrained chauvinistic nature against women. This prejudice made Algerian women to have limited rights. A right to education, right to work and voting rights. Owing to this, the colonial government sought to convert Algerian women to Western culture, believing that the appeal of Western-style reforms could win their support. (Macmaster, 2007:96).

As a result of the foregoing, the colonisers targeted Algerian women in order to undermine veiling which they viewed as a symbol of national and religious beliefs. Also, women were perceived as victims of patriarchy and Islamic laws; powerless and subordinated; hence, the liberation from veiling, seclusion, forced marriage and divorce rights. All these factors were regarded as devious strategies of penetration because a veiled

Algerian woman, according to the colonialists was passive and marginalised, and the veil symbolised caging within Algerian society.

Historically, the colonial rule was characterised by violence, dominance and mutual blankness between the colonisers and Algerian citizens. These factors made Algerian women to use their veils as a symbol of resistance to save their sons and husbands from the afflictions and tortures of the French colonial armies. As a consequence of this resistance, the colonialists determined to unveil Algerian women. This is revealed by Fanon, (1967:37-38),

If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and in the houses where the men keep them out of sight.

Prior to the colonial war in 1954, few Algerian women could read and write. According to Mansouri-Acherar, (2000:163),

Only 4.5 percent of Algerian women knew how to read and write. Just 3 percent were employed outside the home and only 16 percent of Algerian women above 15 were unmarried. There were 503 non-European Algerian students at Algiers University, 22 of them female.

The above position shows that before the war, Algerian women were predominantly illiterate Muslims, relegated to a subaltern position, which is a signal to all other disparities.

During the war of independence, according to Thursen, (2002:890), Algerian women played enormous roles. They acted as combatants, spies, fundraisers, as well as nurses, launderers, and cooks. Algerian women also assisted the male fighting forces in areas such as transportation, communication and administration (Degroot and Peniston-Bird 2000:223). They used western kits like strollers, or baby carriage and handbags to conceal explosive weapons.

According to Kuhlman (2002:176), Djamilia Bouhired was a notable female Algerian radical and nationalist who opposed French colonial rule of Algeria in the 1960s. Bouhired was a student activist and a member of the National Liberation Front (NFL). Her activism started when she was attending a French school. The motto of Algerian students then was “France is our mother” but, to Bouhired, it was “Algeria is our mother”. This maxim is contrary to French rule. In July 1957, Bouhired bombed a café in France, was found guilty and imprisoned. Macmaster (2009:318), also reveals the immense contribution of Djamilia Boupacha and Djamilia Bouhired during the ‘Battle of Algiers’ which occurred in 1957.

Boupacha and Bouhired had never worn the traditional veil. The desire to pull off their veils was to be a target of French male lust. Rohloff, (2012 :5) posits that the act of uncovering their bodies was used as a tactic to smuggle military ammunitions (Rohloff, 2012: 5). However, Djamila Boupacha like her sister was captured by the French police and was raped with “a broken wine bottle”. Subsequently, after terrible tortures, these women were released under international pressures from human rights groups and French intellectuals.

During the national struggle for independence, Algerian women were wholeheartedly committed to resist colonial subjugation and the restrictive tactics of traditional Algerian society. Algerian women acted as messengers underground cajoling French colonialists as supporters. Her “unveiling” was, according to the coloniser, a sign of liberty and modernity – a sign of her independence and equality, for her own good. More significantly, the unveiling represents the affirmation of a colonial system (Fanon, 1965: 42). France fashioned the ‘unveiling’ of Algerian women as an excuse to maintain its colonial rule.

Algerian men and women were equal in their various contributions to the fate of the nation. Fanon (1967:66) avers:

[R]evolutionary war is not a war of men ...The Algerian woman is at the heart of the combat. Arrested, tortured, raped, shot down, she testifies to the violence of the occupier and his inhumanity.

Aicha Bouazzar cited in Rohloff (2012:5), explains how she was mandated to care for the wounded but was also given a “big Italian machine gun.” Women were in charge of weapons, such as bombs and other military ammunitions. The collective action during the struggle for independence, which unified Algerian men and women, weakened the perceived gender inequality between them. Consequently, there was no gender discrimination. The Algerian collective efforts of both men and women against France accentuated the courage of Algerian women who fought hard alongside Algerian men. During the struggle for independence, Algerian women were fortified in the country’s sociopolitical background. From the testimonies given by some Algerian women themselves, it is obvious that gender parity was cemented between men and women during the colonial period. For instance, Houria, a moudjahidate (a volunteer female freedom fighter) explains that during the war, there was a total respect between men and women, there was unity and women were highly respected. (Moghadam, 1994: 28). One Mujahida (a warrior) whose identity is not known in Moghadam’s work also corroborates the non-discrimination of women during the war of independence: “we were all equal in the war” (*ibid*: 28). During the revolution, it was revealed that women “forgot about domestic duties and there was less expectation from men that women perform their traditional tasks.”

Shaaban, (1988: 186). The revolutionary war created a harmonious relationship between Algerian men and women, with the result that it “did not matter who did what; we [men and women] were all the servants of the revolution which was going to liberate us and restore our identity” (*Ibid*:186). This declaration testified to gender equality in Algeria. Women’s status changed consequent to their participation in the war of independence.

After independence, the struggle for gender equality became the crucial issue of women’s movement in Algeria because of the influence of Islamic fundamentalists. Women were relegated to their domestic roles by successive post-independence governments. This action was officially justified because women were seen as the custodian of Islamic and traditional values. Algerian women are expected to fulfill the wife and motherhood roles. The enactment of the family code, based on Sharia, restricted their roles. Thus, after the war of independence, women represented only 7% of the Algerian labour force. This exploitation was expoused by Degroot and Peniston-Bird (2000: 244), thus:

It is forbidden to recruit djoundiates [female soldiers] and nurses without the zone’s authorization. In independent Algeria, the Muslim woman’s freedom stops at the door of her home. Woman will never be equal to man.

Islamic fundamentalists placed restrictions on Algerian women because the freedom and independence that women gained were seen as an obstacle to Algerian culture and society. The exposition of Gentry and Sjoberg (2011:43), equally confirms the stereotyped roles of Algerian women:

Women in Algeria, regardless of their involvement and contributions to the conflict, nevertheless remained in their pre-war subservient position afterward as a result of the prevailing societal, religious, and cultural conditions.

In other words, after the colonial war, Algerian women lost their autonomy. The prospective socialist society to be formed promised Algerian women political participation and equity in Algerian society. On the contrary, the Islamic fundamentalists instituted a Family Code, which established the unequal status of Algerian women in matters of personal autonomy, legalised polygamy and divorce. The code also retained unequal inheritance between women and men, and it legally empowered men over women. In short, women’s rights were severely limited by family codes, which were based on Sharia Islamic law. There were series of protests by Algerian women but the introduction of Family Code expunged the autonomous experience which Algerian women enjoyed during the war of independence. Algerian women were frustrated because their hopes and aspirations were jeopardised.

The role of the entire set of articles in the Family Code places the woman in a subordinate position. In the area of governance, under Ben Bella military regime in 1965, no female members were elected, but they were allowed to propose resolutions before the assembly. In the early post-independence years, no woman was allowed to take part in the key decision-making bodies, but nine women were elected to the People National Assembly (APN) when it was reinstated in 1976. As early as 1967, ninety-nine female candidates were elected to communal assemblies (out of 10,852 positions nationwide) (Mongabay.com). Olivia, (2000), however affirms that, by the late 1980's, "the number of women in provincial and local assemblies had risen to almost 300". In addition, contemporary Algerian women challenge the traditional mores by getting jobs but their wages are being controlled by their husbands. This is established by *Vanguard*, (March 25, 2017):

Female employment rose from 10.2 percent in 2005 to 13.6 by 2015, with around two million Algerian women now in work, alongside just under nine million men. "If a wife refuses to let her husband control her wages, she is forced to stay at home or even face divorce proceedings — a source of shame in the conservative country.

This barbaric tradition allows divorce to be so rampant in Algeria:

The number of divorces almost doubled from 34,000 in 2007 to around 60,000 in 2014. Financial disputes, particularly over control of wives' salaries, are behind the rise. (*Ibid*)

The oppression of women in the Algerian society persisted for decades until the reform of 2005, when President Abdelaziz Bouteflika initiated a partial reform of the 1984 Family Code, which significantly improved the position of women in the society. As stated by Irving (2017:151), in Article 29 of the Constitution of Algeria: "All citizens are equal before the law. No discrimination shall prevail because of birth, race, sex, opinion or any other personal or social condition or circumstance." Gray (2009:16), adds that, the reform strengthens the position of divorced women with children, outlawing forced arranged marriages and requires that polygamy be consented to by the first wife. The reform establishes that women are no longer legally required to be obedient to their husbands.

Today, Algeria is still in a state of turmoil as government policies continue to clash with Islamic militants. It is obvious that the status of women is determined by the interpretation of the Sharia laws coupled with Family Code. Through the experiences of Algerian women, one can presume that the society is misogynistic in nature. This is explicitly declared by the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) leader, Ali Ben Hadj (1989) quoted by Slyomovics (1995) in the Middle East Report:

The natural place of expression for women is the home. If she must go out, there are conditions: not to be near men and that her work is located in an exclusively feminine milieu. In our institutions and universities, is it admissible to authorize mixing? It is contrary to Islamic morality. It is necessary to separate girls and boys and consecrate establishments for each sex.... In a real Islamic society, the woman is not destined to work and the head of state must provide her with remuneration. In this way, she will not leave her home and consecrate herself to the education of men. The woman is a producer of men, she produces no material goods but this essential thing which is the Muslim.

It could be deduced from the statement of FIS leader that sex segregation is ravaging. Social interaction between a man and a woman is a taboo. This means that Algerian women are in serious bondage of the Islamic extremists. Women are beclouded with fear because everything about them is under censorship. The veil is mandatory while unveiling is a suicide syndrome in Algeria. Thus, the Algerian society is religiously, politically, socially and economically patriarchal. All these factors are responsible for women's discriminated and subordinated status. Having fore knowledge of the Algerian women's status and condition, would help our understanding in the analysis of the selected texts by the Algerian female writer.

### **1.1.2 The status of Ivorian women from colonial period to postcolonial era**

Ivory Coast was under the French colonial rule from 1843 until when the country attained her independence in 1960. The traditional Ivorian society is said to be characterised by communal efforts, balancing roles and cross-gender teamwork. The introduction of cash crops, land encroachment and the colonial legislation changed the social roles of Ivorian women and this relegated their socio-economic status. By virtue of this position, women were excluded from all the significant posts they had attained prior to the colonial period. Such roles included members of king makers, clan chiefs and war leaders.

An instance of the leadership role of Ivorian women in Ivorian indigenous society was clarified by N'dris Thérèse (1996). She makes a specific reference to a notable woman who held economic and political powers, which equaled to her male counterparts. According to Thérèse, Queen Abla Pokou of Baoulé tribe in Ivory Coast who hailed from Kumasi in Ghana became the leader of a Separatist Group of Ashanti confederacy during a war in Ghana (King Adele, 2004: 10). The Queen with her followers were forcefully carved out from Ashanti tribe and moved to the north-central region of today's Ivory Coast. Like



Queen *Morèmi* of *Ilé-Ifè* who used her child, *Olúorogbo*, as a sacrificial lamb to *Esìnmirìn* in order to win a war, Queen Pokou of Baoulé tribe used her only child as a sacrifice to River Comoe in order to overpass the water and to liberate her people. She threw the child into the river and shouted "*Ba ouli*", meaning "the child is dead". This was the origin of their tribal name, Baoulé. (Jackson, 2005: 23-25). After the rituals, Hippopotamuses suddenly appeared and partitioned River Comoe, which facilitated the crossing over of Pokou and her people. (Hamilton, 2004:23). The Baoulé people remain the largest tribe in Ivory Coast till today.

The colonial control of women economically rendered Ivorian women as subordinates, with the misconception that women should be confined to the matrimonial home. Thus, Ivorian women became victims of double jeopardy. First, the colonisers initiated the colonial powers against them, and second, men's capabilities for work altered existing economic and social institutions. Ivorian women's role in public sphere was limited. From historical perspective, colonial period instigated division of labour between men and women owing to the cotton plantation system. This brought about the introduction of wage and labour as men were hired by the colonialists to work in the plantations.

Jean (1971: 253-256), posits that men were engaged by the colonialists from days to months, pressing them into cotton work for years. The process of taking men out of their communities had adverse effects on women. This is because women were forced to provide for their communities. Similarly, a number of women were drafted into the French labour schemes, and as women were participating in plantation work, their wages were received by their husbands or fathers subjecting them to dependence status while colonialism empowered Ivorian men to the detriment of their female counterparts.

In addition to robbing women of their traditional status within their society, the introduction of slave trade and the beginning of the direct colonial policies (tax and labour force) in the 19th century worsened the status of Ivorian women. During slave trade, some women were killed, maimed and rendered homeless because of warfare. The enslaved women were separated from their families and transported to America in ruthless circumstances. These issues brought general dislocation and mass movements, especially in the southern forest zones of West Africa, where the French had wreaked havoc on people in the 1860s–90s. Ivorian women were dominated by the colonisers, because they took total control of their agricultural products.

Ivorian women protested against colonial rules and policies. They wanted themselves and their men to be free from the captivity of the Europeans and this led to the

first women political activism after the Second World War. One of the notable women who protested against labour and colonial rules in Ivory Coast was Célestine Quezzin Coulibaly, she was a formidable anti-colonial leader that organised Ivorians and burkinabées women and formed the “Rassemblement Démocratique Africain” (African Democratic Rally) in Ivory Coast. Coulibaly was made the General Secretary of the women’s wing in 1948 (Sheldon, 2005: 191).

In 1949, Célestine Coulibaly organised Ivorian women under the auspices of Parti Démocratique de Côte d’Ivoire (PDCI), (Democratic Party of Ivory Coast) when colonial authority imprisoned their husbands and leaders. They protested by marching on Grand Bassam prison in the South-Eastern part of Ivory Coast (24 December, 1949) to liberate their husbands and secure the release of their leaders; thereby resisting colonial ideologies. Women were regarded as victims of colonial oppression but history still chronicled them as the central pivots of their communities. Bonnie (2008: 51-52) maintains that:

Five hundred Ivorian women staged a dramatic march filled with songs and dance, travelling the thirty miles from the city to prison. The women were attacked by French colonial troops, who injured forty women and arrested four of them.

The educational status of Ivorian women during the colonial era was not impressive because education of males was paramount to the colonial government (Clignet and Foster, 1977). The women were marginalised as attention was focused on the education of the sons of local tribal chiefs who were carefully chosen for secondary education in Ivory Coast. The sons of the local tribal chiefs were later sent to France on scholarships for their university training. This was because “educated male elites would serve a key role in the administration of French colonies” (Griffiths, 2002:242).

Colonial government had an alternative set up for women which was called an *école de maison indigène* (school for the native household). This education was centred on the teaching of modern hygiene and childcare to prospective mothers. These colonial policies and programmes further facilitated the marginalisation and subordination of African women. African traditions that empowered women were deliberately destroyed by the colonisers’ policies. In addition, the colonial policies system barred women from the cash economy, and thereby, introduced the gender-based economic system which promoted gender inequality in Ivory Coast and the entire Africa. Thus, colonial legislation and policies coupled with socio-cultural rules continued to restrict women’s participation and contributions to economic development during the colonial era.

The involvement of West African women in the anti-colonial struggle helped to achieve independence and later brought francophone women into social, political and economic prominence. Aoua Kéïta and Célestine Coulibaly were among the notable women that contributed immensely to the struggle for independence and to end colonialism in Africa. However, all their efforts did not eliminate oppression of women in African society. This was occasioned by the fact that African beliefs of male dominance were strengthened by colonialism and patriarchal notions of women as second class citizens are still the order of the day.

In 1961, Celestine Coulibaly brought Ivorian and Burkinabe women together with the name “Rassemblement Démocratique Africain” (African Democratic Rally) to denounce and reject the inferior status levelled against women. She put up an article in “Carrefour Africain” on 10th November, 1961 where she declared:

We, women of the Upper Volta...must work compellingly to help create a climate truly favourable to the full development of the nation. No longer does the regime in power keep women in inferior status. (Bonnie Smith, 2008:51 *ibd*)

Ivorian women were liberated from male domination and colonial hegemonic tendencies, leading to women, gaining their political recognition.

In the post-colonial era of Ivory Coast, and presently, education had favoured and still favours men and thereby making women to be neglected. According to Cavallaro, (2014), female education in Ivory Coast has been ignored. Statistics show that only 13.7 percent of women had access to education. The report of Human Development is revealed by Cavallaro:

In the Human Development Report (2013) issued by the United Nations, only 13.7 percent of adult women in Côte d’Ivoire had received a secondary education compared to 29.9 percent of males during the same period [...] the fact that the male rate of secondary education is still more than double the female rate, reflects a lack of priority for women’s education.

From the above data, it is evident that the educational status of the Ivorian female is in a deplorable condition.

On the socio-political front, in 1963, shortly after independence, Ivorian women were tired of being controlled and manipulated by government. Some women came together and formed the “Association of Ivoirian Women” (Association des Femmes Ivoiriennes (AFI). Later in 1976, Ivorian women further influenced the then President Houphët Boigny to establish the Ministry of Women's Affairs (*Ministère de la Condition Féminine*, and later

the *Ministry of Solidarity and Women's Advancement (Ministère de la solidarité et de la Promotion de la Femme)*. The President later appointed Jeanne Gervais as both the leader of Association of Ivorian women and a minister. Gervais ensured sound education, good employments and establishment of legal equality for women. Furthermore, in 1983, a bill was passed that women should be given the right to control their properties after marriage and to seek legal redress against their husband's undesirable actions.

Ivorian women began to evolve within the country as education enabled them to challenge the established social order. Government granted them legal and constitutional rights; official attitudes towards the status of women were re-structured and they became socially elevated. .

Gender parity is a mirage in Ivory Coast because women are underrepresented at all levels of economic and socio-political domains. According to the World Bank Abidjan Country Office Gender Consultations Report (2013: 11),

Many women are present in political parties but their electoral weight has not been transformed into political power. The Emergency Law on the quota of at least 30% of women in politics and decision-making positions in administrations has not yet been passed, while the Constitution enshrines the equality of all citizens.

In essence, the status of contemporary women in Ivory Coast is still not at par with that of men. Educationally, about one-sixth of the students at the National University of Ivory Coast were women in 1987, while females with secondary education had risen only to 13.7 percent as of 2010. The number of women in the workforce had increased to 51.8 percent as of 2011 while women in Parliament as of 2012 increased to 11 percent. In this respect, women remain underrepresented except for the labour workforce which is a bit encouraging. Statistics show the huge gap between laws and the actual situation of women. Economic and social inequalities persist between men and women. In administrations and decision-making bodies (Government, National Assembly), women are largely given a lower profile. Despite its constitutional, legal and political commitments, Ivory Coast fails to be consistent with the requirements of equal opportunities (The World Bank, 2013).

Following the report of the World Bank, the post-independence Ivory Coast has not given the desired attention to gender oppression. Hence, Ivory Coast, is rated as one of the countries in the world with the highest levels of discrimination against women. In spite of legislative efforts, women were oppressed in the labour market, in education, in access to healthcare and in the lack of family planning. Thus, it is evident in the contemporary era that the complementary role of Ivorian women to men is not equal. Restrictions still exist at

every level because Ivorian women are not viewed as active participants in the society owing to egoistic nature of Ivorian men who play controlling roles in the family, while women serve as subordinates.

The Ivorian female writers highlighted some of the subjugated roles experienced by women from the colonial period into their narratives. Their works, therefore, represent the voice that has support for modern women; this is because these writers are determined to deconstruct and reconstruct the status quo.

### 1.1.3 **The status of Senegalese women from the colonial to the postcolonial periods**

The province today called Senegal “Gateway of Africa” was originated from ancient Ghana and Djolof kingdoms. (Camara, Clark and Hargreaves 2018:1). Senegal was established within West Africa as a colony under France control in the 19th century. French colonial rule in Senegal was unique as the four major cities of Saint Louis, Dakar, Gorée, and Rufisque were granted special status as French Municipalities and the men were considered full French citizens and not merely subjects (Meredith, 2005:466).

In 1960, Senegal attained her independence under the leadership of Léopold Sedar Senghor after three consecutive centuries of French colonial rule. Senegal was home to many writers such as, Sembène Ousmane, Aminata Sow Fall, Mariama Bâ, Khady Koita and Fatou Diome, among others. The colonial policies and practices in Africa generally tried to put an end to traditional beliefs, languages and cultures when the French colonialists introduced the policy of assimilation or acculturation, which exposed French way of life. These attempts had dramatic and negative effects on indigenous Senegalese women as they were journeying from one culture to another. Right from the prehistoric times, Senegalese women, like other African women initially discussed, had been playing crucial roles in the society. They were entrusted with preservation of cultures, maintenance of the family, reproduction and the rearing of the children. Their roles in agricultural work such as weeding, tilling and harvesting of rice could not be underestimated. This implies that indigenous Senegalese women did not have economic dependence on male until the emergence of the colonialists.

In Senegalese indigenous society, the primary means of education was through oral literature rendered by the *griots* (praise singers), the custodians of tradition. Thus, women had little access to formal education because of their inclination to traditional rites. This situation increased the rate of illiteracy in Senegal because griots generally did not have formal education. The colonisation of Africa by the European nations was generally done to

exploit African economic resources and to amass wealth. In 1855, a Senegalese damsel queen, Ndate Yalla (1810-1860) who hailed from Waalo (a kingdom in the Northwest of Senegal) was one of the greatest resistants to the French colonisation and Moors' invasion of Senegal.

Dr. Y. and Afrolegend.com (2015) argues that Ndate Yalla ruled the Kingdom with an iron fist and became a real threat to the French settlers. Queen Ndate Yalla Mbodj trained the women's army forces against colonial invasion. Ndate Yalla had a fight with the Moors who invaded her space, and the colonialist army led by Louis Faidherbe known as "the butcher and a bandit". Faidherbe was later installed as the governor of Saint-Louis and colonial head of the administration and army. Ndate Yalla was eventually captured and dethroned in a bloody battle. Waalo and Senegal were eventually colonised. After the conquest of Waalo, Ndate Yalla lamented:

Aujourd'hui nous sommes envahis par les conquérants. Notre armée est en déroute. Les tiédos du Waalo, si vaillants guerriers soient-ils, sont presque tous tombés sous les balles de l'ennemi. L'envahisseur est plus fort que nous, je le sais, mais devrions-nous abandonner le Waalo aux mains des étrangers?)

[Today, we are invaded by the conquerors. Our army is in disarray. The tiedos of the Waalo, as brave warriors as they are, have almost all fallen under the enemy's bullets. The invader is stronger than us, I know, but should we abandon the Waalo to foreign hands?] (DR.Y. and Afrolegends.com par. 4)

After the war with Faidherbe, she later formed her own army to safeguard the encroachment of her territory. She decided to go on exile in Ndimb northern part of Waalo before she later died.

Cooper (2014:45-50), avers that Senegalese women were not given the rights to vote. This action triggered Senegalese women to protest against colonial administrators claiming that the same suffrage privilege given to French women in 1944 should be accorded to them also since they were regarded as French citizens. The colonial government initially rejected this idea but later agreed in 1945. Women in French West Africa generally enjoyed suffrage right.

In postcolonial Senegal, women do not enjoy equal status with their male counterparts as gender disparity is rampant. This is due to the doctrines of Islam that render women subordinated to men. Senegalese women are always alienated in matters of politics and decision-making process, even within the family setting. Thus, child marriage, polygyny and polygamy truncate the rights of women in Senegal. Ninety percent of

Senegalese people are Muslims with high rates of illiteracy. Women make up less than 10% of the formal labour force. Female genital mutilation is a persistent practice in some rural areas, despite being outlawed by the constitution of 2001 (Sumarée 2002).

The status of Senegalese women is also revealed by Dasilva (2013 par. 14), in his article entitled “Senegal growing up over marriage”. According to him, marriage before the age of 18 is a common practice in Senegal, with 16 percent of young women getting married and giving birth before reaching 15 years old. This trend deters the education of young women in Senegal as the rate of school dropouts creates wider disparity between Senegalese men and women. A “2010-USAID Senegal Gender Assessment” reported in one of its publications in 2012 that “Senegal was ranked 27th out of 68 countries surveyed in terms of girls marrying before the age of 18”. This information is corroborated by an unnamed girl in Da Silva’s report.

I don’t like this so-called marriage. But I have no choice, since my parents forced me to marry this older man, who happens to be the son of my aunt. I have no formal education and therefore no future. I feel imprisoned.

While young boys are struggling to go to school, girls are being prepared for marriage. This is a serious human rights abuse against young girls and women in Senegalese society. Osotimehin, (2012:4), states that, “child marriage constitutes a grave threat to young girls’ lives, health and future prospects”. Thus, greater dignity should be given to young girls and women in Senegalese community.

Politically, women were marginalised until 2009, when Gender Parity Law was adopted by Senegalese women’s movement under the regime of Abdoulaye Wade. At independence, Senegalese women discovered that there was not a single woman in government nor in parliament. Women movement, Conseil Sénégalais des Femmes (COSEF, founded in 1994 with the support of international body fought together for the common cause of increased representation. Consequently, Abdoulaye Wade was responsible for the signing of Senegalese Law on gender equality in 2010. According to Tøraasen (2017):

The law obliged all political parties to place women and men on candidate lists, aiming at a male-female ratio of 50%. In cases of non-compliance, the electoral commission (CENA) has the authority to reject lists, and thus exclude parties from contesting in elections.

In 2012, national election was conducted in Senegal, which gave rise to “women representatives from 22.7% to 42.7% in the National Assembly, and from 16% to 47% in local legislatures in the 2014 local election” respectively. (Tøråseen.)

With the Gender Parity Law, Women’s movements claim their rightful place in the new society and create women-friendly laws and institutions like gender quotas (Tripp, 2015). President Abdoulaye Wade was regarded as a modern reformer and an advocate of change in women’s lives. Wade stood up for a new constitution, which guarantees women’s rights and access to decision-making instances. In 2002, during a conference at Durban, President Wade among other fellow African presidents proposed a gender quota of 50% in the African Union to favour women. For that achievement, Wade was given the African Gender Award.

After the 2010 election, Macky Sall became the president while sixty-four of the one hundred and fifty new representatives in the national assembly were women. This political development was regarded as a breakthrough towards gender equality. Hawa Bâ, a Senegalese woman, corroborates the idea that if women are highly represented in politics, “it will raise self-esteem among women in a predominantly male-dominated society where politics is largely viewed as a man's business.” (*The Guardian*, 2012)

The family code of 1972 defines women status in Senegalese society after independence. This code forbids repudiation or rejection of one’s wife. Under this law, a Muslim man has no right to divorce his wife. Women are entitled to inherit property and in a no-fault divorce, restitution can be demanded. The family code also recognises official marriage, monogamous as well as polygamous marriage which must be legally documented. The form of the marriage must be explicitly stated between a man and a woman and there is no reversal of agreement even in the course of divorce. For instance, a man who makes the choice of monogamous family would not be given the opportunity to switch to polygamous family. The choice is once and final. In addition, under Family Code, the man is the head of the household. However, Senegalese women fault this Family Code because it does not address the status of women against any form of sexual harassment or domestic violence (Boyle and Sheen, 1997)

Sumarée (2002), in an interview granted to *International Viewpoint* - an online socialist magazine, decries the pitiable status of Senegalese women. She explains that in Senegal, women suffer very much from illiteracy, the super exploitation of their labour power is deep-rooted from cultural prejudices. According to her, women represent 52% of the total population of the country but are excluded from the formal system of employment



where they represent less than 10% of the workforce. In addition, majority of Senegalese women are in the informal sector of the economy (small traders, retail sales in the market and so on) with average daily incomes of around 20 French Francs. They also work in food and fishing industries as temporary workers without social protection from their employers.

Sumarée's position on violence against women is very instructive to this work. She avers that, violence against Senegalese women exists in households, workplaces and services in the towns and in the countryside. It can be noted that violence increases poverty, layoff of workers and above all, frustrates the people. Female genital mutilation is stock-in-trade but it is nowadays forbidden by the constitution of January 2001 and has been fought by the Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other women's associations. The right to inherit property is not available to Senegalese women yet. The women who account for 70% of agricultural production do not have the right to own land as it was in the tradition Senegalese society.

The Bureau of Statistics secretary, Kale (2014), emphasises that the Beijing Platform of 1995 should focus on improving the status of women. Consequently, empowerment of women towards achieving full equality of sexes: wealth, education, health, economic participation, decision-making; elimination of gender-based violence, armed conflict and inequality in power are identified. In spite of the efforts of the Beijing platform to better the lot of women in contemporary period, it is discovered that women are still fighting against series of inequalities. For instance, female education is still in a fiasco, women want to be free from physical exploitation and they want to be in charge of their own personal properties among others.

It is glaring nowadays that most of the problems women encounter in the socio-cultural and political scenes are deep-rooted in colonialism. This is because, the colonial policies discriminate against women. In essence, colonialism aggravates the status of women generally in Africa. Colonialism contributed to the removal of women from the economic, political and social forefronts, and put them in the domestic sphere. The advent of colonialism widened the gap of gender-based oppression and discriminatory roles for young girls and women in the society. Against all these woes, women now engage themselves through literary creativity to acquire their rights to having a voice, as they have started to oppose male dominance in all ramifications. After the attainment of independence, it is presumed that Algerian, Ivorian and Senegalese women would be considered as equals to men in the new sovereign government they had struggled for.

## **1.2 Definition of terms**

### **1.2.1 Gender**

Gender refers to man or woman and it became widespread in feminist discourse in the early 1970. The word gender raises controversial issues because some theorists propose that gender explains the differences in behaviour between men and women, based on biological features. These biological differences make men to be physically and mentally better than women. Feminists, on the other hand, challenge these biological differences as unfounded and assert that gender is socially constructed to them. To them, the root cause of gender inequality is linked to patriarchy, a system that subdues women to men gender. Rawat (2014:43-55.)

### **1.2.2 Oppression**

The word oppression from the Old French word “*presser*” means the exertion of force or to push. Oppression is an unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power, especially by the imposition of burdens; the condition of being weighed down; an act of pressing down; a sense of heaviness or obstruction in the body or mind. To oppress usually, is to subject people to bondage or unjustifiable exercise of power, which suggests a psychological feeling of complete depression. (Harper, 2010)

### **1.2.3 Patriarchy**

Patriarchy is an unjust social system that enforces gender roles. It is oppressive to both men and women (David, 2015:143). It often includes any social mechanism that evokes male dominance over women. ‘Patriarchy’, in contemporary discourse, is the keyword that many female writers draw attention at, to explain gender disparity and subordination of women in the society. The patriarchal system gives many identities to women: as wives and mothers, planters and harvesters or ‘angel of the house’, for example. Thus, patriarchy varies the social roles of women and confines them to domestic spheres. “Patriarchy has thoroughly subjected females to manipulation, abuse, and subordination.” (Glasberg, D. S. and Deric S. 2011). However, the patriarchal system tends to favour those women who are passive in nature or have defined their roles with submissiveness.

### **1.2.4 Exile**

The concept of ‘exile’ concerns the notion of moving away from one's family, society or home. This might be a way to avoid of the use of ostracism, retribution, threat, death or imprisonment or in quest for “solitude”. (Long and Averill, 2003:33:1). FOR THE purpose of this study, exile, is used as a self-imposed departure from one’s society. The person that craves for self-imposed exile does it as a form of objection or protest against an

obnoxious decree or rule in the society. This is a ploy to avoid maltreatment or to privately resolve legal crisis, escape acts of shame or repentance. The exilic journey helps the traveller to devote time to a particular goal.

### **1.2.5 Bildungsroman**

Bildungsroman is a literary genre that traces the emotional and moral growth of the hero or heroine from youth to adulthood. The goal of bildungsroman is character formation and change. The term bildungsroman originated from two German words; bildungs (formation) and roman (novel). Bildungsroman has many connotations: it is regarded as coming-of-age stories, a novel of education, novel of formation, novel of upbringing or novel depicting rites of passage. This genre creates a channel of discussion on the developmental journey of the protagonist from childhood to maturity. [*The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2017].

### **1.2.6 The genre of female bildungsroman**

There is no specific definition for the genre of female bildungsroman. A number of critics call it novel of ‘female awakening’, ‘novel of female development’, ‘novel of emancipation’; others see it as ‘novel of self-discovery’ or ‘novel of self-survival’. Bonnie, (1980) cited in Fuderer (1990:3) consequently defines the genre as:

The modern feminist bildungsroman usually depicts adolescent development to one extent or another, but it focuses primarily upon the crisis occasioned by a woman’s awakening, in her late twenties or early thirties, to the stultification and fragmentation of a personality devoted not to self-fulfillment and awareness, but to a culturally determined, self-sacrificing, and self-effacing existence. This crisis and the resultant struggle for individuality and integration continue to occupy the central thematic position of the feminist bildungsroman in the mid-seventies.

The genre can also be described as the growth and the developmental process of the female protagonist that put emphasis on the struggles of independence against psychological breakdown.

## **1.3 Statement of the problem**

The developmental process or coming-of-age of young girls in a male-dominated or patriarchal society across the world is a poignant issue in contemporary literature and more specifically in the francophone African women’s writings. Oppression in real life becomes the barbed wire that halts the progress of women in patriarchal society. In literature,

patriarchy becomes a metaphor frequently employed by women writers to depict oppression.

The gender-based oppression had been and continues to be a serious issue of concern in Africa, and even in developed countries of the world. Gender-based oppression manifests itself in many ways: discrimination, subordination, marginalisation, sexual violence are examples. In many parts of the world, women and young girls coming-of-age are normally the victims of harmful traditional practices like slavery, human trafficking and forcible early marriage. Thus, women constitute the mainstream of the human race but they are universally a prey of oppression. In many parts of the world, women are relegated, confined, deprived of basic democratic and economic rights and subjected to coercion and violence from men.

Oppression and patriarchy in the developmental journey of young girls and women are the central focus in this work. Walker (2005:14), opines that “one of the traditions we have in Black women’s literature is a tradition of trying to fight all the oppression.” The selected female francophone African authors write against patriarchal oppression. Various scholars have produced copious writings on gender-based oppression using feminist theories. In this study, the genre of female bildungsroman is adopted to elucidate the developmental journey of young girls and women in male-dominated world.

Many critics and researchers have examined some of the fundamental issues of oppression that affect women in the works of Khady Koita, Fatou Kéïta, Malika Mokkedem, Aminata Sow Fall and Regina Yaou in relation to modern-day society. However, they have not studied them from the perspective of female bildungsroman. The novels are sometimes treated as ‘teens’ or ‘adolescents’ literature since they focus on young girls coming-of-age. This study explores the female bildungsroman as manifested in Khady Koita’s *Mutilée* (2005), Fatou Kéïta’s *Rebelle* (1998), Malika Mokkedem’s *L’interdite* (1990) Aminata Sow Fall *Douceurs du bercail* (1998) and Regina Yaou’s *Le prix de la révolte* (1997).

Okuyade (2010), examines female bildungsroman in three postcolonial anglophone African novels. His work focuses on the identity formation, which is a theme in bildungsroman. This work is different from Okuyade’s study, because the linguistic direction is francophone African, and specifically women’s writings, but also because the present study investigates the overall developmental or maturation process of young girls and women coming-of-age. Thus, the study is a broader and more comprehensive view of the bildungsroman, the themes and the significance. Furthermore, not much has been said about the developmental stages of women at middle age who are working out for themselves a second chance, reconstructing their identities after some earlier marriage and

or motherhood roles. This “second chance” narrative in female bildungsroman which has not yet been adequately handled by researchers is another lacuna that the current study fills.

#### **1.4 The aims and objectives of the study**

The main aim of this study is to investigate the dynamics of gender development in patriarchal society through the genre of female bildungsroman.

The following are the specific objectives. To:

- i. identify the resistance strategies employed by bildungsroman heroines to survive patriarchal oppression;
- ii. examine the deconstruction of hegemonic problems confronting women in selected genres of female bildungsroman;
- iii. evaluate how female bildungsroman protagonists are portrayed in selected bildungsroman novels and
- iv. examine how exile assists the bildungsroman heroines to become self-reliant.

#### **1.5 Research questions**

This study aims to provide answers to the following research questions:

- i. What resistance strategies are employed by bildungsroman heroines to assuage patriarchal oppression?
- ii. How are the deconstructions of hegemonic problems confronting women depicted in selected narratives?
- iii. To what extent are female bildungsroman protagonists depicted in selected novels?
- iv. How does exile assist the bildungsroman heroines to become self-reliant?

#### **1.6 Significance of the study**

Francophone women have been writing on “coming-of-age narratives” or genres of bildungsroman but little or no attention has been given to them because some scholars view them as children’s literature or autobiographical stories. Hence, this work is premised on the need to foreground the genre of female bildungsroman as a suitable approach in analysing women oppression. It is also useful to explore the formation or developmental process of young girls and women. The selected francophone novels depict how young girls and women develop from childhood to maturity, and how they are oppressed and marginalised economically, socially, morally, religiously and culturally. Also, the francophone texts have been purposively chosen because the authors are in the forefront of the fight against all the aforementioned oppressive systems in their countries.

Therefore, this work serves as literature for researchers in the genre of coming-of-age narratives in French in order to further explore the growth and development of young female adults within the literary context of male novelists. This study provides researchers with the representation of self and the stages of self-developmental journey of male and female in both genres.

### **1.7 Scope of the study**

This study is devoted to the female bildungsroman. It foregrounds gender-based oppression as depicted in the five novels: Mokkedem's *L'interdite*, Kéïta's *Rebelle*, Khady's *Mutilée*, Yaou's *Le prix de la révolte* and Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail*. The work centres on selected francophone novels and their writers. It examines how each writer uses characterisation to convey how patriarchal gender roles are socially constructed to be obstructive to women. The writers equally present stories that represent true-life experiences elucidating thematic concerns of exile, gender and symbolic violence.

This work is delimited only to the analysis of developmental journeys of heroines in selected texts which foreground the gender-based oppression and the social injustices imposed on women.

### **1.8 Organisation of the study**

This work is divided into six chapters. Chapter One states the background to the study. It presents the general overview of the status of African women in Algeria, Ivory Coast and Senegal and their diverse roles during colonial and postcolonial periods. The effects of colonialism on the status of women are also investigated. Statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study and scope of study are presented. The chapter also defines keywords and concepts relevant to the study. Chapter Two focuses on oppression, which is a major aspect of the study. Relevant literatures on how women's writings act as a channel of deconstruction are reviewed. Similarly, patriarchy is theorised, and its effects on Francophone African women are explored. Chapter Three explains female bildungsroman as the theoretical framework, while the selected are analysed using close reading of the texts. The selected texts are analysed within the social paradigm of individual writers. Chapter Four highlights the themes of three of the selected novels and analyses the subversive strategies in them through the perspective of female bildungsroman. The texts are Malika Mokkedem's *L'interdite* (1990), Fatou Kéïta's *Rebelle* (1998) and Khady Koita's *Mutilée* (2005). The sequence of

discussion is according to the intensification of the features of the bildungsroman, with the climax in Khady's *Mutilée* the last text. In Chapter Five, we analyse two selected novels: Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail* (1998) and Regina Yaou *Le prix de la révolte* (1997). They are considered "novels of epiphany" or "novels of women development" as a matter of "second chance", with the second novel manifesting the elements of the bildungsroman. Chapter Six, which is the conclusion, discusses the relationship among oppression, resistance and liberation on the basis of the findings in the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**2.0** This Chapter conceptualises oppression and reviews a number of scholarly works which have examined the subject of this study. The chapter also explores Jacques Derrida's approach to deconstruction. Based on the existing studies on deconstruction, it is believed that the approach would help in the interrogation of the selected women literary texts. In addition, this Chapter conceptualises patriarchy and presents the life of francophone African women in a patriarchal society.

#### **2.1 Women and gender-based oppression**

Oppression is a cruel injustice or a prejudiced use of authority to prevent people from being free or enjoying equal rights with the oppressor. The term oppression can mean to relegate someone or put someone in mental trouble with the psychological weight of an oppressive idea. (Napikoski and Lewis, 2018: par. 1)

Female writers and critics perceive oppression as a socio-political system, designed purposely to confine, shape, manipulate or reduce a particular class of people largely on arbitrary grounds and for the advantage of another class. According to female writers, oppression symbolically portrays, among others, discrimination, subordination, power, domination, exploitation, deprivation and subjugation. Oppression, in the literary scholarship, oppression is a major feminist issue and in order to gain adequate knowledge of the word, there is need to understand feminist discourse that contributes in some ways to understanding subordination or domination of women. Moradian, (2009: 3) declares that, African women's world, is characterised by a variety of oppressive systems. At least one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or abused in some other ways, usually by an intimate partner or family member.

The report of United Population Fund (UNFPA, 2010) on "Security and Human Rights for All" shows that gender-based violence constitutes a lifelong threat for hundreds of girls and women across the globe. In Africa, gender-based violence in various forms, including domestic violence, rape, women trafficking, honour killings and genital mutilation exerts a heavy toll on the mental and the physical health of women, provoking psychological trauma in them. Gender-based coercion is recognised as a major public health concern and a serious violation of human right.



The term “oppression” is central to female writers because it is seen as a needed rebellious theme, which always awakens their consciousness. The opinion of Adebayo, (1999: 27-28) on oppression of women becomes relevant here:

[...] the existing relationship between men and women is characterized by oppression [...] the issues of equal rights to education, to political and economic development between the male and female dominate the discussions in the public sphere. Feminist analysis dwelt largely on the various forms of prejudices, which were peculiar to women alone and they sought to change these prejudices.

Women oppression is therefore, not limited to a single issue. This is why women’s writings are tagged as protest literature. In addition, women’s oppression always forms the focal point in feminist discourse and this makes Morgan (1970:30) in Redistocking *Manifesto* to describe women oppression thus:

Women are an oppressed class. Our oppression is total, affecting every facet of our lives. We are exploited as sex objects, breeders, domestic servants, and cheap. We are considered inferior beings whose only purpose is to enhance men’s lives. Our humanity is denied. Our prescribed behaviour is enforced by the threat of physical violence.

This assertion is true as to what some women are going through. Women’s oppression, to feminists, is the experience of sexism (intolerance or discrimination based on sex; especially, discrimination against women) which is a manifestation of male domination. In view of this, contemporary feminists are united to employ various approaches like verbal contact, writing and many other means to fight back and eliminate sexist oppression which is the reference point in Mokkedem’s *L’interdite*.

Some cultures employ religious beliefs and practices to justify oppression of women and violence against them. An Indian lawyer, Chopra (2012: 3), claims that “all religious laws have something in common: they support discrimination against women (cited in *Watch Tower* 2012, Volume 133, 3). In contemporary society, extremists still cite religious texts to legitimise their domination of women. For instance, a number of men use what is said to Eve in (Genesis 3:16): “I will greatly multiply your sorrow [...] and your desire shall be to your husband and he shall rule over you” to disregard, abuse and subjugate women. The hegemony of men over women is also revealed in the *Holy Quran* (2:228) which says, “Men have a degree over them”. This implies that men have authority over women.

A number of men in the Islamic religion believe that women are inferior to them because of their gender, whereas it is clear in the *Holy Quran* that women are equal to men.

This is stated in Holy Quran (3:195) that “Their Lord responded to them: “I never fail to reward any worker among you for any work you do, be you male or female”. Thus, God does not discriminate when he categorises both men and women together as workers; the two genders are working for God and are equally rewarded.

The equality between men and women is supported in the *Holy Bible*, (Galatians 3:28): “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” This means that irrespective of race, gender or status, all human beings are equal before God. Ephesians (5:21) also says “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”. Men and women are thus, expected to stand up to one another out of respect for Christ. This equality is justified by Jesus Christ himself. To stress this further, Welman (2015) posits:

God does not show favouritism (Rom 2:11) and does not respect one man or woman over another (Acts 10:34). Then, neither should we, for if you really keep the royal law found in the Scripture, “Love your neighbour as yourself” you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers (James 2:8-9).

Though some men hide under religion to marginalise and oppress women, with these references from *The Holy Quran* and *The Holy Bible*, one could find that God does not support oppressive patriarchal relationship.

Wollstonecraft (1792, 4:11) metaphorically, relates women oppression and marginalization to a caged bird. She says:

Women are confined in cages like the feathered race, they have nothing to do but to plume themselves and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch. It is true that they are provided with food and raiment ... but health, liberty and virtue are given in exchange.

Wollstonecraft sees marriage institution as an oppressive system in the lives of women as they are portrayed as stagnated beings in their matrimonial homes. They are imprisoned and treated like mere house pets that are restricted to particular places. In other words, women are confined in a male-dominated society where marriage is a lifetime contract of enclosure, denial of equal education and equal freedom. She also emphasises how not only laws but also traditions and social expectations lead to those inequalities.

Ancient Assyria, according to Tetlow (2004:141), is a male-dominated society where women were under men’s surveillance at all times:

Men could divorce their wives without giving them anything, and wives could not initiate divorce. Men veiled women and segregated them from the world outside the household. Women were liable for the debts and punished for the crimes of their husbands but husbands were not punished for the crimes of their wives. Women who challenged the authority of men were put to death.

In India, history reveals the unbearable treatment that women go through when they lose their husbands. To expose the level of oppression, widow burning, which is referred to as *sati* in Hindu Language ("suttee" in English), has been a practice in India since, at least, the fourth century B.C. According to Taylor (2010: section. 1), "in Hindu tradition, once the husband dies, a woman becomes incomplete and sinful; she is a social outcast and cannot remarry." In this regard, Indian women sometimes choose *sati* (the act or Hindu custom whereby a widow burns herself to death on the funeral *pyre* of her husband as a better option. Studies however, reveal other forms of *sati*, which include burying widows alive with the husband's remains, drowning and so on. These experiences are very traumatic; since *sati* is still real, widows find a way of escape from the savage custom as this act suggests self suicidal.

Another oppressive statement in religion that shows the disposition of some people is Hesiod in 8th century B.C. He attributes all humankind's tribulations to women. Hesiod speaks of women as "the deadly race and tribe who live amongst mortal men to their great trouble". He warns men not to converse much with women, as they will ultimately lead them to unchastity" (*Watch Tower*, 2012: vol. 7). This castigation has a deep effect on women's role in the Jewish society. One can deduce that patriarchal society and religion are two sides of a coin that has shaped and is still shaping the world view of humanity. In the patriarchal society, the woman's ego is suppressed with the oppressive maxims like "men own the world", "women are weaker sex" and "women are biological being" (Thangaraj, 2014:263). These fallacious and mythical judgments have certainly instigated the female *bildungsroman* which this study seeks to deconstruct in the selected francophone African women's writings.

## **2.2 Deconstruction: an overview**

Deconstruction in literary terms is an approach to textual analysis which posits that a text has no stable reference or meaning, and questions assumptions about the ability of language to represent reality. Deconstruction as a philosophical theory questions traditional assumptions about certainty, identity, and truth (Houghton, 2000).

Deconstruction has its origin in Philosophy. Jacques Derrida uses the term “deconstruction” in his book titled *Grammatology* (1976), and he proposes it as a strategy for challenging some of the ideas that have been taken for granted since the time of Plato. According to Derrida (1976), deconstruction should not be seen as a method or style but rather as an event. He states that deconstruction happens without relying on subjective agency and that it is not limited to written language alone but includes the discursive analysis of subjectivity, experience and reality. (David, Macdonald and O’Sullivan 2006: 86).

Deconstruction, is a way of reading any text and in consequence, revealing the uncertainty of meaning, which the text tries to conceal. At the fundamental level, this uncertainty results from the unending chain of meanings, which a word is capable of generating right from semantics into other facets of meanings, like ancient meanings and their contemporary connotations and denotations. For instance, the word “excision” has both denotative and connotative meanings like Female Genital Cutting, Female Genital Mutilation, removal of the clitoris, amputation, resection, abscission, exclusion, ablation, elimination, cleavage, annihilation, initiatory rite, rite of passage, purification martyrdom, and test of courage and so on. The meanings of all the listed synonyms revolve around wound, damage, hurt, shock, deformity, loss, abuse, harm, abrasion or grievance. Deconstruction is like a pun, which is a play on words. It reveals how the text has mixed feelings, and is far from bearing any definite meaning. Deconstruction implies that people are not simply replicating or duplicating words but are trying to open something new and something real. Thus, deconstruction cannot be restricted to a single meaning. In view of this, one can deconstruct a word into infinity.

Bijay (2005:45), corroborates the notion of Derrida that “one can safely argue that deconstruction is a dismantling of the structure of a text”. This means that the text has a fixed meaning which the critic has to recreate or explain. Thus, a deconstructionist would first look at the text as a whole before breaking it into pieces. In other words, the process of dissecting happens when the reader or critic analyses, turns an ensemble into scattered fragments and reconstructs them. This implies that it is not only the authors that deconstruct; a reader or a critic too in the course of analysing or interpreting what the writer writes, deconstructs. This is because a literary text will have different meaning to each individual reader; therefore, a text does not have absolute or permanent meaning.

Deconstruction is an insight into the blindness of an author’s text, a process which DeMan (2014: 81) describes as, “bringing to light what had remained unperceived by the

author and his followers”. However, the nonappearance of the author makes one to deconstruct the text the way one likes since the text itself has no fixed meaning. In essence, deconstruction frees text from fixed meanings.

The observation of Sachin (2012), says that Derrida’s deconstructive terms are applied to the language of philosophy and the entire mechanism of this language is based on binary oppositions like “light” versus “dark”, “male” versus “female”, “good” versus “bad”, “speech” versus “writing”, “nature” versus “culture” and so on. Derrida (1976) opines that binary oppositions are not equal but hierarchically structured because the first term dominates the second one; thus, the second one is considered either derivative or inferior to the first. This issue of binary opposition however, is what Derrida focuses on to see how it could be reversed and subverted. For instance, the binary pair of man/woman in feminist writing is an aberration. This is because “man” is considered superior and powerful, while “woman” is regarded as inferior or weaker vessel or, to borrow from De Beauvoir (1949) “The other”. For the sake of clarity, what is regarded as meanings in the dictionary are actually other words, which have meanings of their own. Deconstruction in this Chapter is not adopted as theoretical approach, nevertheless, it helps the study at the level of interpretation.

### **2.3 The place of deconstruction in francophone African women’s literature**

Fatou Kéïta’s *Rebelle*, Regina Yaou’s *Le prix de la révolte*, Aminata Sow Fall’s *Douceurs du bercail*, Khady Koita’s *Mutilée* and Malika Mokkedem’s *L’interdites* are based on developmental progression and oppression revolving around gender, the style of female bildungsroman is employed to recount and deconstruct some of the traditional myths that affect women in a male-dominated society. It is noted that any literary approach is propounded as a procedure to understand the different ways people read and interpret fictional texts..

The scholarly work of Okuyade’s (2010) thesis entitled “Bildungsroman in selected postcolonial African novels”, situated within war and female bildungsroman is centred on the identity formation, which is one of the major themes in bildungsroman. Okuyade divides bildungsroman into female and war bildungsroman and weaves it on postcolonial theory. The work reveals that postcolonial writers like Uzodinma Iweala, Unoma Azuah, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Helen Dangaremgba use characters to interrogate different thematic issues ranging from national, patriarchal, cultural to family. The work concludes that African bildungsroman is a reflection of African experience.

Okuyade (2010:152-153), also foregrounds female bildungsroman in one of his articles entitled “Narrating growth in the Nigerian female bildungsroman”. He identifies the female bildungsroman as a genre that “analyses women oppression and at the same time offers resistance. It is noted that generally, African writers, most especially women in recent times, write for women’s survival in directions, which make the expression synonymous to female bildungsroman”. Okuyade, exploring the genre of female bildungsroman in the fictional works of “third generation African female writers” (152) Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*, Unoma Azuah’s *Sky High Flames* and Sefi Atta’s *Everything Good will come*, describes these literary texts as ‘novels of growth and education that account for the Nigerian experience’. Via the genre of female bildungsroman, according to Okuyade, the author moves the character from ignorance to cognition. He finally emphasises change as the ultimate goal of a successful narrative of growth. According to Okuyade (2010: 152)

From the plot structure and analysis of texts, it becomes clear that the traditional western bildungsroman has been domesticated within a postcolonial text to appraise narratives of growth. They offer a model of resistance to women’s oppression [...] while concurrently depicting the plight of women in a society plagued by the debilitating forces of patriarchy, an alternative to that plight. (152).

The assertion of Okuyade in this article contributes immensely to the current study with the emphasis laid on the genre as one that offers “a model of resistance to women oppression”. Resistance, as stated by Okuyade, is the subversive weapon of oppression that bildungsroman proposes to help the fictional protagonist to reconstruct her identity in a male-dominated society. The point of divergence lies in the fact that Okuyade explores female bildungsroman in the works of Nigerian’s ‘third generation African writers’, while the current study focuses on francophone African female writers. It is noted that attention is not given to the second narrative style of female bildungsroman in Okuyade’s work. He explores the genres of female bildungsroman in young girls or adolescents coming to adulthood but does not examine the developmental stages of women in the adulthood stage.

This study therefore deals with the two narrative patterns to make readers understand how women develop later in life after marriage and motherhood. It is equally observed that there is no clear-cut distinction between coming-of-age narratives and female bildungsroman in Okuyade’s work. He labels coming-of-age narrative as narrative of growth, which is synonymous to linear or traditional bildungsroman but the chronological pattern or experience that makes it linear is not stated and “Any story that follows no chronological order lacks the linear characteristics path of Bildungsroman” (Goodman,

2013:30). Also, in narrative of growth or coming-of-age, rites of passage is one of the central themes which is not visible or emphasised in Okuyade's work. These are the gaps that this study fills in order to make it different from that of Okuyade.

Sanusi (2005), in his article entitled, "Fatou Kéïta/Regina Yaou and the Re-definition of Ivorian Cultural and Patriarchal Ethos: *Rebelle* and *Le prix de la révolte*", contributes immensely to the subject of this work. The interpretation of 'deconstruction' in his article sheds light to the current study. The article makes one realise that the major preoccupation of any African women's writer is to deconstruct some of the traditional myths that tend to restrict women in patriarchal society:

Kéïta and Yaou's protagonists fight to eliminate the subordination of women by questioning, re-defining and deconstructing some thorny Ivorian cultural and patriarchal mores (73)

In Fatou Kéïta's *Rebelle* and Yaou's *Le prix de la révolte*, Sanusi (2005) deconstructs all the oppressive issues in the two texts as "thorny". Some of the "thorny" issues that are being deconstructed by both authors' protagonists include female genital mutilation, widowhood rites, child marriage, illiteracy and rape. In addition, he states that the literary texts of the aforementioned authors have taken women beyond the boundaries of confinement and moved them to achieve "permanent victory" (Sanusi, 2005:74). This study agrees with Sanusi's description of the female oppression as "thorny" because the aforementioned themes act as revolutionary weapons in changing the system of tradition in Ivory Coast. A number of African men and women, out of ignorance regard female genital mutilation as a sign of purity and an assurance of fertility.

In Yaou's *Le prix de la révolte*, Ivorian society views widows as helpless but Yaou portrays them as powerful women who have the audacity to challenge traditional assumptions and prejudices surrounding their social plights. The two novels (*Rebelle* and *Le prix de la révolte*) are also recommended as narratives of women's struggle for 'permanent liberation'. The position of the above-mentioned authors broadens our knowledge as it helps to understand the concept of deconstruction as it applies to the two texts.

Similarly, Adesanmi (2002:iii), posits that Regina Yaou, Fatou Kéïta are read as conveying the various stages of consciousness on the part of subaltern. According to him, Kéïta's *Rebelle* (1998), and Yaou's *Le prix de la révolte* (1997), address the possibility of a sustained African women's struggle resulting not only in transient personal and isolated victories but also in an enduring social transformation governed by the ethos of gender equality (Adesanmi 2002: iii). Adesanmi's assertion is in accordance with Sanusi. Adesanmi

also emphasises on ‘Permanent liberation’ for the central characters of the two novels. The two critics employ the concept of ‘subaltern’ to analyse female oppression in Kéïta’s *Rebelle* and Yaou’s *Le prix de la révolte*. However, this study differs in the area of theory. This study focuses on female *bildungsroman* to trace the developmental and formation process of the two protagonists. ‘Subaltern’ represents the marginal protagonists of the two texts (*Rebelle* and *Le prix de la révolte*) that later move from the margin to the apex, becoming the attackers of Ivorian traditional cultures that downgrade them. In addition, the protagonists do not just struggle to achieve temporary and individual liberation but collective and permanent freedom in Ivorian patriarchal society.

Therefore, the protagonists’ various stages of consciousness bring about social revolutionary changes that deconstruct hegemonic oppression in Ivory Coast. The efforts of the two Ivorian authors, in changing the cultural perception of women as inferiors or second-class citizens, challenge and deconstruct patriarchal hegemony. However, this work does not fully agree with Sanusi and Adesanmi on the issue of ‘permanent liberation’ in *Rebelle*. This is because from the authorial voice, it is perceived that other conflicts await the protagonist of Kéïta’s *Rebelle* (2009:232). All the same, the point of convergence lies in liberation and survival of women in patriarchal Africa.

The work of Adeleke (2004), entitled ‘A stylistic analysis of the forms of oppressions in selected francophone West African women’s novels’ makes a significant contribution to the place of women in this work. Adeleke attempts stylistic and critical discourse (a type of stylistic approach that describes, interprets, analyses and criticises social life) to foreground women oppression in Fatou Kéïta’s *Rebelle*. Using the critical discourse, according to him, gives him the opportunity to understand the message of the writer as a defender of women’s right. This is because Fatou Kéïta adopts the Eurocentric style to account for women oppression in a male-dominated society. He finally portrays Fatou Kéïta as a feminist. In the same vein, Adeleke just like Sanusi and Adesanmi describes Kéïta’s *Rebelle* as a direct condemnation of Female Genital Mutilation and child marriage. To shed more light on this, Kéïta’s declaration in one of her interviews corroborates Adeleke’s opinion:

C’est une coutume dont ils ont hérité et qu’ils perpétuent parce que, leur a-t-on dit, elle permet à la femme d’être une vraie femme, fidèle et soumise à son mari. C’est une violation flagrante des Droits de la femme. Il s’agit d’un problème de santé publique. (Interview granted to Coulibaly, 1998).



[This is a custom that they inherited and they perpetuate it because they were told that it allows the woman to be a true woman, faithful and submissive to her husband. It is a gross violation of woman's rights. It is a threat to public health] (*Our translation*).

In a similar vein, Kéïta deconstructs child or forced marriage when she posits that:

Les mariages forcés sont encore légion chez nous. Je ne vois aucun avantage à forcer quelqu'un, qu'il soit un homme ou une femme, à se marier à une personne dont il ne veut pas. (Interview granted by Fatou Kéïta to Coulibaly, 1998).

[Forced marriages are rampant in our country. I do not see any advantage in forcing someone, be it a man or a woman to marry a person he does not want] (*Our translation*)

In Africa, female children are victims of various systems of marriages: marriage by abduction, arranged marriage, *sarrah* marriage in Islam (a kind of marriage where the bride is given out for free), marriage for economic advantage (in case of poverty) and so on. Going by Kéïta's declaration, child marriage is a taboo, and the purity and fertility attached to genital cutting in the traditional setting are pointless. Thus, she deconstructs the two socio-cultural issues as violation on the right of young girls and women coming-of-age. This work, therefore, agrees with Adeleke and Kéïta because it also focuses on gender oppression which is a recurrent issue in francophone African women's novels. While Adeleke concentrates on stylistics and critical discourse to explore female oppression, this work deploys female bildungsroman to recount characters' development from childhood to adulthood, with a view to showing how young girls and women are able to face and survive oppression in a male-dominated society.

Olayinka (2014), examines 'psychological disorders in male and female characters in selected Calixthe Beyala and Buchi Emecheta's novels. The work uses psychoanalytical theory as theoretical framework and data are subjected to literary analysis. The study reveals that both male and female characters suffer psychological oppression and suppression in a patriarchal society. The study further reveals oppressive conditions suffered by female characters in a male-dominated society: gender discrimination, commodification of girl-child, forced-marriage, child-marriage, rape, incest, female genital mutilation, widowhood and motherhood. The work concludes that, in a male-dominated society, both male and female suffer psychological disorder except that female's experiences are severe and they suffer more than their male counterparts do.

Olayinka's work on female oppression is in convergence with the aim of this study, particularly, in a male-dominated society. The study focuses on developmental process of

female protagonists through the perspective of female bildungsroman in Francophone African women's writings, while Olayinka explores oppression in both francophone and anglophone novels using Calixthe Beyala, a Camerounian and Buchi Emecheta, a Nigerian to account for African female experience. Furthermore, Olayinka investigates psychological disorders of characters, while this study is concentrated on the developmental process of young girls and women suffering from oppression right from childhood to the stage of maturity. The assertion of Olayinka that female experiences are arduous and severe is in consonance with the focus of this study.

Siwoku-Awi's study (2004), on 'Psycho-realist approach to the study of patriarchy in feminist counter-culture in the selected works of female writers is similar to Olayinka's. The study, situated within eclectic approach, selects texts of African and non-African feminist works. The study shows that writers write to reflect realities in their society and concludes that patriarchy is a common phenomenon in every society perpetrated by both male and female. It further shows that patriarchy is culture, society and gender bound. The work is quite different from the present study because our study focuses on oppression of female protagonists situated within francophone women writings. Thus, this work does not explore oppression on male protagonists to ascertain the magnitude of oppression inflicted on them. Also, Siwoku-awi's (2004) work selects writers from different continent of the world. As much as we recognise the informative importance of these studies, the focus of the scholars is not from the perspective of female bildungsroman.

Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail* (1998), creates a narrative framework that epitomises the constructions of immigration and racial discrimination against the Black race in European countries. The author exposes the problems confronting the black immigrants, most especially the Senegalese in far away France. Sow Fall, a true representative of cultural values, takes the bull by the horns by providing an enabling environment for Senegalese community and African society as a whole. As a visionary writer, she had previewed the ideas of the Senegalese people transiting to France. This is revealed in one of her interviews when she says:

Pour *Douceurs du bercail*, je n'ai pas choisi un thème d'actualité ... Mais j'avais déjà perçu la mentalité de la jeunesse africaine à cette époque... Et j'ai pensé qu'il fallait écrire pour sensibiliser. (Sow Fall 2005 interview granted to D'Edwige)

For *Douceurs du bercail*, I did not choose a recent happening for theme ... but I had previewed the mentality of African youths at this period... In addition, I thought it is better to write in order to sensitise (*Our translation*)

It is obvious in the text that the author is melancholic about the exodus syndrome of Senegalese people to European countries. However, Sow Fall's depiction of *dépôt* in France Airport, symbolises alienation, frustration, exploitation, incarceration, racial discrimination and even death. Exile is deconstructed because overseas do not always yield an optimistic fruition. The idea of homecoming emphasised by the author deconstructs migration to those who are bent on running away to the European countries. Sow Fall intentionally portrays migration as a disaster-prone effort. She urges the African youths to go back to the land, because the alienation from land has disorganised the political, economic and socio-cultural order of the entire Africa. In this regard, the author uses literary medium to correct the mindset of the Senegalese toward migration. Sow Fall (1987) further says:

La littérature doit évoluer et dépasser le stade de réhabilitation de l'homme noir. J'ai pensé que l'on pouvait créer une littérature qui reflète simplement notre manière d'être, qui soit un miroir de notre âme et de notre culture. Je me suis mise à écrire comme modèle la société dans laquelle je vivais. (Sow Fall cited in Lambert, 1987 :20-22)

Literature must evolve and move beyond the period of rehabilitation of the black man. I thought one could create a literature that simply reflects our way of being, which is a mirror of our soul and our culture. I started eulogising the society in which I lived (*Our translation*)

The author, in her bid to preserve the African culture preaches the value of land to African society. The sermon on back-to-the-land or stay in your father's land deconstructs European countries, which Africans regard as "Paradise" or "*Eldorado*." Sow Fall indicts the youths, urging them to go back to the ways of the ancestors (farming). The people's agonising experience at the *dépot* reinforces her vision that migration to Europe is a fallacy.

Aminata Sow Fall has been castigated by many scholars that her literary works do not evoke feminine voice and for this reason, she is labelled anti-feminist. Adebayo (2000:287), in her article 'Feminism in francophone African literature: from liberalism to militancy' corroborates the above statement when she states that:

Sow Fall's preoccupation is politically rather than gender motivated. It is political in the sense that she is committed to the general problems agitating both sexes in the society and not those, which are circumscribed by gender.

The implication of this submission is that Sow Fall's work does not exemplify gender issues but communal problems. The incorporation of Sow Fall's female oppression

as well as societal problems in *Douceurs du bercail* makes it attractive to the genres of female bildungsroman.

In another vein, Ellington (1992:137), substantiates the above statement in her article entitled 'Aminata Sow Fall's 'Demon' Woman: An Anti-Feminist Social Vision'. She posits:

This feminine voice is not heard in the novels of Aminata Sow Fall. Her main protagonists are male, the world she projects is a male world, and the narrator's voice is a masculine one.

The above statement does not align with this study. Ellington's assertion could have been true if she had studied all of Sow Fall's literary works. In this study, Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail* projects female voice and also puts the protagonist at the centre, as an epitome of social change. The author's style of writing has changed in this contemporary era because *Douceurs du bercail* is dedicated to Senegalese women in order to effect positive transformation in the Senegalese society. This positive transformation is an ultimate goal in female bildungsroman.

As aforementioned, a writer does not necessarily have to belong to any political or social group before she writes. Writing comes from the mind and not through any political movement like feminism. On this point, *Douceurs du bercail* is a prototype of female bildungsroman which focuses on the survival of both women and men. Sow Fall as a feminist bildungsroman, writes beyond feminist aesthetics. She refuses to identify herself with any political or any militant movement before she writes. Sow Fall through some of her works (*Jubier de Patriache, les grèves des battus, Douceurs du bercail* among others) detests patriarchal culture. She thus, establishes a leading example of a woman, who has been under the dominance of untold suffering and subjugation and who later finds escape. Consequently, she refutes this accusation by declaring that:

The feminist movement as it appears in Western countries, in my opinion, doesn't correspond to the preoccupations we have here. We don't have the same ways of expressing ourselves, of demanding our rights. Our realities are not Western realities. This is a judgment I make as I observe our own social arena, the relations between men and women here, as regards to Senegal, the country I know best, I don't think women need to adopt the tactics of feminist militancy like the communists do. (Aminata Sow Fall 1988 an interview granted to Hawkins: 425).

Most African women writers, including Aminata Sow Fall, do not believe in Western feminism because Western feminism principles negate the doctrines of African culture. This is confirmed by Kolawole (1997), "African womanism and African consciousness".

“Aminata Sow Fall, Ama Ata Aidoo, Bessie Head, and Mariama Ba, among others, have all “denied being feminists at various times”- calling for the consideration of racial, economic, and cultural divergences among women (p.10). Sow Fall is also not the only female writer who rejects the title “feminist”. (Kumah, 2000) also condemns the opposition of the gender relations against Western feminism. He concludes that “Emecheta and many of her colleagues have opted for an alternative that is more consistent with an African perspective.”

Adebayo (2000: 279), however condemns African women for “lack of courage to admit to a sound ideological base to their enterprise, even when they were free to adapt feminism to their African experience”. She further adds that the situation “robbed African women’s creative writing of an identity for a long time”. This study maintains that some African female writers, including Sow Fall negate the title “feminist” and do not want to be identified with militant feminists, it is therefore deducible why Emecheta uses the small letter “f” in Feminism. Another critic that opposes Sow Fall’s mode of writing is Kesteloot quoted by Udousoro (2013), who criticizes the alleged absence of women’s right in the author’s narratives. She opines that “Aminata Sow Fall, as a feminist author, has no pity for women”. The words of Cazenave, however, counter Kesteloot’s declaration when he writes, “Aminata Sow Fall is ‘stricto sensu’ a feminist, fighting for women’s ultimate recognition” (Cazenave, 1991:59). Hence, Sow Fall is a committed writer whose literary works have been scrutinising the ills of the society, irrespective of the gender. Her creative writings have helped thousands of people who are exposed to social traumas and afflictions. From the foregoing, this study does not explore the political stance of the writer; but in the message she passes across. This study does not dwell on feminism; it employs female *bildungsroman* to trace the maturity of the protagonist in a male-dominated society.

Anih (2013:119), in his article: “Womanist reading of *Douceurs du bercail*’ in “African Cultures and Literatures; A Miscellany”, agrees with Cazenave’s when he writes that:

Aminata Sow Fall as a committed writer interested in the total well-being of the African woman denounces violence against women by creating in her fictive universe women who are victims of odious crime.

This position is a turning point in ascertaining the position of Aminata Sow Fall as an advocate of women’s rights. In this regard, the onus lies on the reader to analyse a text within the parameters of any theory of his or her choice. Besides, an author just writes without focusing on any theoretical paradigm. It is the readers or critics that interpret

whether the literary work is a feminist, realist or Marxist theory. If a female writer disregards feminism as an unwelcome paradigm, her work is there to justify her intentions. Anih proposes womanist reading of *Douceurs du bercail* to negate the submissions of Sow Fall's critics. To buttress his opinion, he writes:

Aminata Sow Fall resorts to womanist strategies in addressing the ills of the society. The gendered socio-political temper of her novel, *Douceurs du bercail* is in tune with the womanist imperative of implicating racial, cultural, national, economic, and political dimensions in the discussion of gender.  
(Anih, 2013:110)

A Womanist is regarded as a universalist who, irrespective of gender or race, sees men and women as equal. In this study, Aminata Sow Fall as a writer invests authoritative virtues in female gender more than the male counterpart does. This is why this study employs female bildungsroman as the theoretical framework to *Douceurs du bercail*. The portrayal of men as the almighty perfectionist or purist, with their domineering nature over women is strongly deconstructed in *Douceurs du bercail*. Anih's investigation of the text through the lens of womanist inclination arises from the way the author defends the African culture to suit men and women in the text.

It is pertinent to bring on board the observation of Mortimer (2007:76), on Sow Fall, he avers that:

[...] The Senegalese novelist subverts the paradigm of the African woman defined in terms of her domestic role; she proposes instead a new female subjectivity located in a place beyond the double restriction of African patriarchy and European colonialism.

What can be deduced from the above statement is that Sow Fall moves the protagonist beyond the task of domestic oppression and challenges racism in European countries. Sow Fall creates a new heroine in *Douceurs du bercail* to deconstruct wife battering, conjugal rape, as domestic violence meted out to her.

The study of *Douceurs du bercail* by Mabana (2012: 1), also contributes greatly to this work. Mabana's criticism revolves around the abuse of the female body. "*Douceurs du bercail* by Aminata Sow Fall is built around the topic of the female body" (1) Mabana portrays this further as "strict puritanism to libertinage, self-control and self-respect to no-limitation in the use of the body" (*ibid*). Mabana fills the gap of female body in *Douceurs du bercail*, while this analogy is based on the need for the heroine's total reconstruction of identity. Mabana's exploration of woman's body also inspires this study to have a focus on racist oppression as postulated by the author. Following Mabana's opinion, it is learnt that

African women have moral values, absolute control over their bodies, they have respect for tradition and they are also guided by religion. Thus, Sow Fall deconstructs nudity as racist oppression, which aligns with moral decadence.

Khady Koita's *Mutilée* (2005), chronicles both the childhood and adulthood life of the author. The major aim of the author is to deconstruct the myths revolving around oppressive traditions like Female Genital Mutilation, child marriage, polygamy, wife battering among others. Various scholars have explored these themes and associated them with tradition.

Levin (2012), embraces the spirit of resilience and optimism in Khady, when she says: "writing *Mutilée* is to ensure that academic and literary studies representative of African activists' commitment to eliminate female genital mutilation reach a broader audience'. Following Levin's assertion, the literary text *Mutilée*, which symbolises Khady's voice, has reached many planets around the world in different languages. Levin makes *Mutilée* a must-read novel in France and the narrative text is translated into Japanese, Russian, Chinese, and many European languages. This shows that translating Khady's *Mutilée* into different languages would sensitise people around the world to have zero tolerance for female genital mutilation. The words of Khady testify to what she passes through in her interview with Karmioli (2017).

[...] I have experienced the issues of FGM in Africa. I also still suffer from pain because of FGM. Africa has complicated the issue, which is a form of violence against women. The difficult truth is that most African leaders are men and they are not happy to acknowledge that this violence remains deeply entrenched in our society. The fact that FGM is treated as a tradition has also made it a complex issue. I am angry about the lack of political will in Africa to eradicate FGM. Political support, I believe, is crucial to provide education to women who will then be able to sort out the good and bad traditions in Africa. Khady (2017) granted interview to Edwin Karmioli, International Press Service)

Autobiographical stories, focuses on feelings, emotions and memories of the writer. It is a confessional story where the author is not expected to hide anything about herself. This is the reason why Khady speaks plainly by revealing all the horrific experiences she passed through when she was a teenager. In the past, a woman did not have the courage to reveal her secrets to the public for the fear of stigmatisation. African women writers use their pens to deconstruct all what we think of as the disgusting agony of female genital mutilation.

Khady also emphasises that in some cultures, when a girl is circumcised, she is ripe for marriage. The act of circumcision, is a violent assault carried out without informed consent, is thus, a way to entrench the gender inequality; it has been linked to girls dropping out of school early, child marriage and child pregnancy. All these are regarded as forms of deconstructive statements. The author is not afraid to tell the truth about her body, she is strong to speak on the human rights abuse.

While reviewing Mokkedem's *L'interdite*, (Gagiano, 2013), declares *L'interdite* as "a fierce and powerful novel that indicts Algerian society. The ugliness of extremisms and sexism cramps, hampers and damages the lives of all women". This assertion gives us an insight into the level of male animosity against women in Algeria. It is also corroborated by Tad (2012,) who describes Algeria as a country where "misogyny rides on the coattails of religious zealotry". What can be inferred from this assertion is that sexism is influenced by or relied on religious extremity, which incarcerates Algerian women. Mokkedem also deconstructs the act of "holier-than-thou" attitudes of the Islamic fundamentalists.

Mokkedem, in her authorial voice, explains the plight of Algerian women thus:

In Muslim societies, the individual does not exist: he or she exists only as a member of a tribe or clan and does not have the right to take initiatives. When it is a girl who takes initiative to say 'I', to assert herself, to be free, matters are even more dramatic. For, who holds the power of tradition? Who transmits the heritage of the absolute power of men? It is the women themselves. So, when a girl reaches school and begins to challenge this tradition that crushes everyone, the traditional family completely loses its structure, becomes panicked... but I believe that Muslim men are very worried. The rural exodus, immigration, unemployment, bad housing conditions, isolation, all weakens traditional family structures and breaks apart the tribe. The rebellion of a girl against her parents is considered to be a betrayal, and the reactions are violent (*Le point*, 28 August, 1993, 58 cited in (Marcus, 1998: xii)

Algerian girls or women have no right to challenge or deviate from the norms of the society. Consequently, the religious unrest and poor conditions of the country make girls and women to flee, seeking solace abroad. Mokkedem adds:

I saw my mother, I saw the women closed up inside their houses and subjugated. I did not want to become one of them. I did not want to grow up. I dreamed of going to the desert to die, to be devoured by jackals. I became anorexic (Catholique, 1991, 21; cited in Marcus 1998: viii).



The author deconstructs subjugation and the ideology behind putting women in *pardah*, which is synonymous with women enclosure or imprisonment. Instead of subjecting herself to marital torture or bondage as she has said, she would rather die in the desert and be consumed by jackals. In this regard, the literary work is employed to deconstruct imposition of *pardha*, which is seen as being normal in some Arab societies. The author deconstructs Islamic tradition that goes against modernity and the deceptive attitudes of the Islamic bigots that are associated with sexuality that leaves Arab women under the surveillance of the Islamic chauvinists. The authorial voice exposes further the situation in Algeria when she says,

If Algeria had really been committed to the path of progress, if its leaders had really worked at making mentalities evolve, I would have no doubt recovered. I would have forgotten bit by bit. But the country's current events and the fate of women here constantly plunge me back into my past dreams, link me to all those women who are tyrannized. The persecutions and the humiliations endured by them reach me reopen my wounds. Distance attenuates nothing. Pain is the strongest bond between humans. Stronger than all resentment (133). Mokkedem (1994) (cited in (Igoudjil, 2014:180-181)

Taking a cue from the above statement, the condition of Algerian women is thorny; Mokkedem feels their pains, humiliation and harassment. According to her, distance (France) prevents her from assuaging the pains and worries of these women. This study observes the author's undaunted feelings by unveiling the state of women's condition in Algeria. Apart from the story she recounts in the literary text, she still engages in oral interview in order to expose the cruel and oppressive attitudes of men towards women. Hence, as a committed writer who listens to the yearnings of her fellow women, she deploys literary medium to expose the wounds of Algerian women.

#### **2.4 Female writings: deconstructive arms to oppression**

Literature plays a fundamental role in deconstruction because fiction serves as a communication channel where information is spread across the world. In the same vein, literature presents characters or ideas that change gender standards. It tends to scrutinise, query, and argue for change against conventional and stereotyped gender roles. Patriarchy is the catchphrase of women writers and literature empowers them to disrupt without limit; and women's views about writing as a deconstructive weapon give female writers space to contribute to their own freedom.

Adebayo (2000:279), avers that: “writing in itself is a deconstructive act. [...] Women’s writing was therefore, first considered a deconstruction of the patriarchal order.” Thus, writing is a method of de-silencing patriarchal order because it destabilises patriarchal challenges that subdue women. Literature allows women writers to write freely and, in so doing, they use their pens as subversive weapons to express their pains, sorrows and struggles to combat gender-based oppression. Writing has now become a deconstructive device for protecting or saving women's lives; especially those women that are subordinated, helpless, abused and hopeless. Therefore, the significance of writing as a deconstructive strategy against oppression, specifically in the context of francophone African female writers, is brought to the fore by scholars. Gayle (1992:50) posits:

[...] it was from feminist writing fiction, poetry and nonfiction that transformed confusion to consciousness, enabling women to understand the changes they were living through and to interpret their “relative deprivation” as a collective phenomenon, rooted in inegalitarian social, economic, and political structures.

The foregoing means that all the literary genres educate and sensitise women to understand their plights. Furthermore, through literature, women fight the disparities in all ramifications and face their challenges collectively.

In fictional stories, life experiences are gathered and female writers in Africa often focus on women’s circumstance in their works of fiction. To this end, as African contemporary female writers are concentrating on women’s conditions, they provide readers and the society at large with didactic stories that deconstruct some of the experiences that young girls and women go through in their day-to-day activities. Literary interpretation needs to be applied to literary fictions in order to bring out the reality. Thus, women publications (novel, poetry and non-fiction stories) have evolved as a vehicle of deconstruction to convey the realities on women oppression. Female writings raise awareness and help women to realise their oppressive disorders socially, economically and politically in a male-dominated society.

Writing raises awareness. This is because when women know themselves and gain consciousness, they become aware of their subordination. So, writing empowers women to deconstruct hegemonic tendencies. This is the reason why female writers are considered as “illuminators of the female condition” Bâ, (1981:50).

Women through their writings have been struggling against oppression in order to unveil oppressive principles within their fictions. They believe that the real oppression stems from male dominance. “It is the duty of African women not just to write, but to use

writing as a weapon to destroy the age-old oppression of their sex," Bâ (1981: 50) Mariama Bâ, the author of *Une si longue lettre*, (*So long a letter*), conscientises women, to write in order to level up with men. She believes that it is only writing that can make women to deconstruct language of oppression, inequality and exploitation.

Fictional writing is seen as an exact form of deconstruction of the numerous encounters faced by African women. Through writing, women subvert their muteness by telling their stories involving manifestations of oppression. They use writing to deconstruct tradition, which forbids women to enjoy the freedom of expression. Thus, writing for women living in patriarchal societies is an effective medium of communication and this is considered particularly necessary in Magrebian society where speaking out can be very dangerous because women are forbidden to speak amidst men, as this can bring deadly penalty.

“Literature is no longer seen as a kind of poor relation to philosophy” (Norris, 2002:19). This is because, philosophy is a way of life and deconstruction is philosophical. In this regard, fictional stories have the power to influence people’s lives to understand reality. Hence, some of the fictional stories, if not all, have the tinge of reality in them. Thus, a literary form is inseparable from philosophical content. This is because it awakens and cultivates the didactic thoughts in human lives. Deconstruction, being philosophical and instrumental to literary analysis, needs to be employed to literary fictions in order to bring out the reality.

Thus, women’s publications (novel, poetry and non-fiction stories) evolved as a vehicle of deconstruction to convey the realities on women oppression. On this note, female writers employ the weaponry of their pen to deconstruct some African mythologies in order to redefine universal truth about women in some ways that do not raise dominant discourses. In this contemporary era, female writers have now come together to reconstruct and to effect positive changes on patriarchal issues that hinder the developmental advancement of young girls and women in the process of attaining adulthood.

Fictional writings by francophone African female authors highlight the predicament of women. They also indicate various attempts to create a decorous environment for resolving women’s problems. They deconstruct oppression in the institutions of marriage, widowhood rites, harmful cultural practices, perspectives on exile, gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, and religious chauvinism among others. In this regard, the concept of silence as a symbol of female oppression becomes significant.

Nfah-Abbenyi (1997:148), remarks that in the past, women writers were not heard, they were forbidden to publish, compelled to write under male pseudonyms or using

fictitious names and, usually, omitted from the literary listing. She urges African women writers to challenge male dominance in the literary world: She concludes that:

African women writers have not just openly lamented, questioned, and criticized the neglect of their work; they have also attacked this neglect through their ongoing exercise of the act of writing. They have slowly but surely used their writings as weapons to invade the battlefields that had hitherto been occupied and dominated by male writers, making tangible gains along the way. These women writers have beaten and are still beating their drums and are letting their war-cries be heard side by side those of their counterparts at home and abroad. In their quest to “let their war-cries be heard”, African women writers have played a major role in African women’s struggle for dignity.

In the contemporary era, African women writers have been using their pens to wage persistent war against male discourse. The works of African women writers are usually viewed as deconstructive weapons that uncover and attack their oppressions or frustrations. Women have thus been demonstrating their power behind writing paradigm. Prasanna (2005:9) asserts:

We need to remember that in writing, [...] in giving in to the urge of self-expression, women have already flouted tradition in that they are doing what they are not supposed to be doing. When a woman writes, she is turning her back on tradition. She is proclaiming herself, she is saying I will speak, I will say what I want to say. The very process of writing is a loud declaration of the self, something that tradition barred her from.

Based on Prasanna’s assertion, any woman who exhibits the virtue of writing is making a thunderous noise about herself and is equally denouncing tradition that excludes her voice from male-dominated society.

The feminist writer and critic, D’Almeida (1994:x), who has extensively studied the literary works of francophone African women, stresses the significance of *prise d’écriture*, (textual awareness):

It is indeed important that as many people as possible know that African women have “taken writing” (*Prise d’écriture*) and used this new medium as a liberating force to champion the cause of women and of a new African society. A self-definition and a reconstruction of the African woman, new perspectives in articulating difference, an inventive way of using language, a strong socio-political commitment within a feminicentric perspective: these are some of the striking elements that the writings of [Francophone] African women eloquently offer.

D'Almeida opines that *Prise d'écriture* (textual awareness) has increased women's level of articulation, manifested through writing, which eventually becomes an arm of liberation. In view of this, women, through creative writings, represent themselves fully and earn recognition as mature human beings. This is because writing removes them from subservience. It has been noted that the African society is heavily oppressive and so, for contemporary women writers, writing becomes a crucial pace in deconstructing silence and oppression. D'Almeida (1994:11), in her effort to deconstruct the "emptiness of silence", charges women to write about their pains and woes in order to be free:

Writing becomes an extraordinarily liberating force because what you cannot do or say, you can write. Writing makes it possible to "*dire l'interdit*. Speak the forbidden. And language in the writing of African women is ... a powerful weapon able to convey a committed message while destroying the emptiness of silence.

Through writing therefore, the selected francophone women authors fight the subordination of women. The five selected female writers disrupt the patriarchal orders of their societies by introducing innovative tactics that jettison various old practices. Writing, as a deconstructive style, is reflected in the words of the Egyptian feminist writer, (Nawal El Sadawi, cited in D'Almeida, 1994) when she compares writing to killing:

Writing is like killing because it takes a lot of courage as when you kill, because you are killing ideas, you are killing injustices, you are killing systems that oppress you, sometimes it is better to kill the outside world than to kill yourself. (1-2)

Nawal takes writing as a weapon that destroys muteness and dismantles injustices which perpetuate subjugation and discrimination against women. All the selected authors for the study deconstruct the horrendous acts in their various societies. The resolution of women to take their destinies in their own hands and to be independent-minded is one of the defining qualities of female writing.

Inspiration for writing in contemporary society emanates from different perspectives. Some writers focus on the political, some focus on the cultural, while some write on the female psyche. Showalter (1981:187), identifies four models which women's writing follows, namely: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic and cultural. She also notes that these models not only overlap but also interplay and contribute to one another. She notes that a theory based on the cultural model would better explain the difference between women's writing because a theory of culture incorporates ideas about the women's body, language, and psyche; all of which may be interpreted in relation to the social context in

which they occur. The way women conceptualise their bodies, their sexual and reproductive functions are intricately linked to their cultural environment. (Showalter, 1981).

The cultural model draws attention to the cultural conducts within the writer's milieu and this enable her to have the fore knowledge of the condition of women in the society. Showalter's cultural model aligns well with this work. This is because African female writings revolve around family, culture, society and history. Moving from autobiography to issues of the family and the larger community makes them draw themes from natural issues, from the personal to the collective. These themes are, in one way or the other, linked to a reaction against the oppressive system which the women deconstruct.

Literary works about women oppression are inspired by writers' social status, personal experiences, observations and ideology. The texts written by women reflect their personal life experiences in resistance against male domination. For instance, Mokeddem's *L'interdite* is self-referential of the main character of the novel, bears many resemblances to the author: she is a doctor, a nephrologist and a non-conformist.

Beyala (2006: 605-615), in her interview with Matateyou, claims that she uses writing from exile to break her silence. She uses her freedom in exile to deconstruct the restrictions placed on women in her country (Cameroon) owing to the patriarchal nature of the society. She considers France as a place where she has the freedom of speech and writing:

Si j'habitais le Camérout, je n'aurais pas le droit à la parole. L'exil me donne la liberté qui m'est refusée, l'exil me donne la parole qui m'est refusée, l'exil est ma survie. Car si j'habitais le Camérout, aurais-je pu écrire et avoir cet impact international?

If I lived in Camérout, I would not have the right to speak. Exile gives me the freedom that I am denied. Exile gives me the speech that I am denied. Exile is my survival. For if I lived in Camérout, would I be able to write and have this international impact?

Morris (1993) asserts what writing means to African women:

Morris (1993:7) It has traditionally been believed that creative forms of writing can offer special insight into human experience and sharpen our perception of social reality.... In addition, the strong emotional impact of imaginative writing may be brought into play to increase indignation at gender discrimination and hence, help to end it.

Morris argues that fictional writing offers an opportunity through which women can interrogate the power of discrimination that controls relationship between the sexes. It can be used to offer positive alternatives to dominant stereotypes on women. Consequently,

literature serves as a major mouthpiece through which patriarchal structures oppressing women can be defied and possibly reversed.

In the twentieth century, the francophone world produced and continues today to produce many literary works that address the subject of Female Genital Mutilation. Fatou Kéïta and Khady demonstrate how women are able to make an impact when they are activists and deconstructionists against excision in their own communities. Thus, the act of writing, accepting the role of spokespersons becomes a revolutionary act that empowers not only the writers, but also the community of women at large. This is why the writings of African women are seen as threats to men.

The manner, in which some of the former male writers or Negritude writers portray womanhood, by praising women's body, creates emotional trauma for women authors. Women are represented as effigies or figurines, figuratively to show the beauty of women during the pre-colonial era. This is shown in the poem of Léopold Sédar Senghor's *Femme noire, femme Africaine* and Camara Layé's *À ma mère* in the introductory part of *L'enfant Noir*. In trying to valorize African culture, African women are portrayed as subordinates and docile. Sanusi (2004:40) writes,

Negritude writers particularly depicted African women in their poems as docile and passive and considered those attributes as good qualities. The textual representation of women by men in the early phase of written African literatures played an important role in the subordination of women.

To disregard this assertion, Cioux's (2000), in *L'écriture féminine*, proposes feminine writing to defy men's oppressive language. Cioux encourages women to celebrate themselves, write and live in a free society devoid of sexist tendencies. She stresses that woman-writing-woman and writing-the-body can represent the feminine world only when a woman releases herself from the linguistic control of masculine oppression.

For the purpose of deconstructing repressive language, which male writers use to subdue women, Cixous puts forward two principal methods. The first is to reclaim the body in its distinct role as a "new insurgent" (p,883), while the second is to free the "censor[ed]" body. The interpretation of the first method is that a woman can regain her position in the world by gaining power through writing as she rebels against restrictions that controls her; and once a woman reclaims her body, she is no longer an economic and linguistic commodity. Mokeddem, Kéïta, Khady and Sow Fall write about the female body as a ploy to portray their fictional characters as 'new insurgents'. In this regard, writing from the body is tantamount to rejection of the tradition that forbids sexuality as a public discourse.

Fictional writing is an act of storytelling which tends to widen the horizon of the readers. It also brings the impossible within the reader's reach. As a result of this, reading women's narratives reveals what they want to teach the readers. Minh-ha (1997: 28) posits, "To (re) tell stories is to enter into the constant recreation of the world, of community, of mankind". This means that, every time one shares one's story through writing, it is like giving a testimony to the benefit of humanity, which makes it more real. This fact is reflected, for example, in Khady's autobiographical narrative, *Mutilée*. The memoir is a vehicle by which she shares her story; a story that enhances consciousness of the woman's personal power and the ability to shape her world by means of self-activity. Likewise, the narrative provides a living example that can facilitate the healing of others.

The primary mode of deconstructing discursive restrictions in many francophone women's texts is to untie the suture from stitched up mouths. The selected authors for this study employ the instrumentability of their creativity to depict the ills of society, to deconstruct oppression and to document opposition struggles such as masculinity-femininity, tradition-modernity, individual-collective, and society-exile. African women writers and critics, such as those cited in this study, offer an alternative perspective of female portrayal in contemporary African literature. They have written so much on women's oppression and have attempted to deconstruct most of the thorny issues that debar women's progress. As we shall show further, these women's writings provide sharp insights into women's lives and the social order that governs them.

## **2.5 The concept of patriarchy**

The word "patriarchy" originates from Latin *pater*, which means "father", and *arches* from Greek which means "chief of a race" Ferguson, (1999:1048). Hence, a patriarchal society is considered to be a society where fathers are the chief or dominant agents and controllers of every activity: social, economic, political, intellectual and religious. Thus, patriarchal society is parallel to androcentric or a male-dominated society where male interests dominate women's opinions and every orientation is understood and interpreted from the masculinist perspective.

Feminists and women writers depict the system of patriarchy as the root of gender oppression which comprises various acts of abuse and violence, manipulated pattern of power and control, perpetrated against women and girls due to their gender. Gender-based oppression is an emotional issue that covers a wide range of violation of "woman rights". It overlaps with oppression based upon class, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, education,



gender identity, religion, immigration status and language. It also manifests in rape, domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, trafficking of women and girls, and several harmful traditional practices like Female Genital Mutilation. Some countries are particularly known for these practices. For instance, in China and India, sex-discriminatory abortion and female infanticide are rampant. Men discriminate against female children. These terrible experiences provoke distress on women both physically and psychologically. Some women have committed suicide because of domestic violence, rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Many rapists go unpunished while rape cases are not reported because of the fear of stigmatisation from the society. Millions of girls are initiated into prostitution on daily basis. This study highlights the underlying principles of gender oppression in order to adequately capture the dynamics of oppressive systems and to create effective strategies to address and minimise it in patriarchal world.

Since most societies are patriarchal in nature, the concept has also become predominant in the genres of female bildungsroman. Feminists use bildungsroman to fight for autonomy and self-development. Through the genre of female bildungsroman, women fight against disparity of rights and for repositioning cultural concepts in the society. Many schools of thoughts criticise patriarchy, for instance, Marxists point out that patriarchy is concerned with class struggle and capitalist system; thus, if capitalism is shattered, women would be free from all hegemonic problems.

Generally, any social means that suggests male dominance against women's belief is equivalent to patriarchy and many scholars have represented their opinions on the subject through their writings. "Many feminists (especially scholars and activists) have called for culture repositioning as a method for assessing patriarchy. Culture repositioning relates to culture change. It involves the reconstruction of the cultural concept of a society" (Chigbu, 2015 18: 3). Petrakis and Kostis, (2013: vol.47) explain that for "culture repositioning to take place, policy-makers need to make a great effort to improve some basic aspects of a society's cultural traits". Before patriarchy becomes prevalent, feminists had been using the terms "male chauvinism" and "sexism" in reference to patriarchy. (Hooks, 2004:17-25). She argues that the new term which is patriarchy, identifies the ideological system itself (that men are inherently dominant or superior to women) that can be believed and acted upon by either men or women, whereas the earlier terms imply that only men act as oppressors of women.

Lerner (1986: 201), maintains "patriarchy as a system of oppression of women which is socially constructed and seen as a natural phenomenon. She argues further that,

“the control of men over women's body or sexuality and reproductive roles is a fundamental cause and result of patriarchy.

Scholars like Fishbein (2002:27) and Dubber (2005:5-7) declare that the works of “Aristotle portrays women as morally, intellectually, and physically inferior to men. They depict women as the property of men; claim that women's role in society is to reproduce and serve men in the household”. In this respect, Lerner (1986: 8-11), states that women should free themselves from reproductive functions in order to be free from patriarchal oppression.

Walby (1990:20), defines patriarchy as “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women”. Walby's definition recognises patriarchy as a social organisation that puts men at the centre to subdue and have control over women. In other words, subservience and exploitation of women by men is the hallmark of patriarchy.

Feminists' writings foreground the fact that colonialism and patriarchy are the bases of women oppression, which consequently render them voiceless. Adebayo (2000:281) avows that:

Whether she lived in the bush or in the city, the African woman is still doubly oppressed: firstly, she is oppressed by colonialism and neocolonialism like her male counterpart, and, secondly, she is oppressed by the patriarchal arrangement whereby the women and the children belong to the minority group, in the sense that they are denied some privileges and freedom, which society normally allows for the dominant group. In this case, the dominant group is the male. It is the destiny of the subaltern, of the minority group, which becomes the focus of many francophone women's writing.

The general belief is that all women's problems are tucked or embedded in patriarchy. Women are considered inferior to men and they are logically barred from taking decision on family matters and participating in political actions because of gender. For this reason, francophone women writers hold the view that within the patriarchal system, there are possibilities for self-definition and personal emancipation.

The radical feminist, Daly (1978:24) writes,

The courage to be logical, the courage to name-would require that we admit to ourselves that males and males only are the originators, planners, controllers, and legitimators of patriarchy. Patriarchy is the homeland of males; it is Father Land; and men are its agents.

According to Daly, men are accepted by women as the harbingers and the managers of patriarchy, the perpetrators and agents of sexism. In view of this, women need to summon the courage to defy patriarchy. Radical feminists, in their own world, regard

“patriarchy” as their maxim. To them, patriarchy is an institutionalised and persistent form of male domination that is rooted in female oppression. They believe that patriarchy is socially constructed; it has nothing to do with biological differences. Patriarchy, according to radical feminists, starts within the family structures, which serve as the basis of domination and female subordination across economic, political and social aspects of life. Radical feminists argue that the belief that women are different and inferior is deeply entrenched in most men's consciousness because women are regarded as the main beneficiaries of subordination. Patriarchal society gives absolute power to men and limits women's human rights. Patriarchal institutions make it difficult for women to go forward in society. This assertion is confirmed by Tong (2013:2-3). She argues that:

It is the patriarchal system that oppresses women, a system characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy and competition, a system that cannot be reformed but only ripped out root and branch. It is not just patriarchy's legal and political structures that must be overturned; its social and cultural institutions (especially the family, the church, and the academy) must go.

However, patriarchy is the bane of women's problems and, according to radical feminists, patriarchy is regarded as the most dominant force in the world today. By its very nature, it is rooted in the subjugation of women. In the last two decades, discrimination against women becomes known as one of the most visible social issues in francophone countries in particular and Africa in general, which causes women's subordination. These discriminations are found in the social, political, economic, religious and cultural aspects of the society. Male domination and women's subordination are contemporary issues of the public society.

## **2.6 Representations of francophone women in patriarchal society**

This section explores the portrayal of francophone women in a male-dominated society and reflects how they have been struggling to come out of the yoke of hegemonic problems. African women writers are regarded as visionary writers because they predict through their writings, and they pass didactic and therapeutic messages around the globe. Through their writings, mythical and sexist ideologies revolving around patriarchal customs that make women mute and barely visible are revealed.

Storytelling through novels has put francophone African women in the limelight. They use the skill to review the patriarchal order, to defend women against savage customs and traditions in the community. Thus, francophone women writers have created a literary space that expresses a vision of collective identity that averts patriarchal oppressions.

Mariama Bâ, for instance, portrays the pains of wifhood and motherhood in *Une si longue lettre*, Yaou's *Le prix de la révolte* depicts a woman who suffers alone for bad widowhood practices; and thus, women in search of identity is explored in Kéïta's *Rebelle* and Mokeddem's *L'interdite*, the agony of a battered wife is reflected in Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail* and a woman who gives an account of her horrible story life is reflected in Khady's *Mutilée*. These writers create awareness; each ponders on female identity, raises female hope and exposes male deception. Francophone female writers present female protagonists that live miserable life. In this vein, the remark of Adebayo (2000:278) becomes relevant:

The francophone African women who first broke the silence performed a revolutionary act. Women's writing was therefore first considered a deconstruction of the patriarchal order.

This is a truism of francophone African women writers because, their writings capture the physical and mental torture that women go through. African women are relegated to the background and a typical African woman is expected to stoop low or debase herself before she can be recognised in an African patriarchal society. Francophone women, through their creative work, embark on writing strategy to deconstruct the silence in order to resist and eradicate hegemonic disorders. Thus, writing becomes a radical tool of liberation.

Francophone women are deprived of educational opportunities owing to patriarchal oppressions. In Ivory Coast, Senegal and Algeria, the five selected authors represent the problem of illiteracy through their narratives. Men think education is primarily for them. Female children are not given equal chance with boys to develop their personalities. The five authors selected above are therefore, able to refer to their women as illiterates.

George L.A., (2012) opines that some women aid and abet some men to victimise their fellow women which renders them in subaltern position. She speaks out:

We (women) we all live in a patriarchal society. A patriarchal society is one where men are the decision-makers and hold positions of power and prestige. Men in those positions have the power to define reality and common situations for all. What is sad is that so many women elect to support this society and to be participants in the abuse of other women. It is unfortunate but true. ... This situation not only exists but is aided and abetted by women. We really need to speak up for women no matter where they live....

The above highlights what is obtainable in a patriarchal society when we consider the true condition of women in a male-dominated society. The authoritative power of men throws women off-balance. Some women are even deceived into exploiting and oppressing their fellow women. For instance, women who are expected to be the rescuers of their daughters

and sisters in the operation of female genital mutilation and arranged marriage stand as the real enemies. This is the reason why Lucy portrays them as agents of tradition who support men in oppressing other women.

Henderson (2000:7), avers that : “It is not that black women in the past have nothing to say, but they have had no say”. This is because in patriarchal society, like francophone society, women are being controlled and suppressed. It is considered a taboo for women to open up where men are. Patriarchy compels some women to accept traditions blindly, which creates space for domination and subordination. Nevertheless, in 1970s, some feminists’ texts deconstructed patriarchal society in the area of domestic violence, polygamy, child marriage, divorce and widowhood. These writers include the chosen authors: Mariama Bâ, Aminata Sow Fall, Calixthe Beyala, Khady Koita, Fatou Kéïta among others challenged and fought tradition and patriarchal issues forced on African women.

The contribution of Keddie (1991:1) makes an overt and explicit revelation on the deplorable conditions of francophone Arab women:

Arabo-feminists are concerned with a number of issues affecting women in their societies, issues such as culture constraints, gender segregation, class stratification, economic exploitation, religious intolerance and political oppression. Two main subjects, however, occupy center stage in Arabo-Islamic feminist discourse, namely, marriage and sexuality. The problems relating to marriage addressed by Muslim women writers include early marriage for teenage girls, which is premised on the protection of girls from violation or unwanted pregnancy; contracted marriages in which parents choose a husband for the girl; polygamy, which permits a man to have as many as four wives; paternal cousin marriage, which ensures that property stays in the patrilineal line; and the divorce laws, which favour men over women.

The above statement suggests that patriarchy and religion are intertwined in francophone Arab society, including Maghrebian society. Women conditions in some of the francophone Arab countries are depicted as appalling. This is because women’s social habits are in consonance with the patriarchal habits and customs of the country. They are deprived of personal autonomy and economically maltreated. In this regard, Female authors, therefore, deconstruct this ideology by calling it women imprisonment.

The influence of patriarchy in domestic violence cannot be overlooked. The forms of wife battering, rape, genital mutilation and domestic abuse are seriously ravaging in francophone countries. Wife battering, to Mokeddem, Fatou Kéïta, Khady Koita and Aminata Sow Fall has patriarchal undertone. The violence inflicted upon francophone female fictional characters by francophone men assumes more sinister conformation in the

chosen novels. The bond nature of marriage, for instance, which underpins the patriarchal tradition of male domination and female compliance, is a subject of great concern to the selected authors. The *Quran* also substantiates patriarchy in such a manner as to rationalise or even authorise a husband to beat his wife if she fails to preserve her dignity. The Quran states that:

The men are placed in charge of the women, since God has endowed them with the necessary qualities and made them bread earners. The righteous women will accept this arrangement obediently, and will honour their husbands in their absence, in accordance with God's commands. As for the women who show rebellion, you shall first enlighten them, then desert them in bed, and you may beat them as a last resort. (Quran 4:34)

Religion, with some of its tenets has been employed by some men as excuses of oppressing women. Ezeigbo (1994:2), lends credence to the above statement when she considers "Gender oppression as a scourge [...] that has its source in religion, tradition and politics." The above quotation puts women's lives in peril if one considers the beating aspect of the statement, which is somewhat degrading. However, Fatou Kéïta, Aminata Sow Fall and Khady reveal the scourge of wife battering to show another patriarchal power in francophone Sub-Saharan Africa. Portraying it in the creative writings deconstructs the shameful deeds.

Another element of patriarchal oppression that affects francophone African women is polygamy. The issue of polygamy is no longer a private matter but a public concern because of the social problems that continue to arise through it. Polygamy demoralises and destabilises women's sense of worth, sense of autonomy and ability to feel and act independently. To deconstruct polygamy, Calixthe Beyala in her opinion, translated by Adebayo Aduke (2004: 289), suggests:

Polygamy must be banished entirely. No matter how intelligent a man may be, he should not have many wives. In my opinion, one is already too much.

Polygamy, to some men is intended for economic reason or to increase the family number. On the other hand, the Sudanese President, Omar Hassan al-Bashir (2015: par. 6) has positive opinion for polygamy. He affirms:

Polygamy should be maintained because multiple marriages are one of the options available for Sudan in order to increase its population.

Misogyny, which signifies "the hatred of women" (Flood: 2007) is another patriarchal oppression confronting women in francophone countries precisely Algeria. "All

human beings are equal” is a myth for women in Algeria. The misogyny provokes chains of discrimination and disparity which cut across all social spheres. Similarly, violence in whatever forms (physical, economic or sexual) is used against women to sustain inequality. Francophone women are subjected to the authority of men in the family and marriage which debar their development and freedom. It is equally amazing that in this 21st century, female children are used as pawns by their own fathers in Ivory Coast for economic survival. (Yaou’s *Le glass de l’infortune* 2009) Francophone women’s works of fiction depict patriarchal atrocities that are being perpetrated by some franchophone men. This is because, francophone men do not just find themselves in power, but they are in power because the patriarchal system that dominates the world favours them, by systematically debasing and marginalising women.

This Chapter has been able to examine existing critical studies on the five texts by five francophone authors. Issues such as oppression, gender, resistance and liberation were examined and it is evident that deconstruction has been a major theoretical position adopted in earlier studies and critical perspectives. It is stressed in this study that, deconstruction is a major tool for the elucidation of the selected texts. It is located at the level of interpretation.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

**3.0** This Chapter deals with the genre of female bildungsroman. It provides an overview of the theoretical basis for the study, it also presents the methodology adopted.

#### **3.1 Methodology**

This study adopts close reading as a method of data analysis in five francophone novels, informed by the genre of female bildungsroman. We focus our exploration on the developmental journey of five female protagonists in the selected francophone African women's novels. The close reading methodology enables us to explore the content, structure, plot, characterisation, themes, events, messages and significance of the perspectives in the texts. All these literary elements enable readers to comprehend the maturation process of the young female protagonists who are "coming-of-age" and also the epiphany of adult women protagonists in the "phase of new beginning", struggling for second chance in patriarchal society.

Thus, two narrative patterns in the genre of female bildungsroman are identified: coming-of-age novels and novels of epiphany. The first three selected novels: Mokkedem's *L'interdite*, Kéïta's *Rebelle* and Khady's *Mutilée* represent coming-of-age' narratives due to the linear or chronological styles of their heroines' development. The other two texts: Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail* and Yaou's *Le prix de la révolte* represent novels of epiphany. These types of novels revolve around adult women experiencing mid-life crisis after marriage and motherhood. Thus, for clarity and ease of reference in this work, we maintain 'coming-of-age' for young girls in their formative years and 'novel of epiphany' for adult women.

It is significant to note here that linear, traditional or conventional bildungsroman is in accordance with coming-of-age narrative, while novel of awakening or novel of women development is synonymous with 'novel of epiphany'. In spite of the variations (coming-of-age and epiphany), the five selected texts are situated within the genre of female bildungsroman. In this study, the focus is on gender in order to account for the 'female protagonists' diverse experiences in a male-dominated society. The genre of female bildungsroman belongs to broad feminist orientation as a means to achieving the goal in finding a new female identity, and consciously effecting change in male-dominated society.



## 3.2 Theoretical framework

Research is generally directed at discovering certain reforms upon which society is built and constantly reorganised, rather than to finding causes in the isolated sense. The application of theoretical assumptions examines the way reality is arranged and organised, such that the emerging new facts and potentials are identified and specified in findings which form the conclusion, recommendation and possible future paths or trends. Thus, this research work would rely on the genre of female bildungsroman, its context and capacity to affect literary and socio-cultural standards.

### 3.2.1 Historical overview of bildungsroman

The concept of bildungsroman, which is synonymous to 'coming-of-age' story (Lynch, 1999:2) was originally coined in 1819 by philologist Karl Morgenstern and later brought to the fore by the German philosopher and sociologist, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1941). In 1905, the genre became popular through Dilthey who legitimised it in 1870. The purpose of the genre of bildungsroman, according to Morgenstern, is to portray the hero's *bildung* (formation) as it begins and proceeds to a certain level of perfection (Summerfield, 2010:1).

When Johann Wolfgang von Goethe published *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* (1795-96), it was translated as *Novel of Apprenticeship*. The theme of apprenticeship is fundamental in the novel, and the apprenticeship is to be understood as the developmental process that the protagonist navigates through in order to reach maturity and moral change. Goethe, through his novel, introduces a narrative pattern that several other authors embrace. The style of the genre typically features a young protagonist, either male or female, who undergoes an uneasy adventure to attain maturity or adult identity and certain goals through the process of trials, experiences and exposures. In order to make Goethe's novel more popular, the novel is translated into English by Thomas Carlyle in 1824. The book gives inspiration to many British authors (Buckley, 1974). In the 20th century, the genre gained popularity among women and minority writers, and it has spread to numerous countries around the globe.

Bildungsroman is analogous to other genres, such as the *Künstlerroman*, a novel that focuses on the growth and development of an artist, the *Erziehungsroman*, a novel of upbringing, (right from birth) and the *Entwicklungsroman* a novel of character development. The prime user of bildungsroman, whom several critics and researchers have been making reference to in the British novel of formation, was (Buckely, 1974:17) with

his article entitled “Season of Youth: *The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*”. He sums up the features of the typical bildungsroman thus:

A child of some sensibility grows up in a country or 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 impervious to new ideas he has gained from unprescribed reading. His first schooling, even if not totally inadequate, may be frustrating in so far as it may suggest options not available to him in his present setting.

Buckley in his own analysis of the genre of bildungsroman explains further,

He therefore, sometimes at quite an early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home, (and also the relative innocence), to make his way independently to the city (in English novels, usually London). There his real “education” begins, not only his preparation for a career but also ... and often more importantly ... 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 visit his old home, to demonstrate by his presence the degree of his success or the wisdom of his choice. (Buckley, 1974:17–18, Stein, 2004:25)

In traditional bildungsroman, the developmental stages of the protagonist follow a linear strategy. According to Buckley (1974), a bildungsroman is a novel that portrays a set list of characteristics, among them: “childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love, the search for a vocation and a working philosophy” (Buckley: 231). From Buckley’s brief description of the traditional bildungsroman structure, which this study refers to as linear, conventional or male bildungsroman, the development of the protagonist occurs according to a pattern: the sensitive, intelligent protagonist leaves home, undergoes stages of conflict and growth; he or she is tested by crisis and love affairs, then finally integrates into his or her former society and starts to use his or her unique talents in her community. Sometimes, the protagonist returns home to display his or her new talents in his or her community. Thus, the protagonist’s adventures can be seen as a pursuit for meaningful life existence.

From the onset, the traditional bildungsroman was mainly concerned with male developmental goals. However, Buckley’s study on bildungsroman focuses on a male

literary tradition and follows specific characteristics. Women writers have argued it out that the developmental stages of a female protagonist can as well follow the linear pattern.

Hader 1996:168) gives her own version of bildungsroman as thus:

The story of a single individual's growth and development within the context of a defined social order. [...] To spur the hero or heroine on to their journey, some form of loss or discontent must jar (shake) them at an early stage away from the home or family setting. 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. Eventually, the spirit and values of the social order becomes manifest in the protagonist, who is then accommodated into society. The novel ends with an assessment by the protagonist of himself and his new place in that society.

To buttress this opinion, a bildungsroman genre is the story of an individual's growth and moral transformation. Before the hero or heroine embarks on a journey, he or she might have been shaken with anger or "deprivation as a basis for aggression and violence". (Oladitan, 1975). At the same time, there is the likelihood that he or she encounters some complications before she reaches the age of maturity. Finally, the genre further depicts continuity and change (Iverson, 2010) as the end result of the formative journey.

### **3.2.2 The genre of female bildungsroman**

The female bildungsroman genre dates back to the eighteenth century when books that promoted moral instructions and survival devices in the context of a patriarchal society were read among the educated, middle-class society women. With this emergence, women no longer wanted to be second-class citizens; they wanted to be independent, to grow spiritually apart and to have their own separate identity. The feminist adaptation of bildungsroman has proved a particularly suitable medium for conveying and examining women's multifaceted conflicts in a patriarchal culture.

Female bildungsroman portrays the development of an individual who becomes or is on the verge of adulthood. Authors of female bildungsroman allow their heroines to mature or grow up to understand the real meaning of life. The desire for self-improvement, self-expression, the need to adapt to varying social circumstances in a world of change and the ever-present aspiration for economic advancement leads to a purposeful awakening of the female protagonist. In female bildungsroman, the protagonist dares all challenges, but her physical journey, which is usually provoked by family members or society, emerges

for self-individuation or self-fulfilment. The advent of the female bildungsroman is thus linked to changes in the social conditions of women.

Female bildungsroman is regarded as “novel of female development” (Abel, Hirsch and Langland 1983:8) and it is an expansion of linear, traditional or male bildungsroman. Novel of development is labelled as such for women to express those patriarchal powers that construct their experiences. The female writers and critics in the early 1970s experienced a radical transformation in the critical approach to the genre, as a term that traces the process of individual self-discovery within the society. Feminist scholars propose that the phallogocentric ideology should be embedded in the genre of bildungsroman (Abel et al. 1983; Labovitz, 1986). As female authors continue to write books that have characteristics similar to male bildungsroman, the feminist scholars “integrate gender with genre and identify distinctively female version of bildungsroman.” (Abel et al.1983: 5). The reason for this, according to the above declaration, is to take account of women’s experiences.

In Labovitz’s *The Myth of the heroine* (1986:7), while pondering on the concept of selfhood to female youths, the author write that:

New areas of study about the “concerns and experience of women” were first required to remedy the gap in knowledge about the female youth, about concepts of womanhood and adulthood.

This “new area of study” that accommodates experience of women is female bildungsroman. A number of critics according to Labovitz (1986:7), argue that it would be difficult for a young woman to achieve maturation and identity because of the customary limitations inherent in being female in a patriarchal society. However, women writers are charged to have a resolution, between cultural pressure toward feminine duty and the independence and assertiveness that imaginative writing requires, to fully realise a fictional heroine who goes through the process of developing an identity and a self. (*Ibd*). It was during that declaration, that female bildungsroman became widespread.

Another feminist critic that has explored the genre of female bildungsroman is Felski (1986: 128-138). She posits that “the Feminist bildungsroman resembles the traditional bildungsroman because it describes the protagonist’s journey from the enclosed realm of the familial home into the social world.” She equally labels female bildungsroman as novel of “self-discovery where growth is depicted as a voyage inward toward a more mystical resolution of women’s alienation”. This alienation, in fact, is as a result of patriarchal tyranny but it moves the protagonist to self-realisation. To Rosowski (1983:

49), female bildungsroman is a “novel of awakening” that is, it awakens the protagonist to patriarchal restrictions which she tackles. Lorna (1999:16) posits that: female bildungsroman is “the novel of a young woman’s development”. The protagonist is elevated to the position of a hero as she undergoes a journey of development and maturation”; Felski (1989:135-137) also maintains that, female bildungsroman depicts resistance and survival.

In addition, feminist scholars use the female bildungsroman to describe coming-of-age stories, featuring female protagonists. The term ‘coming-of age’ is less technical, hence its replacement with bildungsroman (All these terminologies can be used interchangeably). In the wake of this expansion, according to Boes (2006:231), “the scholars of modernism began to see their periods as an era of transition from traditional metropolitan novels of formation and social affirmation to [...] narratives of transformation and rebellion”. Feminist critics propounded this genre in the 1970s which truly represents narratives of rebellion, social protest and change. The form was used to defend the rights of women authors to describe their own reality and to legitimise these experiences and their differences to those of men.

The scholarly contribution of Showalter (1977:3-36) to the development of literature is relevant to coming-of-age stories. She describes three ways through which fiction can be developed. According to her, ‘feminine phase’ is the first stage where women writers portray their protagonists as heroines and ideal women who are prepared to endlessly suffer, sacrifice, and endure for the progress of their families or communities. A number of francophone women authors take up this phase strongly and those conditions enumerated are embedded in their coming-of-age stories. The next ‘feminist phase’ where the emphasis is on the protest against male dominance, the patriarchal order, the existing system of values, and on the demand for more status, recognition, freedom and rights for women. In this vein, francophone women have been trying in making substantive efforts to weaken the systems that relegate them.

Finally, ‘self-discovery’ is the stage of questing for freedom. This third phase is the true representation of coming-of-age. Female protagonists here attain self-fulfillment, independence, meaningful life and security amidst the confusions and uncertainties of their changing world. The heroines migrate from rural to urban areas to develop themselves in quest of self-actualisation. All the female protagonists explored in this study fall within the three phases as highlighted by Showalter.

Nfah-Abbenyi (1997:148), states that the male authors marginalised African women writers in the literary field, which made female authors to be few some decades ago. Nevertheless, the contemporary francophone female writers have been mending the above situation through their narratives, writing a good number of bildungsroman. Also, francophone women writers note that the female voice which had for long been muted and relegated has now broken loud. The issue of self-expression has been the subject of many women writers and they have been exploring this through their coming-of-age fictions after the long historical silence.

### **3.2.3 The difference between the male and the female bildungsroman**

This study attempts to clarify the difference between the male bildungsroman and the female bildungsroman. In a patriarchal society, there is a gender distinction between male and female protagonists of bildungsroman. While male heroes are granted the privilege to receive formal education, female protagonists are confined at home. This is revealed by (Abel, Hirsch and Langland 1983). “Even those directly involved in formal education [...] do not significantly expand their options, but learn instead to consolidate their female nurturing roles rather than to take a more active part in the shaping of society” (Abel et al, 1983: 7). Thus, male heroes have upperhand more than females.

The story and development of the bildungsroman hero usually commences when he is a young child. The story of a number of heroines may begin as a small child too but the story of other developments begins later on in their lives, after marriage and motherhood experiences failed. The male protagonist only faces his working profession without interference and his conflict is personal. However, he gets educated and finds his true career. Conversely, gender determines the starting point of a heroine’s development in female bildungsroman and her own conflict revolves around family and patriarchal restrictions.

However, the principal focus of the genre of female bildungsroman is the educational and developmental advancement of the female protagonist in a male-dominated society. The reformation of the female character is also an important component in the genre. In view of this thought, scholars and critics start to explore female bildungsroman that goes after the growth and development of a young woman towards emotional and social maturity.

Thus, women found a voice through feminism and began to change the traditional male literary principle by creating two narrative styles. In the anthology of Abel et al, (1983), *The Voyage in: Fictions of Female Development*, it is stated that:

Two narrative patterns are identified in female bildungsroman; first, there is chronological apprenticeship. In showing a continuous development from childhood, this paradigm adapts the linear structure of the male bildungsroman. Second, there is the awakening that generally occurs later in the heroine's life usually "after conventional expectations of marriage and motherhood have been fulfilled and found insufficient".

(Abel et al, 1983:11-12).

Meanwhile, the chronological apprenticeship that has linear structure of the male bildungsroman is the one stated by Buckely, which feminists' bildungsroman also adopts in their style of writing for young girls craving to the age of maturity. This is referred to as coming-of-age stories. The second narrative pattern implies the novel of epiphany, which indicates that women can later develop in life after exiting from marital and motherhood under patriarchy. The fundamental goal of female bildungsroman is the replacement of "inner concentration for active accommodation and rebellion. (Abel et al. 1983:8). This means that the protagonist should be self-determined, focused and revolutionary when need be in order to complete her journey of self-discovery.

In these novels, there are a set of defining and recurring themes: they include harmful traditional practices, exile or journey of self-exploration, violence, education, arranged marriage, sexuality, religion and social injustice. All these characteristics feature in the African male bildungsroman too. In view of this, one can say that there is continuity between the linear bildungsroman narratives and female bildungsroman fictions. We equally propose that the female bildungsroman does not oppose the male hero bildungsroman but it harmonizes it.

In the selected novels studied, three of them follow the male or linear plots of the traditional bildungsroman because, each of the novels incorporates all the developmental characteristics of each heroine right from childhood to adulthood.

However, this study argues that the absence of one or two characteristics should not disqualify any of the chosen novels from belonging to the genre of female bildungsroman; it should rather reinforce the notion that fictions of female bildungsroman do differ but share a number of common principles. The fact that the women who wrote these stories use different techniques and perspectives to express this struggle makes the genre of francophone women's bildungsroman real to the society.

The novels explored in this study have been labelled as novels of formation, coming-of-age novels, novels of epiphany and novels depicting rites of passage. Thus, rites of passage is explored in order to have a complete principle of coming-of-age stories or bildungsroman.

### **3.2.4 Rites of passage in francophone women's novels**

The coming-of-age narrative, usually linear in pattern, begins in childhood and progress steadily towards a mature adult. Goodman, (2013:30), states that any novel that has “no chronological order, lacks the linear path characteristic of Bildungsroman”. Thus, rites of passage represent an important linear path that is obligatory in coming-of-age stories. Rites of passage are symbolic ceremonies in coming-of-age novels. It is a period of transformation from child to adult to achieve a new status.

Van Gennep (2003) maintains that, rites of passage are ceremonial devices used by societies to mark the passage or transition of an individual or a group from one social status or situation to another. Rites of passage resolve life *crises*; they provide a mechanism to deal with the tension experienced by both individuals and social groups. Rites of passage function to accomplish status transitions; they provide a mechanism for individuals and their societies to recognise those who negotiate the rites as intrinsically different beings (Van Gennep cited in *International Encyclopaedia*: 2003) (family.jrank.org/pages/1414)

The coming-of-age genres is presented in the current study through the selected female novelists from three different regions: Algeria, Ivory Coast and Senegal and rites of passage are depicted as the adolescent protagonist's coming-of-age, or the transformation of a young girl, becoming a young woman. It is brought to fore that, for a young person to come-of-age, there are many hurdles to cross, many difficulties and challenges to face. Usually, in Africa, coming-of-age is associated with cultural and religious ceremonies that an individual has to go through in life before reaching the age of maturity. However, the time of transition is different in each person. Certain children reach the stage of maturity by simply growing older and having a better understanding of the world around them, while some children reach adulthood stage through a tragic, painful event (like circumcision in boys and Female Genital Mutilation in girls) which some people refer to as initiations or rites of passage.

The above explanation suggests that the loss of virginity, the Female Genital Mutilation, the experience of pregnancy and becoming mother symbolise a phase of



transition, which marks the stage of entering into adulthood. In other words, in moving to the stage of adulthood, there are physical changes, whereby the protagonist starts gaining strength, there are emotional changes when the protagonist is sensitive to the world and learns about relationships with people, and there are intellectual changes when the protagonist becomes aware of his or her shortcomings. This current study presents three coming-of-age narratives that reflect all these phenomena: *Mutilée*, *Rebelle* and *L'interdite* as analysed in Chapter four.

Moreover, francophone women writers seek to coordinate the experiences of young girls by using coming-of-age novels or bildungsroman to illustrate how socio-cultural vices and harmful traditional practices shatter the dreams of their characters. Patriarchal oppression and destructive traditional practices are major themes in coming-of-age narratives; however, they do not represent the only barrier to female self-development. The process of rites of passage in the midst of two opposite worlds, a patriarchal society and becoming adult is a common theme in the contemporary francophone women literature. The character's experience is literally a matter of life and death and that is why the genre of coming-of-age is like a wilderness survival novels marked by near-death-experience.

Coming-of-age stories are actually based on the formation of an individual's identity, which have revolutionary tendencies. In this vein, the female francophone novelists design their writings to ensure that the protagonists come out of their problems with a new and empowering spirit. In so doing, they present stories that connect the characters to their communities, while the kind of life they want to build is located within the exploration of their own personal values. Coming-of-age novels have been in existence for a long time in Africa, however, they are not recognised as bildungsroman rather they are categorised as autobiographical or semi-autobiographical novels. African novels in French like Camara Layé's *L'enfant Noir*, Ferdinand Oyono's *Une vie de boy* are typical examples of bildungsroman. This is because their stories revolve around boys becoming men.

### 3.2.5 Diversity of end results

In line with female bildungsroman principles, the genre admonishes women to change their patterns of life from sexually defined roles in order to discover true self-knowledge, achieve autonomy and independence. The selected five novels are explored along these principles to show that a woman can successfully develop, claim the right to be

a self-determined individual regardless of patriarchal constraints. The characteristics of female bildungsroman are thus, classified into three distinct literary groups.

First, there is the awakening which suggests consciousness-raising. This awakening process can be a “movement inward and backward. Beginning with dreams, thoughtfulness...shadowy anguishes ... tears” (Abel et al., 1983:43). In another dimension, awakening helps people to discriminate against what is false and what is true. This is because the act of speaking and acting comes directly from the inner heart and these will sensitise people to resist or confront the challenges of life. In the process of awakening, the mission is to follow one’s heart instead of following the crowd. The achievement of the person involved is to choose knowledge over ignorance. In the light of this, one must expose lies in order to break free from the chains of oppression. The assertion of Robbins (2005:8), in her book, *Subjectivity* elucidates the concept of consciousness thus:

To be conscious of oneself is part of what subjectivity appears to mean; and from that, self-knowledge. All other personal traits proceed. Self-consciousness can mean self-possession, poise, and confidence. At the same time, however, self-consciousness also means awkwardness and embarrassment, clumsiness and discomfort, which may also rob us of our self-possession.

This comprehension of self-awakening or self-consciousness underscores the relationship between becoming aware of one’s physical presence in an environment and the expected psychological or spiritual discomfort that follows from that awareness. According to Bladon (2012:149) “everything happens for a reason, and that reason is the development of our consciousness”. The foregoing enjoins every individual to wake up to the realistic matters in the world.

Second, the heroine explores her femininity and begins to redefine her identity as she journeys into adulthood. In view of this, “self-identity becomes an awareness of oneself as a separate individual” (Houghton, 2016). In other words, it may mean the realisation of one's behaviours and qualities that make someone exceptional or the way an individual defines himself/herself. The stage of forming identity is problematic and it is noted that during that stage, adolescents are restless because they face a lot of challenges. However, in a male-dominated society, the heroine is always in conflict with patriarchal authorities. In order to form an independent identity, to be unique, the heroine has to reject most of the patriarchal controls as she is on the verge of maturity or adulthood. Self-identity gives someone the capability to construct personal mannerism. In this context, female bildungsroman heroines are always confronted with identity crisis and as a young girl aspiring to the position of adulthood, it is extremely important to have self-confidence,

especially when she considers societal pressures as hurdles to cross. The self-confidence will boost her self-esteem in order to discover her personality.

Finally, as the character reaches a point of maturity and independence, she takes control of her transition or journey of self-discovery. The character reaches this peak with the help of the women who have been guiding her. (Abel et al, 1983: 294-295). The journey of self-discovery involves a sequence of events when a person determines to rely on her own intuition or do what it takes to make her productive without taking the opinions of family, friends or peer pressure.

Aristotle states that, “Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom” quoted by Tylerdevault, (2010). He explains that “self-discovery is the most important aspects of adolescence. As teens become more self-aware, they start trying to figure out who they are, making choices that will impact their lives forever”. In essence, self-discovery comprises contentment, accomplishment and education. The journey is however strenuous and complicated because it represents distress, horror, confusion and uncertainty. The person on the path of self-discovery makes tough decisions on how to achieve a certain goal which in the long run, gets blossom after his or her trial periods.

The genre of bildungsroman follows this pattern more closely than others; we have not proposed an exact outline for the entire genre. At the forefront of the genre, however, is the journey of the heroine (psychological or physical) and how the heroine is shaped throughout the story. This is important; as it makes clear that there would be an internal growth and a transformation of the character.

Having critically examined the broad characteristics of both the traditional and female bildungsroman, one can situate the writings of the francophone African woman in context. This study leans on Abel, Hirsch and Langland’s (1983) narrative models because the selected novels fall within the two categories (novels that have linear or chronological progression fall within coming-of-age stories, while novels of female development or novels of awakening are in consonance with epiphany).

Therefore, the development of Sultana in Malika Mokkedem’s *L’interdite*, Malimouna in Kéïta’s *Rebelle* and Khady in *Mutilée* fall within the linear progression of bildungsroman because their stories start from childhood to maturity; while the heroines of Aminata Sow Fall *Douceurs du bercail* and Yaou’s *Le prix de la révolte* are regarded as the ‘novels of epiphany’ because the heroines’ crises start after marriage and motherhood. The next Chapter demonstrates how this genre becomes suitable to the career of the protagonists in sorting out their survival realities and their achieving self-fulfilment.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **SURVIVAL STRATEGIES**

#### **THE PROTAGONISTS AS *BILDUNGSROMAN* HEROINES**

4.0 This Chapter focuses on three texts that adopt the first narrative pattern of female bildungsroman. This is called coming-of-age narratives, linear, conventional or traditional bildungsroman. In the course of analysis, there would be interchanging of the terms 'linear', 'traditional,' or 'conventional' bildungsroman to mean coming-of-age narratives. As have been stated earlier on, not all the novels have the same thematic features, as each literary text proposes different social, environmental, geographical and philosophical constructs. In other words, the thematic features of one text should not be forced on the other.

In the genre of bildungsroman or coming-of-age narratives, the focus is on the main characters of the texts, while other characters in the story only function in positions that contribute to the development and maturity of the protagonists. Following this pattern, the focus here is on Sultana in *L'interdite*, Malimouna in *Rebelle* and Khady in *Mutilée*. In structure, these novels are depicted as coming of-age stories and they align with linear or traditional bildungsroman because of the chronological progression that is involved, and we follow the developmental and educative journey of these protagonists from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. At times, this developmental journey symbolises the formation of character. The formal education in the life of each protagonist may be tedious but the innovative opportunities for learning may come up as the adolescent gets familiar with the world around her.

In the analysis and discussions, the survival strategies that each central character of the three novels displays in resisting and surviving oppression in a male-dominated society are explored. The chapter proceeds to analyse each of the novels on the basis of the characteristics of the genre of bildungsroman. It begins with the simplest Malika Mokkedem's *L'interdite*, and concludes with the complex. This is because, the wide-ranging features of bildungsroman is manifested in *Mutilée*.

#### **4.1 Malika Mokkedem's *L'interdite***

##### **4.1.1 Summary of *L'interdite***

Malika Mokeddem is an Algerian writer whose literary works have helped to shape Algeria's post-colonial society in the 21st century. Apart from *L'interdite*, she has written other novels, which include *Des rêves et des assassins* (1995), *La nuit de la lézarde* (1998),

*Le siècle des sauterelles* (1992), *Les hommes qui marchent* (1997), *N'zid* (2001) and *Je dois à ton oubli* (2008).

Malika Mokkedem explores oppressive themes of sexism, discrimination, patriarchy, religious bigotry, sexuality among others in *L'interdite*. She depicts these thematic preoccupations in order to expose the mysteries behind the lives of Algerian women and also the social injustices meted out to them through her heroine, Sultana. *L'interdite* revolves around the themes of oppression and resistance of gender identity. The themes are supported by Islamic tenets and beliefs. The role of Islam is powerful in Algeria, and it is strongly linked to the socio-cultural facets of the country. For these reasons, Mokkedem uses her story to represent the break of these norms even though the wave of religious fundamentalism has influenced various aspects of the country's socio-cultural traditions, including educational school system.

Mokkedem foregrounds that, under Islamic fundamentalism, alcohol is outlawed and there is a special dress code for women in general. Women are compelled to veil from head to toe in the public to avoid sexual distractions. The Islamic tenets have shaped traditions in Algeria and have contributed to the allocation of power in the society such that women are exploited and marginalised under patriarchal hegemony.

*L'interdite* focuses on the developmental stages of Sultana Medjahed, a medical nephrologist in the French town of Montpellier. After years of exile in France, she returns to her native town, Aïn Nekhla in Southern Algeria to attend the funeral rites of her lover, Yacine Meziane whom she has not seen for ten years after they both graduated from medical school in Oran. Sultana feels depressed by the action of the village mayor, Bakar, the head of the local Islamist party who unsuccessfully tries to keep her from joining the funeral procession because she is a woman. The protagonist defies villagers' threats and attends the funeral rite of Yacine, the deceased medical doctor. Sultana decides to stay in the village to take care of her people until another doctor is found. Her European lifestyle: a smoker and a drunkard are not in conformity with the ways and manners of the Algerian citizenry. Sultana is forbidden to take charge of her life, to love and be loved, to have freedom of speech, to take her own decision among the rest. Consequently, she becomes the victim of the Islamic fundamentalists who want her to go away in order not to corrupt young girls and women coming-of-age in the city.

Sultana becomes an orphan at the age of five, which makes her to be vulnerable and helpless. As infant, she witnesses the scene of an alleged infidelity row between her father and her mother, which results into domestic violence. Sultana's father wrongfully accuses

his wife, Aïcha of committing adultery. They have an intense quarrel, which makes Aïcha to hit her head on a millstone and dies instantly. Bakar disappears, leaving Sultana and her unnamed three-year-old sister behind. After a few days, Sultana's sister passes away.

The protagonist in *L'interdite* rebels against the contradictions and tradition in Algeria, which results into series of conflicts between her and the Muslim fanatics. Because of women's enclosure situation in Algeria, Vincent, Khaled, Yacine's medical assistant, Salah Akil, Yacine's friend, always protect Sultana. She refuses marriage but always subjects herself to platonic love.

The analysis of *L'interdite* is based on the linear progression of traditional bildungsroman, such as awakening, exile, education, quest of identity, marriage, self-discovery and career plan. However, we concentrate on the developmental stages of the protagonist as she makes her journey to the stage of maturity. This growth is sought through the application of the genre of female bildungsroman. This is because her story illustrates a heroine who is in the process of formation. She leaves her familial surroundings to seek identity in quest of self-development in another environment.

#### 4.1.2 Analysis of *L'interdite*: Sultana

##### 4.1.2.1 Awakening

The awakening to consciousness of Sultana in the beginning of the novel is a reformation strategy. When Sultana is conscious of her environment, she sees the society with new eyes. The new outlook gives her the ability to differentiate reality from falsehood. In the light of this, life becomes a journey of self-discovery or self-survival in order to accomplish her developmental process.

The novel starts by presenting the emotional instability of the heroine, Sultana who is alienated socially, religiously and psychologically from everyone around her. She is not coordinated, but most importantly, she controls her emotional trauma. Sultana finds herself an orphan when she loses her protective guards, the mother and the prime role model who is expected to look after her from formative years.

In addition, the entire village community, as expected, turns against Sultana, who resorts to aliens for love and support. Despite this, her ordeal continues as she finds herself being rejected by the villagers who label her as a cursed child. Each passing day, she grows up suffering verbal abuses as villagers call her a whore. "Putain [...] lors de mon adolescence, encore vierge" (*L'interdite*, 16). [Whore, [...] since my adolescent, still a

virgin] (*Our translation*). Initially, they label her a prostitute and later the daughter of a whore. The following excerpt epitomises the attitudes of the villagers towards Sultana:

Ils ont d'abord dit: "maudite fille de putain, maudite fille des maudits" (*L'interdite* 154-155).

[Initially, they said, a cursed daughter of a whore, a cursed daughter of the accursed] (*Our translation*)

This horrible title, 'whore', and the loss of her family members and the hostility of the village community awaken her consciousness. She eventually flees from Ksar, her native village in order to reorganise her life.

#### 4.1.2.2 Exile

Exile is presented in *L'interdite* as a cause of displacement, isolation, and reformulation of identity. It is written in Mujčinović, (2004:105) that, the exiled person is in an everlasting state of displacement. This is because, the wandering about and the psychological instability can lead to or hold back personal development and transformation. "Through the discovery of an inner capacity to survive and grow in the new environment, one may find a greater independence and confidence and thus gain a more fulfilling self-affirmation and realization". Sultana corroborates the above line of thought when she says:

À Oran, j'avais appris à hurler. Je me tenais toujours cabrée pour parer aux attaques. L'anonymat dans de grandes villes étrangères a émoussé mes colères, modéré mes ripostes. L'exil m'a assoupli; L'exil est l'aire de l'insaisissable, de l'indifférence réfractaire, du regard en déshérence. (*L'interdite*, 17)

[In Oran, I had learned to scream. I always held myself in a ready position to fend off attacks. The anonymity of large foreign cities has taken the edge off my anger, moderated my retorts. Exile has softened me; Exile is the domain of that which cannot be seized of the rebellious indifference, of the confiscated look] (*Our translation*)

One can say that exile offers restorative possibilities to the protagonist in the text. In bildungsroman, the heroine is confronted with some discontent which sets her on a journey. The hostility of the villagers that awaken Sultana's consciousness sends her into exile. She later finds comfort in the company of a European couple, Doctor Paul Challes, and his wife, Jeanne. They look after her and protect her from being harmed until she is old enough to leave the village to attend a boarding school in Oran. This is the beginning that not only indicates a heroine in the process of "becoming," but also shows a young female

character being given the opportunity to seek out her growth as she takes a journey away from her community. The protagonist thus starts her *bildung* (formation).

In the process of exilic journey, crossing different borders is dangerous but a conscientized person, who is in the process of becoming adult, needs to learn something meaningful and valuable along the way. The movement of Sultana outside her own territory to exile leads her to attain her educational achievements.

#### 4.1.2.3 Education

Education is a life-long process; it is also an embodiment of formation and reformation. Education in female bildungsroman may not mean a formal academic teaching and learning because life itself is an education centre where one learns and takes instructions everywhere. The process of growing up as proved in the bildungsroman is a series of experiences that teach lessons. The protagonist's education may be in other areas, such as learning social values, conducting business affairs, and gaining integrity in relationship with people.

The protagonist, Sultana, because of her orphanhood, receives Western secondary education in Algeria where she is raised by a French couple who imparts their values, norms and knowledge to her. Later, she moves to France to complete her university training as a doctor of nephrology, which is very rare for a woman to achieve in Algeria. Mokkedem strives at raising women's consciousness on the need for a change in male attitudes towards women in Algeria. This is manifested in her interview with Marcus in 1994 when she declares,

All my life I have waged a battle to be who I want to be in the face of a society that wanted to crush women. I dedicated myself to my studies, to the battle for women's rights, but I was suffocating. .... I write to raise my voice from the Midi (the southern coast of France), a voice other than that put forth by the [Muslim] fanatics, and to rid myself of this feeling of failure. I am from the coast, a woman flayed alive, but also an angry woman. (*L'Humanité*, 15 April, 1994: 18 cited in Marcus, (1998: vii)

The sexist oppression is seriously devastating when Sultana comes back from exile to reintegrate with her people, only to find herself shunned by her community because of her unconventional upbringing. She attends a Western school, which resists Islamic zealots and patriarchal authority of Algeria. Western education also frees Sultana from female cocoon but that sends her into a form of exile. This arduous journey makes the heroine a survivor; a journey, which makes her to acquire education and self-knowledge.



#### 4.1.2.4 Self-discovery

The journey of self-discovery involves a sequence of events where a person determines to find herself or to rely on her own intuition without taking the opinions of friends or peers pressure into consideration. Bildungsroman is a psychological novel in which the protagonist evolves towards complete maturity. The return of Sultana to Algeria reinforces her sense of self-discovery, as she explains to Salah:

Moi, je suis multiple et écartelée, depuis l'enfance. Avec l'âge et l'exil, cela n'a fait que s'aggraver. Maintenant, en France, je ne suis ni algérienne, ni même maghrébine. Ici, je ne suis pas plus algérienne, ni française. Je porte un masque. Un masque occidental ? Un masque d'émigrée ? Pour combler du paradoxe, ceux-ci se confondent souvent. À force d'être toujours d'ailleurs, on devient forcément différent (*L'interdite*, 131-132.)

[I have been fragmented and torn since childhood. With age and exile, it has only worsened. Now in France, I am neither Algerian, nor Maghrebi. Here, I am no longer Algerian or French. I am wearing a mask. A western mask? An emigrant mask? To fulfil the paradox, they often get mixed up. By being always from elsewhere, one becomes necessarily different] (*Our translation*).

The psychological “journey” alters Sultana’s life identity. As an adult, her growing identity problems are linked with her childhood trauma, and she finally decides to confront it. She wants to find out who she really is. When she revisits her childhood home at Ksar, she falls into a state of trance. She is overwhelmed by unspeakable emotions of fright, sorrow and helplessness. She later survives that terrible night of remembering her past, the loss of her family members. Her emotions define who she is and how she has coped with issues of life. The protagonist’s sense of selfhood is not rooted in one particular place or time. It is a constant movement like a nomad. This nomadic style of her life symbolises professional freedom and financial independence. This is reflected in the following:

Mais comment ... comment leur faire comprendre ma terreur du choix, l'arrêt ? Comment leur faire entendre que ma survivance n'est que dans le déplacement, dans la migration? Lorsqu'on est ainsi, une avidité qui à la brûlure au cœur, la projection dans le temps quasi est impossible. ... Mon retour m'aura servi au moins à cela, à détruire mes dernières illusions d'ancrage. (*L'interdite*, 161).

[But how ... how can I make them understand my terror of choice, of settling down? How can I make them understand that my survival is only in moving around, in migration? When you are in this state, with burning eagerness in your heart, projection into the future is almost impossible ... My return here will have at least, to serve that purpose, in destroying my last illusions of being anchored] (*Our translation*).

Her return to the hometown turns out to be eye-opening and liberating. Having dealt with her childhood trauma characterised by psychological depression, she reconstructs an identity that suits adulthood behaviour.

#### **4.1.2.5 Career plan**

The journey and experiences of the heroine become another turning point for setting up her goals. Thus, in the journey of self-discovery, Sultana's desired career is the ultimate which she determines to pursue without fear of criticism. Sultana commits herself to being of service to humanity. This choice of career is a tradition that is rooted in bildungsroman. She becomes a doctor, a nephrologist, in France. Apart from the Western education, her navigation through the adult world informs her to grow up in order to understand humankind and the realities of life. In view of this, Sultana enters into conflict with the Islamic fanatics of her society because she is frustrated by their actions, which affect her love life and her profession. Most importantly, she actualises her dream.

#### **4.1.2.6 Self-identity**

This is a focal point in female bildungsroman. People do not have one single identity. Knowing who one is a complex mission that has no end when people ponder on justification for existence. Self-identity is the process of accepting the facts that make up our distinctiveness. From this act of self-identity comes transition when resolutions are made and changes are accomplished. A person's identity is a combination of several factors related to cultural and family background, politics, religion, education among others.

Sultana evolves to be a medical doctor, an activist and anti-conformist. From the beginning of the novel, she is described as a self-confident and liberated woman. All these virtues show her uniqueness. As an activist that advocates women's rights and freedom in Algeria, the most important aspect of her transition is the quest for voice. If she must get her voice, she must go against the ethics of Islamic fundamentalism. She must rebel against patriarchal systems to change the experience of other women who have been brainwashed and are dogmatic to religious indoctrination. Following some feminist bildungsroman tradition, a woman should be revolutionary and rebellious if she wants to achieve independence and be free from the patriarchal bondage. Sultana demonstrates these virtues during the funeral procession of Yacine. The nurse tells her that it is forbidden for a woman to attend funeral procession:

Ils ne vous laisseront pas assister à son enterrement. Vous ne savez que les femmes ne sont pas admises aux enterrements. (*L'interdite*, 21)

They will not allow you to attend his funeral. You know that women are not allowed at funeral sessions (*Our translation*)

Le Maire (The Mayor) also makes a remark that forbids women from attending funeral rites. This ensues in the discussion between Le Maire and Sultana:

- Madame, tu peux pas venir! C'est interdit!

- interdit? interdit par qui? (*L'interdite* 24)

[-Madam, you cannot come! It is forbidden!

- forbidden? forbidden by who?] (*Our translation*)

Female authors frown at gender oppression. They argue that women oppression stems from being categorised as inferior to men. Sultana damns the consequence by saying: “On verra bien qui pourra m’empêcher.” (*L'interdite* 21) [We shall see who will prevent me] (*Our translation*). The response of Sultana fulfils the principles of female bildungsroman, emphasising assertiveness. Sultana does not see the presence of a woman at the funeral procession as a religious taboo. She considers it as a normal practice for men and women to pay the last respect to a dead person.

Meanwhile, a person may embrace behaviours acquired from his or her societal upbringing, when one later reaches formative years, one can either confront or jettison religious practices that stem from cultural imposition. This battle on cultural practices manifests externally in Sultana when the nurse says that women have no business in the funeral procession. Confrontation and defiance are weapons of resistance, which pave way for survival. Sultana has already made up her mind concerning the outcome; her action will not be threatened by any circumstance; she stands up to damn the consequence against the society. The social rebellion enables Sultana to veer totally away from the tenets of Islamic religion and reveals the religious intolerance against women in Algeria. The heroine’s obstinacy to defy all religious threats makes her to come-of-age and to stand as a survivor.

#### 4.1.2.7 (i) **Marriage or love**

The nineteenth-century feminist bildungsroman declares that there are only two choices available to the female heroine: either to live an unhappy married life, or to live a solitary life. Thus, Sultana struggles to free herself from marital bondage. Her resistance to

marriage is in consonance with this position. She shuns men and equally challenges male control of the female body. These positions constitute another strategy for surviving oppression. Sultana's refusal to have a long-lasting relationship with men signifies her quest for freedom. She wants to be in control of herself, her body and her life. She ultimately declines to commit herself to a stable man. This is reflected in the novel when she says thus:

J'en ai eu des amours et pourtant, j'ai toujours perdu mes amants sur des chemins sans retour. Il ne me reste jamais qu'un désir béant inassouvi. (*L'interdite*, 132)

[I soaked up love and yet, I have always lost my lovers on the paths of no return. What I have left is a huge unfulfilled desire] (*Our translation*)

Sultana's belief in platonic love suggests autonomy. She does not want any man to lure her to what could potentially turn into an abused relationship. She falls in love with three men in the text: Yacine, Vincent and Salah but she never plans to marry any of them. This decision portrays the protagonist as a bildungsroman heroine who wants to control her body as Cixous (1976:883) puts it, that women should reclaim the body in its distinct role as a "new insurgent", and to free the "censor[ed]" body (883). Sultana feels that being legally married to a man may threaten her freedom. If she agrees, she might become a victim of patriarchal domination. Sultana, in line with Cixous' *écriture féminine*, reclaims her body and rebels against all the ties of matrimony that subject women to servitude. In this regard, Sultana breaks marriage hegemony, which makes her to stand as a survivor.

#### 4.1.2.6 (ii) **Religious bigotry**

Islamic religion in Algeria is a fundamental issue that cannot be underrated. Islam reinforces gender discrimination to the extent that a female medical practitioner is not allowed to touch Algerian men because of their religious propaganda; to them, such treatment is a sin, forgetting that "La religiosité ne préserve pas des maladies. La foi n'est pas un vaccin." [Religion does not cure sickness and faith is not a vaccine] [*L'interdite*, 124]. (*Our translation*). In *L'interdite*, Sultana addresses a man as *Un barbu*, who needs medical attention without being examined. This exchange ensues between Sultana and him:

– Je suis médecin, pas sorcière. Je dois t'examiner.  
– Tu es une femme. Tu ne peux pas me toucher.  
C'est péché...

- Alors sors d’ici!
- Tu ne me fais pas une pique?
- toi, qui n’oses même pas me regarder?  
(*L’interdite*, 125)
  
- [– I am a doctor, not a witch. I must examine you.
- You are a woman. You cannot touch me. It is a sin...
- Then, get out of here!
- You won’t give me an injection?  
... you, who dare not even look at me] (*Our translation*)

In *L’interdite*, Islam is not only a mechanism or weapon of patriarchal control, but also a tool of domestic servitude. Sultana suffers an individual trauma, while the female villagers suffer a collective trauma. This servitude is reflected in the women’s attitudes of prolonged subordination, passivity and compliance. In Algeria, women are regarded as agents of childrearing and domestic chores. Sultana observes this on her return from France to Algeria:

Je regarde la rue, effarée. Elle grouille encore plus que dans mes cauchemars. Elle inflige, sans vergogne, son masculin pluriel et son apartheid féminin. Elle est grosse de toutes les frustrations, travaillée par toutes les folies, souillée par toutes les misères  
(*L’interdite*, 15)

[I look at the street, alarmed. It is teeming with people even more than in my nightmares. It shamelessly inflicts its masculine plurality and its feminine apartheid. The street is full of all frustrations, tormented by every type of insanity and polluted by all its misery].  
(*Our translation*)

#### **4.1.2.6. (iii) Dress code**

Dress code is a controversial issue in Algeria. For instance, women’s dressing should be modest and must follow the rules of Islamic religion. A man challenges Sultana for not wearing veil the very day she arrives Algeria: “Tu n’as qu’à porter le voile!” (*L’interdite*, 17) [You must wear a veil]. Veil is equivalent to confinement, while confinement is synonymous to women’s imprisonment. Women are not allowed to be seen on the street in Algeria. Sultana defies veiling because she regards it as an Islamic oppression. She is accustomed to European mode of dressing, which encourages feminine autonomy. The veil denies communication between man and woman. Because of this, wearing veil depicts enclosure that demands a quest for freedom. The declaration of Daly

(1978:137-138) concerning religion is in accordance with this literary representation of women trap:

We [women] cannot really talk about belonging to institutional religion as it exists [...]. Let us affirm our faith in ourselves and our will, to transcendence by rising and walking out together.

Daly (1978) urges women to shun patriarchal oppression and avow their belief in themselves. However, Sultana is depicted as a free and audacious woman who completely rejects Islamic commands. She enters public places, including bars and parlours. She is portrayed as the “forbidden one”, as implied in the title of the book. A boy explodes in the novel:

Bierre! Un docteur? Même docteur !une femme ne va pas boire de la bière et parler comme ça aux hommes dans un bar! (*L'interdite*, 112)

[Beer! A doctor? Even, as a doctor, a woman does not go to drink beer and talk to men like that in a bar!] (*Our translation*)

Sultana's refusal to conform to tradition and socially acceptable behaviour is an act of survival, which conforms to female bildungsroman creeds. When she is reintegrated into the society, she refuses to comply with the traditional rules of her society. This disobedience liberates her from the restrictions of Islamic bigotry.

#### 4.1.2.6 (iv) **Sexuality**

Another scene that suggests survival strategy is the protagonist's manner of breaking the traditional beliefs and taboos. It is apparent in *L'interdite* that Islamic religion prevents women from having independent control over their bodies. Sultana provokes the villagers by indulging in what is forbidden. It is unacceptable for a man and a woman who are not married to sleep in the same room. This is tantamount to adultery or fornication under Islamic religion:

L'illicéité de notre situation me vient subitement à l'esprit. Un homme et une femme, deux étrangers sous le même toit. L'honneur du village est en danger. Ce soir, premier retour dans la transgression. Cela me convient. (*L'interdite*, 54)

[The illegality of our situation suddenly comes to my mind. A man and a woman, two strangers under the same roof! The reputation of the village is in danger. This evening is the first sliding into transgression. That suits me]. (*Our translation*)

Religious fundamentalism is identified as an obstacle to women liberation in Algeria but the protagonist tows the line of transgression to break it in order to triumph. Her confrontation makes her to be a survivor.

Sultana is also a victim of honour violence. This is because, she engages herself in issues that go against the religious culture of Algeria. The Islamic fundamentalists torment her because of her conduct towards religious norms. Such conducts include adopting a Western lifestyle, wearing of Western clothing instead of veiling from head to toe and having friends of the opposite sex consecutively. All these behaviours result to honour violence. These Western attitudes of the protagonist make Bakkar and Ali Marabah to compel her to leave:

On veut plus que tu restes chez nous ; Aïn Nekhla c'est pas un bordel! Toi, tu couches même avec les étrangers, deux hommes en même temps! On te connaît ! Tu es toujours un danger pour les filles, un péché dans le village (*L'interdite*, 162).

[We do not want you to stay here anymore; Aïn Nekhla is not a whorehouse! You, you even sleep with foreigners! Two men at the same time! We know you! You are a danger to girls, a sin in the village]. (*Our translation*)

The fundamentalists set Sultana's house ablaze; they even attempt to kill her. However, Sultana remains undaunted by the angry mob. She is indifferent to the threats of the Islamic fundamentalists. She knows quite well that the villagers have taken unanimous decision to drive her away from Aïn Nekhla. The protagonist confirms this:

Je pensais que ma condamnation était unanime. Je pensais que j'étais interdit au village. En tous cas, je n'ai entendu, moi, que les « putain ! » Qui pleuvaient sur mon passage. Du moins actuellement, existe-t-il quelques désaccords ou affrontements entre les gens. Les unanimités d'antan, surtout pour les mises au ban, m'effraient. Elles m'ont rendu service. Je me méfie toujours des dangers des consensus! (*L'interdite*, 171-172)

I thought that my condemnation was unanimous; I thought I was forbidden in the village. In any case, all I heard raining down on me was "whore"! Now, at least, some disagreements and confrontations exist between the people. The consensus of the past, especially banishment, shocked me. They served me. I am always suspicious of the dangers of the consensus (*Our translation*)

It is understood from the above that the heroine, Sultana in *l'interdite* is the forbidden woman. This incident has positive consequences because the women, after this event, employ collective actions that give them a voice. Interestingly, according to feminist bildungsroman tradition, what appears to be personal insurgency turns out to be collective movement. The village women take a stand by joining hands with Sultana and set the city

hall on fire. As a role model to Algerian women in Aïn Nekhla, a child named Dalila admires Sultana for demonstrating such gender audacity. Also, before Sultana finally returns to France, a woman tries to persuade her not to leave:

Nous savons qui tu es, ma fille. Nous sommes contentes que Sultana Medjahed soit devenue une belle femme, docteur de surcroît. Il ne faut pas céder à ces tyrans ! Nous les femmes, on a besoin de toi. Jusqu'à présent, il n'y a eu que des médecins hommes, ici. Toi, tu es des nôtres. Toi, tu peux nous comprendre.... Trente années à supporter ceux du parti suffisent à notre peine. Nous ne voulons pas retomber sous un joug encore plus impitoyable, celui des intégristes.

[We know who you are, my daughter. We are happy that, Sultana Medjahed has become a beautiful woman, in addition, a doctor. We must not give in to these tyrants. We women, we need you. Until this moment, there had been only male doctors here. You, you are one of us. You can understand us. .... Thirty years of putting up with party people is enough suffering. We do not want to fall anymore under the yoke of the unpitiabe fundamentalists]. (*Our translation*)

The ex-woman leader in trying to persuade Sultana to stay back makes reference to the struggles and contributions of Algerian women during her struggle for independence. She laments that this very independence has stolen away their pride and dignity. She even refers to Algerian men as atheists and fabricators of heresies in the name of Islam:

Que croient-ils ces faussaires de la foi? Seraient-ils tous des prophètes d'un nouvel Allah que nous aurions ignoré jusqu'à présent ? Des hérétiques, voilà ce qu'ils sont. Leurs propos et leur existence même sont des insultes à la mémoire de nos aïeux, à notre religion et à notre histoire. C'est une ancienne du maquis qui te parle. Une qui ne comprend pas par quelle perversion l'indépendance du pays nous a déçues de nos dignités et de nos droits alors que nous avons combattu pour elle. Nous, on est avec toi. .... Il faut qu'on parle, qu'on parle, qu'on se donne un peu de solidarité. Il faut qu'ils sachent qu'on ne se laissera plus faire. Que nous sommes même prêtes à reprendre les armes, s'il faut ! Ma fille, *une main seule ne peut s'applaudir.* (*L'interdite*, 166)

[What do these fabricators of faith think? Are they all prophets of a new Allah that we are not aware of nowadays? Atheists, that is what they are. Their words and their very existence are insults to the memory of our ancestors, our religion and our history. A member of the resistant fighter is the one talking to you. A woman who does not understand by what perversion our country's independence has deprived us of our dignity and our rights, when we fought for it. We are with you.... We have to talk, give each other a little solidarity. They have to know that we would not allow them to push us around anymore. We are even ready to take up arms again if it is necessary. My daughter, one hand cannot clap...] (*Our translation*)



The woman, in her deep-thinking message, concludes that the lives of Algerian women are nothing but slavery and humiliation. Men do not accord them any respect. The battle line is drawn because they cannot take it anymore. She declares further:

Maintenant une femme ne retire rien du travail, des vexations et des brimades subies. Toute la volonté et l'abnégation qu'elle peut donner à la jeunesse des jours, ne lui servent rien. Lorsqu'elle devient vieille, ses belles-filles ne la veulent pas, ses enfants sont dispersés. .... Quelle tristesse de réaliser que sa vie n'a été qu'esclavage et humiliations, dans l'impuissance continue! Alors comment perpétuer un mode de vie qui ne nous reconnaît plus aucune considération, à aucun moment de la vie ? .... Une main seule ne peut applaudir et nous ne pouvons en supporter davantage ! Nous sommes si usées (*L'interdite* 166-168)

Now a woman gains nothing from all the work, she is subjected to vexation and insults. All the will and abnegation that she gives in her prime no longer serve her in anyway. When she becomes old, her daughters-in-law would not want her, her children are scattered...What sorrow to realize that her life has only been slavery and humiliation in a perpetual state of powerlessness! However, how do we perpetuate a manner of living that does not accord us any consideration, in any moment of our life? [...] 'United we stand', and we cannot take it anymore! We are truly tired (*Our translation*)

The speech of "the ancient fighter" is in accordance with the philosophy of feminist bildungsroman and it also exposes the readers to the spirit of collective action. Hanisch (2000:113) posits that "There are no personal solutions at this time. There is only collective action for a collective solution." Women need to stand in unity in order to change their condition. Sultana seeks for help from other women and this is aligned with the proverb in the message "une main seule ne peut s'applaudir". [One hand cannot clap]. (*Our translation*)

As a result of this, Sultana adopts the method of collective action to effect real change in her own life, and the lives of Algerian women. This scheme of collective action makes Sultana and other women to become survivors. Finally, the women have the courage to speak up and claim a space for themselves. They plan to form a club, presided over by Sultana, though they fail to convince her to stay back in Algeria. She ultimately decides to leave for France. In this atmosphere of "revolutionary" commitment, Sultana advises the women that a number of men in the village support the women's movement. The protagonist re-establishes some links that have long been sealed, as shown by her declaration of solidarity with the village women in their struggle for self-actualisation:

Après un moment, je parviens à articuler, à travers les convulsions de ce rire-sanglot. Khaled, je repars demain. Dis aux femmes que même loin, je suis avec elles. (*L'interdite* 180)

After a while, I manage to speak, through the trembling of this laughter-sob. Khaled, I am leaving tomorrow. Tell the women that even far away, I am with them (*Our translation*)

Sultana is emotionally charged because of her intimidating departure for France. Meanwhile, her message to be delivered to the womenfolk by Khaled raises hopes that men and women may still be able to start a fruitful life through dialogue that will improve women's lives. In this regard, the positive ending that bildungsroman envisions comes to fruition. The optimistic complementary roles between men and women also come to being. The last words of Sultana to Khaled suggest that there is harmonious co-existence between men and women. In spite of the sexist nature of Algerian men, the author develops the roles of some men and the women in the collective struggle. Rather than sustaining separatism, the final collective action promotes unity and a harmonious rapport between men and women.

Subsequently, since survival is the key word in bildungsroman, Sultana is a survivor. She fulfils the doctrines of bildungsroman. Through a series of challenges, she digs deep into her soul to find the inner resources to stay alive. The women's collective line of action and war of words with Islamic patriarchy pave way for her survival. Sultana's example shows that the ability to face challenges is to build up personal identity, empowerment and liberation values. Women's revolt at the end of the novel anticipates a looming communal struggle for freedom of rights and women expression in a male-dominated society. Sultana reaches the age of adulthood and the spirit of assertiveness confirms her to be a true bildungsroman heroine.

## 4.2 **Fatou Kéïta's *Rebelle***

### 4.2.1 **Summary of *Rebelle***

The themes of oppression and survival are the most prominent in the Ivorian, Fatou Kéïta's first novel, *Rebelle* (1998). She is also the author of *Et l'aube se leva* (2006). The author writes the title in small letters, and semantically, this suggests that *Rebelle* denotes somebody who rejects the norms and conventions of society. Kéïta writes from her own cultural experiences in Ivory Coast. She carefully uses fiction to divulge the complexities of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage.

The major preoccupation of this author is the process of change in the lives of women in Ivory Coast in particular and Africa, in general. She achieves this by transforming the personal struggles of Malimouna, the protagonist, into the collective against patriarchal oppression. Literature is not written in a vacuum; thus, every writer derives his or her thematic preoccupation from the society and the novel becomes the 'drum' that beats it. Kéïta does not only deal with Female Genital Mutilation, she equally explores other themes like rape, child abuse, religion, racial discrimination and polygamy. All these are derived from Fatou Kéïta's community or geographical region.

The analysis of *Rebelle* is employed through the lens of linear bildungsroman. The text covers broad themes of female bildungsroman: awakening, self-identity and self-discovery. The theme of rebellion is prominent in this novel; thereby justifying the title *Rebelle*. The title implies that a female bildungsroman heroine has to rebel against all unpleasant situations that may endanger her autonomy in a patriarchal society. *Rebelle* is depicted as a novel of discovery and a novel of survival in which the protagonist withdraws herself from the larger society into a solitary life in order to pay constant attention to herself. The novel presents the physical and psychological developments of the protagonist. Malimouna suffers psychological trauma due to her experiences from patriarchal domination, such as bullying, forced marriage, sexual abuse, domestic violence, rape and racial discrimination. Malimouna is described as a perfect heroine: she is beautiful, intelligent, sensitive and independent. She faces many problems but she holds on to her struggle to define herself beyond traditional beliefs.

#### 4.2.2 **Analysis of *Rebelle*: Malimouna**

##### 4.2.2.1 **Awakening**

The heroine, Malimouna, awakens her consciousness through her friend Sanita, an urban girl who lives in Paris but travels to Bouritoni, a village in Ivory-Coast to spend her holidays. Sanita sensitises Malimouna to touch her clitoris in order to be aroused sexually. She does not allow Dimikela, the village circumciser to have it cut. She follows the advice of her friend, and decides to be a deviant in order to protect her genitalia from being cut. This sensitive issue forms the plot of *Rebelle*. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA 1997:4) describes Female Genital Mutilation thus:

A surgical removal of parts, or all of the most sensitive female genital organs. It refers to all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external features of the female genitalia.

However, the issue of Female Genital Mutilation leads to a vital point in bildungsroman which is called rites of passage. “The rites of passage” is a major theme. It is a medium through which women are sexually abused in African society.

#### 4.2.2.2 Rites of passage

Rites of passage are explored in order to chronicle the heroine’s developmental process from childhood to adulthood so as to correct barbaric traditional rites that awaken her consciousness. These rites of passage are concerned with Female Genital Mutilation and child marriage. Ivorian society supports the rites of passage because this tradition is a determining factor in the growth and development of a young girl coming-of-age in Ivorian society. The heroine of *Mutilée* is a victim of tradition in Senegal but the heroine of *Rebelle* violently rejects all rites of passage in Ivory Coast. The rites of passage are rituals that mark a change in a person's social or sexual status. The action of the heroine of *Rebelle* proves that social status can change without rites of passage.

##### 4.2.2.2. (i) Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation is usually performed on girls or young women as part of rites of passage, coming-of-age or initiation. Female Genital Mutilation in contemporary times is deconstructed as violation of a girl-child’s right. Following the procedure of rites of passage, a girl usually gains social status within her group and becomes a legitimate entrant for marriage. Dimikela is the village female genital practitioner but her secret affair with Seynou, the village hunter, free the heroine’s from being mutilated. Dimikèla is caught in a sexual act with the young hunter while in the bush around village. Kéïta’s simple description of what Malimouna sees generate suspense for readers and allows them to understand Dimikèla as the antagonist:

Son cœur se mit à battre encore plus fort... Elle ne pouvait avoir vu ce qu’elle avait vu. Tremblant de tous ses membres, elle se hissa de nouveau pour bien voir. Dimikèla était toute nue. Étendu à côté d’elle, le jeune Seynou, le chasseur le plus vigoureux et le plus adroit du village (*Rebelle*, 9).

Her heart started beating fast. She could not have seen what she had seen. All her limbs were trembling. She hauled herself up again to see clearly. Dimikela was totally nude. The young Seynou, the most vigorous and skillful hunter of the village, was lying beside her. (*Our translation*)

Malimouna, who is about to start her own “Première épreuve de femme” [first menstruation], discusses her fears with her mother who promptly sends her to Dimikèla, whom she hopes will assuage Malimouna’s fears:

Ta mère m’a demandé de te préparer ta première épreuve de femme, qui aura lieu dans deux semaines » (*Rebelle* 21)

[Your mother asked me to prepare you, for your first woman’s test that will take place in two weeks’ time] (*Our translation*)

Dimikèla is being paranoid hearing Malimouna’s response: « Si je ne le fais pas, est-ce que je me comporterai comme toi avec Seynou? » (*Rebelle* 2). [If I do not do it, will I comport myself like you with Seynou?]. “Survival is in the mouth” (Vera, 2002: 217-276 interviewed granted to Bryce). Malimouna uses her mouth to prevent her body from the torment of Female Genital Mutilation. However, because of the indecent affairs between Seynou and the exciser, Dimikèla, a custodian of tradition, who understands the penalty of being defiant, buys Malimouna’s silence regarding her sexual deceit by pretending to excise her; makes only a small incision on her thigh. This unspeakable contract between Dimikela and the would-be excised Malimouna makes her to be a survivor. Matou, Malimouna’s mother attributes the heroine’s blunt refusal of Female Genital Mutilation to Sanita and her parents. The heroine declares to her mother: « Je ne veux pas passer cette épreuve » (*Rebelle*,15). [I do not want to undergo this test]. This makes her mother to explode:

Sanita! Cette maudite petite citadine aux manières de Toubab, et qui était devenue l’amie de sa fille, avait dû lui donner toutes ses mauvaises idées (*Rebelle*, 15)

[Sanita! This little accursed city girl, with European manners, and who became her daughter’s friend, must have given her all the bad ideas [*Our translation*]

Female bildungsroman advocates a sense of awareness; nevertheless, female writers support the idea of raising people’s consciousness. Sense of awareness could come from a relative, lover or friend. Sanita creates that sense of consciousness, which awakens the spirit of Malimouna to challenge patriarchal forces on the belief of Female Genital Mutilation. Through this awareness, Malimouna is free from the impediment of FGM and becomes a survivor. The heroine uses propaganda strategy against Dimikela in order to cross the hurdle. This is the first liberating chance for Malimouna. Having crossed the hurdles of FGM, Malimouna faces the affliction of forced marriage, which makes her to cross to the line of action.

#### 4.2.2.2. (ii) **Forced marriage**

Forced marriage occurs when a lady or a girl is compelled, threatened, or tricked to marry without consent. It is considered as an abuse of fundamental human rights of the person involved. It represents the most common form of sexual abuse and exploitation of girl mainly at the teen age. Malimouna has not yet come-of-age when she is forced into marriage with a rich and old polygamist, Sando. The wedding is hastily arranged because patriarchy supports such wedding. Malimouna and her mother are mute. The following words explain Louma's intention: "Malimouna devait venir avec lui [...] Il allait la marier à son ami Sando". (*Rebelle* 29) [Malimouna ought to come with him [...] he was going to marry her off to his friend Sando] *Our translation*).

#### 4.2.2.2. (iii) **Authentication of virginity**

This is to confirm whether a girl is a virgin. This is to ascertain whether she has never engaged in sexual intercourse. In some African cultures, a girl has to undergo virginity test prior to her marriage. This is traditionally tested by a proof of blood stain on a white cloth, the blood naturally comes from the vaginal when the hymen is torn. The bride undergoes the physical examination rites before the marriage ceremony, while the proof by blood is verified before the consummation of marriage. Kelly, (2000: 197).

Malimouna is locked up in the bedroom with the help of two women (representatives of patriarchy) who are insensitive to the plight of the young girl. As night goes by, Malimouna is expecting the old man to come and carry out the marriage formal procedure after which the two women will check the white cloth for bloodstains to ascertain Malimouna's virginity. Sando, in the process of copulating, gets shocked when he discovers that Malimouna has not been circumcised. Malimouna, out of fear, grabs a wooden statue and hits Sando on the head. Malimouna, on the wedding night, forces herself out and runs away without knowing the exact direction she is heading towards:

Il s'était redressé pour admirer le spectacle de son jeune corps, et c'est alors que son regard s'était figé sur sa vulve... Le vieux Sando bondit sur elle et lui écarta violemment les genoux. Il avait peut-être mal vu. Il avait peut-être rêvé!...Il avait bien vu. Il la lâcha alors, en poussant un cri horrifié. Il se leva brusquement, enfila son boubou et se dirigea vers la porte. Malimouna bondit sur lui, la statuette au poing. Elle frappa une seule fois, de toutes ses forces (*Rebelle* 39)

[He straightened up to admire her youthful figure; and it was then he gazed at her vulva... Old Sando pounced on her and violently drew her knees apart. May be he did not see very well. May be he was dreaming! ... He did see well. He left her alone, and then screamed in horror. He swiftly stood up, put on his dress and made his way towards the door. Malimouna pounced on him with a doll. She hits him once with all her power] (*Our translation*)

Violent behaviour and confrontation are part of the heroine's ploy to escape the rites of authentication of virginity. These strategies empower women to resist the oppression that characterises their everyday experiences. Kéïta, through her heroine, Malimouna, employs violent means to achieve independence and to gain her personal autonomy. The myth concerning authentication of virginity helps to ensure young girls' fertility and faithfulness to their husbands. Matou, Malimouna's mother, shares this belief. She simply wants her daughter to be a suitable bride. This is the only deceptive way for a woman to be successful and happy as a bride's mother. Dimikèla, the exciser also agrees with Matou, the heroine's mother:

Sache qu'une femme qui ne subit pas cette épreuve ne peut être maîtresse de son corps et ne peut devenir qu'une dévergondée. (*Rebelle*, 21.)

[Know that a woman who does not undergo this test cannot be a mistress of her body and can only become loose.] (*Our translation*)

Kéïta represents authentication of virginity as a barbaric custom. This is revealed through her interview with Amina (1998). She sensitises the reader about the traditional belief which forms the basis of Female Genital Mutilation in her community. According to the African traditional belief, Female Genital Mutilation increases fertility and reassures woman's purity, virginity and faithfulness. It also helps women to control their sexual urge. On the contrary, the genital cutting without anesthesia endangers the lives of the victims, deprives them of sexual pleasure forever and destroys their lives as women completely. This is a gross violation of women's fundamental human rights. The danger of FGM is a public health issue. It is an aberration and a domestic violence against the body of a woman.

Des millions de femmes sont mutilées inutilement, en Afrique. D'une façon générale, ceux qui la pratiquent ne savent pas vraiment pourquoi ils le font. C'est une coutume dont ils ont hérité et qu'ils perpétuent parce que, leur a-t-on dit, elle permet à la femme d'être une vraie femme, fidèle et soumise à son mari. C'est une violation flagrante des Droits de la femme. Il s'agit d'un problème de santé publique (<http://aflit.arts.uwa.edu.au/BitonCV>, (Kéïta's interview granted to Amina, 1998).

[Millions of women are mutilated unnecessarily in Africa. In general, those who practice it do not really know the reason why they are doing it. This is a custom that they inherited and they perpetuate it because they were told that, it allows the woman to be a true woman, faithful and submissive to her husband. It is a gross violation of woman's rights. It is a public health issue] (*Our translation*)

The belief of most Africans is that FGM is a source of pride when girls are excised before marriage, remain virgins and have the proof of the virginity on the wedding night.

The genre of female bildungsroman shuns imposition of marriage. Bildungsroman heroines need male friends, lovers or husbands, but they have every right to choose their own husbands. Imposition of husband by family and community is a violation of the rights of a young girl. Kéïta also condemns this act when she portrays it as a savage custom. This idea is reflected in her interview granted to Amina (1998):

Les mariages forcés sont encore légion chez nous. Je ne vois aucun avantage à forcer quelqu'un, qu'il soit un homme ou une femme, à se marier à une personne dont il ne veut pas. (*ibid*)

[Forced marriages are still rampant in our country. I do not see any advantage in forcing someone, be it a man or a woman, to marry a person he does not want] (*Our translation*)

It is revealed that, "female sexuality is celebrated for its power and its supposed capacity to escape from dominance and submission" Lennon, (2014: 3.1).

To justify the title of the novel, *Rebelle*, Malimouna rebels against tradition that puts her on hold. She escapes from dominance and submission as put by Lennon (2014). To Malimouna, the marriage is absurd which makes her to escape at age fourteen. In *Mutilée*, escape is not possible for Khady, the author and the narrator of the text. In her own case, there is no one to give her a sense of awareness as everyone adheres strictly to the tradition in her own community. She takes everything that comes her way in order to bring honour to her parents not mindful of the everlasting sorrows that forced marriage and FGM would cause her. Khady's innocence allows patriarchy to thrive and perpetuate its power structure. Thus, for bildungsroman heroine to grow and progress, escape is the first stage of liberation. Malimouna, through violence and confrontation, gets herself liberated from Dimikèla and Old Sando and this action paves way for her survival.

#### 4.2.2.3 Exile

In bildungsroman, the protagonist suffers emotional disillusionment such that running into exile is the only alternative. This is considered necessary as the heroine is on her way to maturity. FGM and child-marriage provoke emotional discontent that makes



Malimouna to run into exile. However, self-exile is necessary at times to overcome emotional torture. It acts as a pointer to Malimouna's self-consciousness. Malimouna, in her traumatic state, runs to Salouma, the capital city, and from there to France, where she is ill-treated by men, both black and white, and takes up a variety of odd jobs, such as nanny, dish-washer, and domestic-maid in order to survive. She works for two French families. The first French employer falls in love with her, which makes the wife of her employer to hand her over to the second family. Her stay with the second family takes a dramatic turn when her employer, M. Bireau attempts to rape her:

Monsieur Bireau...entra sans frapper dans sa chambre, et vint s'asseoir au bord de son lit ... Il était seulement vêtu d'un caleçon qui cachait à peine la brutalité de son désir. Il souriait stupidement en la regardant. (*Rebelle 68*)

[Mr. Bireau ...entered her room without knocking; he sat on the edge of the bed... He was wearing only a pant that barely concealed the brutality of his desire. He was smiling stupidly while looking at her] (*Our translation*)

This attempted rape makes Malimouna to leave without asking for her wage. Feminists express the view that rape is a problem faced by women as a manifestation of men's patriarchal power. This violent act taunts women psychologically. Malimouna is not a victim of rape but to circumvent rape, she quickly runs to Paris. Overcoming the attempted rape makes her to be a bildungsroman heroine and also a survivor. This marks her third victory against patriarchal domination, after FGM and forced marriage. In Paris, Malimouna feels deserted, lonely, tired and depressed. Fortunately, she is supported by a pastor and his wife. The difference in religious belief gets Malimouna and the pastor's family separated.

#### 4.2.2.4 Love or marriage

Falling in love is a socially acceptable option for young women and is another major characteristic of the female bildungsroman. According to Labovitz (1986:178) "marriage for this modern questing heroine begins in the iron grip of necessity and ends by providing bonds which prohibit growth." The bonds of matrimony as observed by the critic come to frustrate Malimouna's personal developmental desires. With Karim, her new husband, she is subjected to domestic violence, both physically and emotionally. While she escapes FGM and forced marriage, Malimouna is a victim of another damaging traditional issue of polygamy when Karim takes a second wife. Polygamy is like a bitter pill for women to swallow.

De Beauvoir (1949) posits that under patriarchy, the woman is the “Other”. Men make women the "Other" in society by putting them in bondage. Malimouna is the “Other” in *Rebelle* since she is expected to perform the task of child rearing, cooking food, and baby-sitting. Karim’s intention is reflected in the novel thus:

Karim ne voulait plus qu’elle travaille. Elle aurait assez à faire à s’occuper de ses propres enfants. (*Rebelle* 162).

[Karim does not want her to work any longer; she would have enough to engage her, taking care of her own children (*Our translation*)

Karim’s intention, according to feminist bildungsroman’s ideology, is tantamount to patriarchal domination. Feminist bildungsroman demonstrates the ability of women to disengage themselves from sexually defined roles in order to ascertain true self-autonomy, to achieve independence and self-dignity. Malimouna’s hope of freedom is crushed when she enters into matrimony. The major goal for bildungsroman’s heroine is to redefine her identity and role in society. In this regard, the heroine’s developmental process is generally hampered by getting married to Karim. Malimouna, who after getting rid of three lovers, ends up living alone. Nevertheless, she is as antagonistic as ever.

It should be noted that the pursuit of her career is not in consonance with marriage. Malimouna struggles to gain a sense of worth when she frees herself from marital subordination, which supports the feminist’s ideological concept of ‘separatism’. In order to continue her journey of self-exploration and developmental process, Malimouna ceases to be a full-time homemaker, and resists to be dogmatic to the exploitative nature of her husband.

Towards the end of the narrative, Malimouna is summoned to Boritouni, her native village, to go and perform by force, the FGM rites which she fails to perform before her escapade. Karim arranges for her kidnapping and subjects her to ridicule by facing the crime she commits before she runs away, that is, the killing of her ‘proposed husband’. While Malimouna is in the midst of the villagers in Boritouni, the elders start to interrogate her on her betrothal to Sando. She explains to the elders the illegality of girl-child marriage under the law. « A l’époque, j’étais une enfant! On m’a obligée à me marier et la loi condamne ce genre de pratiques!» [At that time, I was a child! They forced me to get married and the law condemns this kind of practice!] « Le conseil de village » [council of elders] retorts at her:

-La loi? Quelle loi?.....

-Est-ce que le gouvernement ne connaît pas nos coutumes? ...

-Vous irez en prison si vous me touchez (*Rebelle* 228).

- The law? What law?
- Does the government not know our tradition?
- You will go to prison if you touch me (*Our translation*)

Malimouna's response shocks them when she speaks out. This kind of boldness she manifests can be termed escape to action. Malimouna finds her voice, which is the central idea in the genre of the female bildungsroman. Feminist bildungsroman stresses that women can be liberated through legal reform. Malimouna tries all her efforts to change the existing institutions; she challenges the status quo and patriarchal mores through legal reform. In Africa, a woman does not have the audacity to speak in front of elders. However, Malimouna is no longer in the group of *béni oui-oui* that most African women represent by accepting things sheepishly. In this respect, Malimouna is a rebel. Pell, (1977:31.4) also asserts that the self-assertion and rebellion for a bildungsroman heroine to develop and achieve self-fulfilment in a male-dominated society is a key tenet of bildungsroman. All these characteristics are found in the heroine and they help her in achieving her goals.

In the African tradition, the council of elders has its symbolic decisions and punishments to who err (banishment or alienation). Malimouna is sensitive to their ploy. Instantly, she invites the police to arrest all of them. The days are gone when the elders would be passing barbaric judgments on women and they would be mute. This is a modern era where women fight their cause through legal means. Feminist bildungsroman upholds the notion that all that is needed to transform the condition of women is to change existing laws that are hostile to them and that open up more possibilities for women to prove themselves as equal to men. Malimouna, through her exposure to urban life and education, has gathered a lot of experience. She asserts her rights by seeking redress within a modern legal system to achieve her goal. Being a contemporary woman portrays her as a bildungsroman heroine and a survivor of patriarchal subjugation. This teaches that, African women should grow up instead of allowing themselves to suffer in the name of tradition. Malimouna's victory is celebrated thus:

Après avoir pris quelques renseignements auprès de Malimouna, le commissaire décida d'embarquer les deux frères du vieux Sando pour le commissariat le plus proche. Malimouna monta dans la voiture de Laura sous l'œil vigilant de ses amies, après quoi, celles-ci regagnèrent leur car. Le convoi s'ébranla. Alors, les femmes laissèrent éclater leur joie. Des commentaires ponctués de rires allèrent bon train. (*Rebelle*, 231-232.)

After taking some information from Malimouna, the police superintendent decided to pick up the two brothers of the old Sando to the nearest police station. Malimouna got into Laura's car in the presence of her friends, after which they returned to their car. The convoy took off. Then the women burst out in joy...Comments mixed with laughter unabated were going on. (*Our translation*)

Education and exposure make an amazing impact on the life of Malimouna. This expression reveals her present status: « Cette femme-là, était à présent une intellectuelle et ne pouvait donc pas être traitée n'importe comment » (*Rebelle* 228). [This woman was now an intellectual and could not be treated anyhow.] (*Our translation*.) This declaration also portrays Malimouna as bildungsroman heroine. Malimouna's status is elevated and she cannot be taken for granted again.

Towards the end of the story, Karim reappears and begs Malimouna to follow him back home. Malimouna's decision is in order with Felski's ideological point of view on marriage that the heroine will want to free herself from "marital subordination and dependence". This is reflected in the text:

-A quoi tu joues?..Tu vas me faire le plaisir de regagner la maison, immédiatement ! Je ne reviendrai pas à la maison...Tu as choisi de refaire ta vie, je ne peux pas t'en empêcher ; mais je refuse de vivre une vie que je n'ai pas choisie (*Rebelle* 209)

[What a joke? ...- You want to give me the pleasure of returning home. I will not come back home ...you have chosen to reorganize your life and I cannot prevent it; but I refuse to live a life that I have not chosen.] *Our translation*

Malimouna's refusal to follow her husband home implies that she wants to be free from any matrimonial bond or abuses that will still deter her progress. Feminist bildungsroman addresses personal autonomy. Women should create enabling conditions for themselves. A woman should have an overall decision whether to end or to remain in a particular relationship. However, Malimouna decides to opt out of the matrimony that is characterised by beating, conjugal rape, deprivation, domination and depression.

Malimouna becomes radical and extremely prominent in the fight against oppression of patriarchal authority. The collective action of both modern and rural women in the novel brings about the transformational social goals that feminist bildungsroman proposes. Laura, Malimouna's friend, achieves this by mobilising other members of the association to pave way for her freedom. Despite all odds, she survives all obstacles and achieves her independence. All the features of female bildungsroman are present here. The metamorphosis of the heroine from a state of unawareness to a state of full consciousness

establishes *Rebelle* as a bildungsroman: a novel of growth, education, development, discovery and survival.

#### 4.2.2.5 Self-identity

In traditional bildungsroman, the hero seeks his identity, while in female bildungsroman, the heroine sees herself as someone who is oppressed with personal matters. Thus, the family must, to some extent, be abandoned for the modern heroine to redefine her identity. This is the period of alienation in bildungsroman. The protagonist needs a space to think in order to define herself as a non-conformist to patriarchal mores (FGM and child-marriage).

In a traditional community, there is a fundamental belief that genital cutting is paramount to rite of passage. This is a way to trap a young girl coming-of-age into marriage and childbirth. The irony is that the practice of FGM achieves the exact opposite. Removing part of a girl or a woman's anatomy is a way to forcefully change the way her body is intended to function. The point is not only to take away her femininity, but biologically, to change the composition that makes her the woman she is naturally intended to be.

Malimouna assimilates societal values at the beginning, but she eventually creates an identity that opposes the prescribed societal values. In order to gain self-identity, she isolates herself from the community, her father, the oppressor and her repudiated mother in order to have rest of mind so as to reconstruct her self-identity. This is important as bildungsroman makes it clear that an internal growth and a transformation of the heroine is bound to occur. This action of 'self-rule' truly transformed Malimouna to be a survivor and bildungsroman heroine.

#### 4.2.2.6 Education

Contemporary female writers advocate female education in order to enhance their individual identity and to attain the status of women. Their concern is to have educational parity in all disciplines and at all levels. In the traditional or conventional bildungsroman, formal education is typically a part of the young hero's *bildung* (formation). Malimouna, without formal education, does not deviate from the typical bildungsroman pattern despite all odds. Education can be acquired in and out of the class. This is because acquisition of life experiences is regarded as education. Nevertheless, bildungsroman heroines are always anxious to have formal education. With the help of education, they can improve their socio-economic status. Malimouna emulates this idea and seeks her education outside the family fold where she is met only with discord, pain, and hindrances. As part of her identity formation, Malimouna has the ambition of acquiring formal education in *L'institut*

*d'Etudes Sociales* [The Institute of Social Studies]. "Aider les femmes" [Helping women] is her mission which she wants to accomplish.

Elle voulait porter assistance aux africaines en France. C'était le défi qu'elle s'était lancée (*Rebelle* 83.)

[She wanted to render assistance to African women in France. That was the challenge she gave herself] (*Our translation.*)

Knowledge brings awareness. Women, who have low educational background, may feel insecure and defenceless. Malimouna's decision to educate herself has beneficial effects on her journey of self-discovery. Learning skills and becoming a competent person are essential not only to enter a profession, but necessary to be discreet in decision making. Education propels Malimouna to engage in passionate discussions with her fellow women in order to create awareness and open their eyes to realities of life. At times, financial problems may want to hinder people's ambition but the heroine is financially buoyant to pursue this goal: "Financièrement, Malimouna s'en sortait, mais, elle avait d'autres ambitions". (*Rebelle*, 83) [Financially, Malimouna is okay, but she has other ambitions.] On one hand, she desperately wants to upgrade herself; on the other hand, she is keen to help women.

#### 4.2.2.7 **Self-discovery**

Having reconstructed her identity as a forward-looking heroine, she embarks on her journey of self-discovery to set specific and viable goals for herself. The escape from the trauma of circumcision and forced marriage awakens Malimouna to embark on the journey of self-discovery in quest of her self-development. Among the themes of the bildungsroman and the most frequently discussed in relation to the linear bildungsroman is the development of the protagonist. The voyage of self-discovery leads the heroine to pursue a career plan.

#### 4.2.2.8 **Career plan**

This is also a prominent theme of female bildungsroman. To be part of a new social profession constitutes a broadening horizon. This helps to awaken a young person coming-of-age to many possibilities in the world. "For young Africans to make the best decisions regarding career, there is need for *self-discovery* –you need to know who you are!" Akiode, (2012). Through self-assessment, one understands oneself. Understanding, according to

Akiode, is the beginning of the “career planning process”. In line with Akiode’s assertion, Malimouna understands and creates a sense of direction for herself. She is dedicated and committed to pursue her career.

Accordingly, Fatou Kéïta and Khady Koita are on the same pedestal, as the duo focus on the socio-cultural turmoil of patriarchy against young girls and women in Ivory Coast and Senegal, respectively. Kéïta’s heroine, Malimouna, rejects all the so called rites of passage in Ivory Coast, while Khady confesses that she is a victim of all. The two heroines are committed to social career in a bid to wipe out all the barbaric rites of passage that throw the life of young girls coming-of-age into disaster.

Malimouna, having evaluated herself deeply, discovers that her passion resides in a social career. This career plan prevents her from having psychological depression. Malimouna decides to be a social worker who wants to improve her society as well as helping African women as a whole. Her social career begins in France with her Malian friend, Fanta, who wants her daughter’s genital to be cut. Koso, (1987:98) urges African women to “free themselves from ignorance, fear and mental servitude [and] join in the education of their sisters”. Despite all social virtues that Fanta receives from Malimouna, she still lives in fear and in ignorance. In bildungsroman, Female genital mutilation is considered as “rites of passage”; a ritual associated with a change of status for an individual, especially emerging into adulthood. However, Malimouna expresses her disapproval of mutilation of clitoris.

Mais elle savait que, dans cet instant critique, elle ne trouverait pas les arguments nécessaires pour convaincre cette femme, pétrie de traditions. Comment la persuader, là, maintenant, tout de suite, que sa fille, sa petite Noura chérie, ne deviendrait pas une dévergondée simplement parce qu’elle garderait entier son clitoris. (*Rebelle*, 125)

[But she knew that in this critical moment, she could not find the necessary words to convince this woman, who is neck deep in tradition. How would she persuade her, there, now, right away that her daughter, her darling little Noura would not become a slut simply because she would keep her entire clitoris intact]. (*Our translation*)

Malimouna’s friendship with Fanta is a failure because the latter cannot change her traditionally inclined orientation. The heroine’s disposition to help her friend is in consonance with the vision of female bildungsroman. This is because Fanta does not reckon with the advice of Malimouna who wants Fanta to adopt a position in which the decision to have several children would be commensurate with the couple’s economic situation and sound health. The heroine’s suggestion of contraceptive pills to Fanta is

regarded as a religious taboo by Barou, Fanta's husband. Likewise, her advice to Fanta to protect Noura's genital from being cut, does not work. When the heroine declares to Fanta that she is not excised, she takes Malimouna as a deviant of tradition. Malimouna says: "Moi, je ne suis pas excisée..." (*Rebelle*, 125) [Me, I am not excised].

Fanta's decision to insist on Noura's excision is motivated by her animosity against Malimouna who refuses to be excised and also dating a White man. Courting a white man signifies an irredeemable acculturation to Fanta. The couple insists on excising their daughter, which leads to her death. « La petite Noura était morte d'une hémorragie dans les souffrances les plus atroces » (*Rebelle*, 126) [Little Noura in the most terrible pain, died of haemorrhage] (*Our translation*)

Malimouna struggles with the arrest of her friend and she wonders if the imprisonment of the parents, who subjects their child to genital cutting, is truly the solution to the end of the practice in France. In her discussion with Philippe, her husband, Malimouna understands his disapproval of Female Genital Mutilation. He calls the act "barbare" [barbaric] (*Rebelle* 127). Malimouna says that Female Genital Mutilation is harmful. She does not support her husband's statement. The following discussions ensue between them:

Qu'est-ce que tu connais à la barbarie? hurla-t-elle, courroucée... Il n'y a rien à comprendre au fait qu'une mutilation est une mutilation et que c'est un acte barbare! Malimouna était furieuse de l'entendre, lui, parler de la sorte. Ne comprenait-il pas que ce n'était pas aussi simple? Que pour ces gens-là, il ne s'agissait absolument pas d'être barbare ou cruel? Cela n'avait rien à voir avec la barbarie telle qu'elle était décrite par les journaux et la télévision, faisant apparaître les parents de Noura comme des monstres sanguinaires, des sauvages incapables d'aimer leurs enfants. (*Rebelle*, 127)

[What do you know about barbarism? She yelled with anger ... There is nothing more to understand than the fact that mutilation is mutilation and that is a barbaric act! Malimouna was furious to hear him talking like that. Did he not understand that it is not that simple? For these people, it was not only to be absolutely barbaric or cruel? That had nothing to do with the barbarism that newspapers and television described, showing Noura's parents as bloodthirsty monsters, beasts who are incapable of loving their children] (*Our translation*)

The fact that her friend is arrested shows the French legal position on Female Genital Mutilation in the 1990s. In addition, Philippe's reaction reflects the French perception of genital mutilation. Malimouna's relationship with Philippe continues to depreciate after cultural clash that ensues after the demise of Noura. After returning to Salouma, she leaves Philippe Blain and marries Karim, a man from Salouma.



When Malimouna returns to Ivory Coast, she becomes the country's ambassador whose function is to improve the lives of women. As she takes up the presidency of the "Centre d'Entraide aux Femmes" (Centre of Mutual-Aid for Women), Female Genital Mutilation is brought to the fore again. Having had a friend whose daughter dies from the complications of FGM in Paris and having undergone the pain of physical and domestic violence, Malimouna finds herself at the forefront of her community. She becomes the president of L'Association d'Aide à la Femme en Difficulté (162) [The Association for the Assistance of Women in Difficulty] (*Our translation*).

Scholars have placed emphasis on education as a catalyst that upturns the status of women in the society. This is reflected in Malimouna's attitude when she determines to fight for the education of all women in her community "Un vaste programme d'alphabetisation des ménagères" (183) [A comprehensive literacy programme for housewives] in Salouma through l'AAFD. Malimouna looks forward to seeing the day when women would be treated as equal with men and when the horrors of some of their traditions, such as FGM, domestic violence and forced marriage would be totally abolished. This expression corroborates Malimouna's plan for women:

Le nom de Malimouna apparaissait dans les journaux, ... Martelant à tous vent qu'il fallait que cessent les violences faites aux femmes. Violence ...partaient de l'excision, en passant par le mariage forcé de très jeunes filles, l'étouffement de celles-ci dans leur foyer et les brutalités domestiques qui s'ensuivaient souvent (*Rebelle* 189)

[The name of Malimouna appeared in the newspapers ...Hammering to all directions, that violence against women needed to stop. Violence, ... starting from excision, moving to forced marriage of very young girls and domestic brutality that often followed.] (*Our translation*)

In spite of her successes and experiences, she still encounters some setbacks and frustrations:

Le plus dur pour Malimouna et ses amies, était de rencontrer de l'hostilité de la part d'autres femmes. Des femmes dont les propos pouvaient être encore plus virulentes que ceux de leurs opposants masculins... Ces femmes étaient intraitables et semblaient nourrir de la haine pour ces «intellectuelles» qui ne connaissaient pas leur place dans la société car elles n'étaient pas de vraies Africaines fières de leurs origines (*Rebelle*, 182)

[The most painful thing for Malimouna and her friends was the hostility they encountered from other women. Women whose words could still be more virulent than those of their male counterparts.... These women were obstinate and seemed to nurture hatred for those female “intellectuals” who did not know their position in society because they were not true African women proud of their origins] (*Our translation*)

Malimouna’s activism exposes the reader to a broad knowledge of women’s oppression across the globe. Women torment other women to accommodate the beliefs of male superiority. Female Genital Mutilation is practised to satisfy the wishes of a patriarchal society because men are the decision makers and hold authoritative positions in carrying out the operation. It is clear that men stay aloof from the practice but give commands and instructions to the women. Feminist critics portray these types of women as agents of oppression and enemies of progress.

The intellectual tactics that the association explores actually help women to achieve a common goal. They form sisterhood bond as a form of resistance. The close-knit relationship strengthens the bond among the women in *Rebelle*. Malimouna is the pacesetter, while other women follow such step of rejecting the oppression of the society and creating a new path. The expression ‘liberté de la femme’ [woman’s freedom] is a thorn in men’s flesh. As a result of this, the women are being tactful in their selection of words. The concept that Malimouna and her colleagues formulate reflects in this excerpt:

Malimouna pouvait donc se donner à fond à la lutte qu’elle et ses amies de l’Association avaient entrepris de poursuivre. La lutte pour un ‘mieux-être’ de la femme. Elles s’autocensuraient et ne parlaient jamais de ‘liberté’ de la femme pour ne pas être mises au pilori par de nombreux hommes ...ce mot ‘liberté’ était tabou. C’était, leur lançait-on souvent au visage, un mot emprunté à l’idéologie occidentale. (*Rebelle*, 179)

Malimouna could therefore give her all to the struggle which she and her friends of the Association had undertaken to pursue. The struggle for a “better-life” for women. They cautioned themselves and never spoke of women “liberation” in order not to be held to ridicule by numerous men ... the word 'freedom' was a taboo. It was often hurled on their faces, a word borrowed from Western ideology (*our translation*)

Malimouna achieves her transformation not by restructuring patriarchal systems but by appropriating her own identity within her community. She survives as she creates a

framework that enables her to become the woman she wants to be and not the woman the society would like her to be. She attains her potentials from her journey of self-discovery, which she uses in her quest for survival and redefinition of her identity. She completes her journey of formation and come-of-age. Through her career plan, she actualises her goals which make her to become a bildungsroman heroine and a survivor.

The first two bildungsromane examined has given us the fore knowledge about the journey of self-survival. The heroines struggle to reclaim their identity. They strive for new experiences and find their levels in the world; they explore their sexualities and possess their bodies. They become mentors and role models to young girls and women around the world. Eventually, they overcome obstacles and they are declared survivors.

### **4.3 Khady Koita's *Mutilée***

#### **4.3.1 Summary of *Mutilée***

Khady's autobiographical novel, *Mutilée* (2005), traces the growth and the developmental progression of Khady, the author, the narrator and the protagonist as she grows from childhood to adulthood.

Khady Koita's title *Mutilée*, can be literally translated as "mutilated" and the narrative focuses on the barbaric customs and traditions of the Soninke tribe in Senegal, West Africa. Khady, a mother of five, writes in order to make her voice heard to the world as a victim of female circumcision, forced marriage, child marriage, conjugal rape, polygamy, domestic violence and divorce. At the age of thirteen and a half years, Khady is forced to marry her unknown cousin Moussa, who lives in France. Her marital life is miserable until she divorces her husband.

In France, two of Khady's children also undergo genital cutting, which makes her to be psychologically downcast. Thus, she takes the horse by the reins, and joins the French anti-female genital mutilation crusader called GAMS (Groupe d'Abolition de la Mutilation Sexuelle [Group for the Abolition of Sexual Mutilation] (GAMS) in the 1980s. GAMS is an organization that fights against genital cutting and traditions that are detrimental to the African young girls and women. Khady later becomes the president of Euronet-FGM (a European Network that is dedicated to the eradication of genital cutting). In the last chapter of the novel, she details out on her struggle against genital cutting, child marriage and illiteracy.

Some scholars for example, postulate that all autobiographical novels are bildungsroman. This is because the duo shares same features and expressive roles. It is a

narrative production that tells the author's own coming-of-age experiences situated within a given historical, social and cultural framework. The autobiographical genre is not seen in this study as an imaginary tale but as factual narrative, which proposes to creatively tell the story and character formation of a real person.

Lupton (1998:29) defines "auto/bio/graphy" to mean "self/life/story," or "the narrative of the events in a person's life" by the person. Lupton further says that "autobiographers not only recount facts but also use them as a vehicle for expressing self-revelation". He classifies four elements that characterise an autobiographical novel: it must be written rather than spoken; it must be recounted by a first-person narrator; it must be of manageable length and, finally, it must be organised in a chronological order of significant events of the narrator's life. The chronological order and the expressive role of "I" (first person singular) have a link with bildungsroman in autobiographical novel (Abel et al. 1983:304). This is because the writers narrate their experiences and developments as if they were in conflict with the society.

The African bildungsroman, Khady's *Mutilée* is narrated from first-person point of view that chronicles the significant events of her life. Thus, *Mutilée* is a channel of self-expression that unfolds the horrors of Khady's life. In this case, facts blend with creative writing. Naturally, an author may bring in facts of her own life into her work, especially in a form in which childhood memories are so important to the growth of the protagonist. Khady's *Mutilée* is a typical bildungsroman, chronologically arranged within the author's childhood and painful experiences.

Apart from being a victim of genital cutting and child marriage, Khady exposes other restrictions placed on her and other women in Senegal. Nevertheless, she manipulates literary means as a subversive strategy to interpret her own experiences in order to express her opinion on the subjugation of women. Khady reveals that women are victims and survivors of genital cutting, child or forced marriage, illiteracy, conjugal rape and polygamy. Her autobiographical text is an act of confession, testimony and emancipation, which divulges socio-political realities and experiences.

A number of female writers construct their developmental experiences through the female bildungsroman literary paradigm. This is the platform by which they bring to the fore their experiences rather than choosing the paths of rebellion. Contemporary women have taken pens to "write themselves" Cixous, (1976:883) in autobiographical form. Khady aligns with the orientation within the tenets of female bildungsroman while writing about herself in *Mutilée*.

Khady is entrapped by tradition; she therefore, challenges the existing socio-cultural norms. She believes that many things are terribly wrong within her society and she wants the whole world to recognise these negative aspects through her writings. She adopts a realistic approach, which conveys the anomalous attitudes of her Soninke society. Her efforts to attract the attention of many writers the world over is to compare women's experience across boundaries. With her adherence to GAMS, she seeks a radical transformational change not only in her society but also around the world. Indeed, it can be argued that society is the heroine's antagonist in the bildungsroman. The restrictions that the society places on the heroine are an indicator of their anger towards her. These constraints are disastrous to the adolescent's autonomy and instead of the parents exerting authority on the society; society puts pressure on the parents. Hence, society controls both the parents and the protagonists' actions. Khady, for instance, undergoes societal pressures, which make her life unbearable. Her early marriage is life-threatening; her verification of virginity is heartbreaking; the myths surrounding genital cutting are tragic. These issues deter her social accomplishments.

#### 4.3.2 Analysis of *Mutilée*: Khady

##### 4.3.2.1 Awakening

Khady awakens to consciousness when she is fully aware of the mythical traditions of her society. The truth behind all the harmful rites of passage dawns on her when she realises what her society appears to be in her childhood days. Her society is characterised by harmful traditional practices, conventional ideas and unimaginable rituals. The awakening of Khady can be summarised as what Rosowski (1983:64) describes as “an awakening to limitation and conflict [...] and the need for meaningful public action”. When Khady is awakened to consciousness, she is determined to embark on a life of her own. However, as a woman in a male-dominated society, the possibility of taking action is limited. But Khady, having an independent mind, exposes the sexist tendencies as well as the patriarchal prejudices that oppress the young girls struggling to reach maturity.

Khady eventually brings to the fore the urgent needs for women to take charge of their situations in a patriarchal society where men are regarded as “tin gods” because of their absolute and unquestionable powers. Normally, in African setting, a woman is often disenchanted, static, and submissive because of outstanding cultural hegemony. Khady's case is not different; marriage illusion deprives her of achieving goals and aspirations in

her prime. She sacrifices her freedom and education. However, she later wakes up and comes to terms with the penalties of her own retrospection.

#### 4.3.2.2 Rites of passage

Khady's *Mutilée* is an embodiment of bildungsroman that captures many forms of rites of passage, which are connected to genital cutting, child marriage, a knock on the head, authentication of virginity and the traditional ritual of the nuptial night.

##### 4.3.2.2 (i) The Female Genital Mutilation

This is depicted as a rite of passage and in many cultures, it is used to mark the social beginning of one's life to sexual maturity. Khady's *Mutilée* highlights the details of the events that mark her rites of passage in Senegal. This Female Genital Mutilation awakens her consciousness that the moment girls are relieved of their genitals, they are sought after for marriage. In 1966, Khady is barely a seven-year-old girl, when she and her cousins underwent the horror of Female Genital Mutilation. Female Genital Mutilation, according to World Health Organization (2010) involves "All procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural, religious or other non-medical reasons." This genital, which in medical term refers to as clitoridectomy and erroneously declared as riddance of male organ in females, is to mark gender difference. Some women see it as a mark of honour, purity or modesty. When this is done, a girl is on transition to womanhood. Clitoridectomy is believed to symbolically represent feminine fertility, which is deconstructed in *Mutilée*.

"Rites of passage gives a picture of either an adolescent protagonist's coming-of-age, or as an awakening to the reality of her social and culturally defined order". (Eysturoy 1996:4). In Africa, the significance of rites of passage is aimed at achieving cultural identity. Khady, through the first chapter of *Mutilée*, presents Female Genital Mutilation (Salindé in Soninké language) as one of the rites of passage, which turn out to be the beginning of awareness that free young girls and women from the conventional traditions and to incorporate new ideas into the Africans.

Female Genital Mutilation is presented as a ritual of purification under the guise of Islamic religion, which is nothing but a myth. It becomes appalling when Khady gets to know that female genital circumcision has no connection with any religion:

La grand-mère nous annonce que nous allons être salindé pour « pouvoir prier » ce qui veut dire [...] « être purifiées pour accéder à la prière ». En français: « excisées » [...] « coupées ». (*Mutilée*, 15)

The grandmother announces to us that we are going to be “salindé “to be able to pray” which means “to be purified, to have access to prayer”. (*Our translation*)

Khady describes her rite of passage in the text:

Deux femmes m’ont attrapée et trainée dans la pièce. L’une derrière moi, me tient la tête et ses genoux écrasent mes épaules de tout leur poids pour que je ne bouge pas ; l’autre me tient aux genoux. Les jambes écartées. [...] La dame chargée de l’opération dispose d’une lame de rasoir [...] Elle tire avec ses doigts, [...] ce minuscule morceau de chair et coupe comme si elle tranchait un morceau de viande de zébu. (19) C’est une douleur inexplicable. (*Mutilée*, 20)

Two women seized and dragged me to the room. One behind me grabbed my head and, with all the strength of her knees, crushed my shoulders so that I cannot move; the other held my knees. The legs were spread... The woman in charge of the operation held a razor blade. She pulls with her fingers, this tiny bit of flesh and cut as if she was cutting a piece of bull meat. It is an indescribable pain. (*Our translation*)

When an awakening occurs, she describes the act of female genital as barbaric;

Ce mauvais jour de l’excision, [...] de la barbarie

[This bad day of genital cutting [...] of the barbaric)  
(*Mutilée*, 28)

Ce rituel barbare [this barbaric ritual [...]  
qui n’a absolument rien à voir avec la religion (*Mutilée*, 15)

That has absolutely nothing to do with religion  
(*Our translation*)

According to Khady, men instigate Female Genital Mutilation and compel women to execute the operation. In addition, the reasons why they want women to undergo genital cutting are manifested below:

Assurer leur pouvoir, croire que leurs épouses n’iraient pas vers d’autres géniteurs, ou que les hommes des tribus ennemies ne les violeraient pas! D’autres explications, encore plus absurdes, voudraient que le sexe des femmes soit impur, diabolique... (*Mutilée*, 16)

To affirm their power, to believe that their wives would not go after other men, or that enemies from other tribes would not rape them! Other more absurd explanations were that female organs are impure and diabolical... (*Our translation*)

Genital cutting is culturally imposed on women. Khady deconstructs this act as men's domination. "Seule la domination en est la vraie raison » (*Mutilée*, 16) [Domination is the only true reason]. Fatou Kéïta deconstructs Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as a child abuse and a form of extreme discrimination against women. Khady herself says that FGM is a gross violation of fundamental human rights. These words are revealed when two of Khady's cousins want to undergo the exercise:

–Ah! Mais, vous, les Soninké, vous continuez à faire vos actes de barbarie, là...? Vous n'êtes pas réveillés, vous restez sauvages! Ces actes-là, c'est sauvage! (*Mutilée*, 26)

-Ah! But, you, Soninkés, you continue to perform those barbaric acts of yours, here...? You are not awake; you remain uncivilized! These acts are savage (*Our translation*)

These words act as words of caution or advice that awakens Khady's consciousness. From what the woman says, her psychological journey starts. According to her, she never pays attention to FGM as it is described as barbaric, until she later begins to understand that the deep cut that suppresses normal sexuality is an unknown flourishing flower that would never flourish again" (*Mutilée*, 27). Khady is a victim of Female Genital Mutilation and she is overwhelmed by the tragic incident. According to her, the removal of her clitoris has suppressed her sexual pleasure and part of her life is crushed with sexual violence. However, despite the anguish of FGM, Khady emerges like a warrior figure and the path to warrior life revolves around claiming space and freedom for expression to create a different identity for herself. Khady has desires for happy ending, which makes her to think and put her feelings into writing: to confront her problems, examine her own history, struggle to make better choices and restore her psychological wounds. She recuperates and determines to live. Her strong decision to expose her ordeal to the whole world makes her a true survivor. The will to live also makes her to represent a bildungsroman heroine.

#### 4.3.2.2 (ii) **Forced marriage**

The European Parliamentary Assembly Resolution (2005:4) defines forced marriage as the "union of two persons at least one of whom has not given their full and free consent to the marriage". A child under the age of 18 is not capable of giving her valid consent to enter into marriage, such marriage is considered a forced marriage. Forced marriage can assume various forms. It may occur in situations involving slavery; mail order marriages; human trafficking; arranged, traditional and customary marriages, expedient marriage, marriages as dispute settlement, fictitious marriages, *trokosi* (the practice of giving young virgin girls to priests to serve as sexual slaves as payment for



services or as atonement), and bride kidnapping or marriage to acquire citizenship (UNWOMEN, 2012)

In Senegal, forced marriage is generally a common practice, in which 16 percent of young women marry and give birth before reaching the age of fifteen. (Da Silva, 2013). The term ‘child-bride’ elevates the tradition under the pretext of celebration. Most of these child/ forced marriages are arranged by parents, and the young girl rarely meets her future husband before the wedding as revealed in the text. The supposed girl knows that after the wedding, she must move to her husband’s household and become the responsibility of the in-laws. She may even be prevented from seeing her parents for some time.

According to UNICEF (2016),

Child marriage functions as a social norm. Marrying girls under 18 years old is rooted in gender discrimination, encouraging premature and continuous child bearing and giving preference to boys’ education. Child marriage is also a strategy for economic survival as families marry off their daughters at an early age to reduce their economic burden. Complicated phenomenon and factors that contribute to the practice are countless, and include poverty, gaps in laws, and lack of education, religious beliefs and traditions....

According to UNICEF’s declaration, child marriage is a traditional practice that happens in African countries, where the moment a girl starts menstruating and breasts start growing, she becomes a woman in the eyes of the parents and even the entire community. Marriage is, therefore, the next step towards giving a girl another status: a wife and mother. The practice of Female Genital Mutilation is a determining factor that facilitates child marriage. This is another vital issue that awakens Khady’s consciousness:

À partir du moment où une fille est réglée et que les seins sont visibles, les parents pensent qu’elle est prête à être mariée. Et ils souhaitent un mari le plus vite possible. (*Mutilée*, 51)

The moment a girl starts menstruating and the breasts are visible, the parents think she is ready to be married off. And they crave for a husband as soon as possible. (*Our translation*)

This is applicable to Khady, barely at the age of thirteen and a half years old; she is married to an unknown cousin Moussa. « La demande en mariage d’un cousin inconnu [...] à treize ans et demie » (*Mutilée* 48). Khady uncovers the way she is entrapped into the cage of child marriage. Her maternal grandmother is the facilitator of the consummation of her marriage.

Given this situation, child marriage is one of the most prevalent forms of sexual exploitation of girls. This practice robs girls of their access to functional education, and

economic empowerment and opportunities and thereby prevents them from developing their full potentials. Their childhoods are effectively shortchanged; their education ended; their emotional and social development interrupted. Girls are psychologically downcast by marital rape, and, if they become pregnant, they experience greater risk of both death and chronic disability than their mothers.

Between illusions and disappointments, regrets and tears, Khady is confronted with ambivalence of childhood trauma and the goal opportunities of adulthood. But she passes through this storm to emerge stronger and transform to a survivor. Khady's life is characterised by physical, mental and emotional torture. Despite all that happens to her, she still displays perseverance to live "successfully". In this regard, she is a true representative of *bildungsroman* heroine who crosses over the "wilderness of death".

#### 4.3.2.2 (iii) A knock on the head

Another rite is 'a knock on the head', which symbolises that a girl-child is ripe for marriage in Senegal. Khady, during the course of discussion with her grandmother, one of her elder sister's friends rushes in and gives her a small knock on the head which is an indicator as exemplified in the excerpt below:

Une amie de ma sœur aînée arrive en courant et me donne un petit coup de poing sur la tête. [...] Et là, j'ai compris. C'est fini. Ils m'ont mariée à la mosquée. Le coup de poing est le signal. (*Mutilée*, 55).

One of my elder sister's friends runs in, and gives me a knock on the head... And there, I understood it is finished. They have got me wedded in the mosque. The knock is the signal. (*Our translation*)

According to Soninke tradition, when a young woman is married, an agreement is reached among men and the ceremony takes place without her in the mosque. However, in a utopian society, where the society is perfect, it is absurd to marry a girl off in absentia and to an unknown man. Khady's consciousness is awakened, she knows exactly what the problem is but she dares not challenge the tradition in order not to be ostracised. This can be deduced in the words of Webb (1926:101) that "to reach for self-culture or self-expression placed her (the protagonist) in the category of a potential law-breaker". Khady expresses her feelings that she sits there like an idiot, passive and incapable to react to the confirmation of her new status. « C'est notre destinée. Donc, il est impensable de dire non » (*Mutilée*, 50). [It is our destiny. So, it is unthinkable to say no] And if any girl says no, the response is "Tu l'aimeras plus tard" [You will love him later] (*Mutilée*, 51). To buttress her argument further, she reveals : « Une fille qui refuse ce que les parents lui

proposent tombera forcément sur un mauvais mari!» (*Mutilée*, 52) [A girl that refuses whomever the parents propose will possibly fall on a bad husband] (*Our translation*)

Khady as a young girl is totally submissive to her parents' wish, so as not to put the family honour in jeopardy. This compliant attitude of Khady is refuted by Malimouna, the bildungsroman heroine of Fatou Kéïta's *Rebelle*. Through confrontation and violence, Malimouna rejects every initiation revolving around rites of passage. She defies Female Genital Mutilation, child marriage, virginity test and all the rest.

In Khady's *Mutilée*, the *Soninke* perpetuates self-imposed traditions instead of creating an enabling future for their daughters. Child marriage usually marks the end of a girl's education, restricting her chance of developing skills that can help her achieve economic survival and also rid the prospective children out of poverty.

#### 4.3.2.2 (iv) **Authentication of virginity**

The authentication of virginity is the degrading aspect of rites of passage as portrayed in Khady's *Mutilée*. According to Soninké tradition, it is a taboo for a girl to be deflowered before the wedding day. This is depicted in the novel: ... « Une tante vient remplir son rôle de vérificatrice symbolique de ma virginité» (*Mutilée*, 60). [An aunt comes to perform her symbolic role of proving my virginity] « Ma mère [...] se pose surtout la grande question: est-ce qu'elle est vierge? » (*Mutilée*, 66) [My mother above all, asks the big question: is she a virgin?] (*Our translation*). Khady reveals the ritual bath she has to prove her purity and chastity. She asserts her authentication of virginity in this manner :

...Elles me font asseoir sur un grand mortier qui sert à piler le mil .... Le seau d'eau tout neuf est à côté de moi, avec une petite calabasse. Elles ont mis des plantes dans l'eau, du parfum, de l'encens à côté. Elles retirent le tissu de mes cheveux ..., et je reste torse nu, en pagne. Il s'agit maintenant de préparer symboliquement mon corps au « sacrifice ». Elles me versent un peu d'eau sur la tête et chantent en me frottant la peau de cette eau parfumée..... Après quoi, je peux revêtir les boubous tout neufs, parfumés d'encens, blancs, symbole de ma virginité et de la purification.... Un pagne plus épais, plus lourd, et je prends la direction de la chambre nuptiale, la tête dissimulée sous un voile (*Mutilée*, 66-67).

They make me to sit on a big mortar, which is used for pounding millet .... A new bowl of fresh water is put beside me, with a small calabash. Inside the water, they had put herbs, perfumed with incense beside it. They loosen the head-tie of my hair... and I remain half-naked, with only a wrapper on me. It is now time to prepare my body symbolically for that "sacrifice". They sprinkle a little water on my head and sing while scrubbing my skin with the perfumed water. [...]After which, I can wear a new, white boubou sprayed with perfume incense, symbol of my virginity and purification... A bigger heavier wrapper and I follow the direction of the nuptial room, the head hidden under a veil. (*Our translation*)

According to the World Health Organization (2002:17), “Sexual violence encompasses a wide range of acts including...obligatory inspections forvirginity”. Some cultures require proof of a bride's virginity before her marriage. This has traditionally been tested by the presence of an intact hymen (a thin layer covering the vagina) which was verified by a physical examination usually by a proof of blood. The nuptial blood-spotted bed sheet would be displayed as proof of consummation of marriage to show that the bride is a virgin. The loss of virginity before marriage in African setting is a shame.

In some African or Arab countries, an unmarried female, who is found not to be a virgin, whether by choice or rape, may be ostracised or killed. This is tagged as “honour violence”. On the nuptial night, if a girl is tested and declared a virgin, she brings honour to her family. Virginity testing has the potential to be a life-changing event. Presently, the act of virginity test is deconstructed as a form of abuse against women. However, Khady recounts how a matron walks her over to the room with a mattress on the floor and leaves her there waiting for the groom. The husband, who is old enough to be Khady's father, consummates this union to the thirteen and half-year-old girl with sexual intercourse. Khady describes her psychological state on that conjugal night as thus:

La femme qui m'a accompagnée jusque-là me laisse seule. Il est possible qu'à partir de cet instant mon cerveau se soit bloqué. [...] Je sais qu'il est entré, mais je n'ai pas voulu le regarder, et je n'ai pas retiré mon voile. Il a éteint l'unique lampe à pétrole, c'est tout ce dont je me souviens. Je me suis réveillée le lendemain matin, vers quatre heures, au lever du soleil. Des cris et des youyous devant la porte venaient de me faire sortir du coma dans lequel j'avais sombré. (*Mutilée*, 67)

The woman that accompanied me left me there alone. I assume that from that moment on, my brain is blocked [...] I know he entered, but I did not want to look at him, and I did not remove my veil. He turned off the only oil lamp; and that was the last thing I recalled. I woke up the next morning around four a.m. to the sun rise. Cries and ululations in front of the door had aroused me from the coma into which I had fallen (*Our translation*)

She explains her painful sexual experience as “sex without consent” with an unknown husband:

Le mari n'était pas là, il était déjà parti. Les mamans étaient heureuses, elles avaient ce qu'elles voulaient. Je me souviens la douleur à ce moment-là.... C'était une douleur si violente qu'elle m'a plongée dans le noir. Je n'ai rien vu, rien entendu, absente de ma propre vie durant trois ou quatre heures. Je me suis mise à haïr, et je m'efforce d'ignorer définitivement cette partie de mon corps, dont l'intime blessure ne cicatrisera jamais. (*Mutilée*, 67).

The husband was not there; he had already left. The mothers were happy; they had gotten what they wanted.... I remember the pain at that moment ... it is an excruciating pain into which I had been thrown in the dark. I saw nothing, heard nothing. Unconscious for three or four hours, I started to hate, and I try to blot out permanently that part of my body whose intimate wound will never heal. (*Our translation*)

As Khady finishes the initiation rites, she faces the complexities of the real world. The society subjects her to humiliation and distress because tradition must be fulfilled. Despite her tender age, body and heart, Khady still survives all the tortures they put her through. She endures all the traditional rites from the stage of transition to womanhood. In bildungsroman, the journey to adulthood is complicated but Khady has no other choice than to accept the arrangement. Khady says,

Pour la première fois, je prends conscience de ce qui m'arrive... je pleure pour beaucoup de raisons, mêlées, diffuses ... parce que je vais quitter ma famille. ... je n'ai jamais vu cet homme, j'ignore à quoi il ressemble, quel âge il a. On veut donner à cet homme une femme que l'on dit vierge de tout, propre de tout. (*Mutilée*, 62-63)

[-For the first time, I am aware of what is happening to me... I cry for many reasons, mixed up, scattered ...because I am going to leave my family..... I have never seen this man, I don't know what he looks like, how old he is..... They want to give this man a wife they say is a virgin in every way, completely pure] (*Our translation*)

All these characterise Khady's childhood as a teenager, drifting into an unknown world of matrimony. After completing the journey of initiation, Khady comes to realise that all these traditional rites are mere indoctrination in a patriarchal or male-dominated society.

#### 4.3.2.3 Self-identity

In female bildungsroman, identity formation goes beyond social constructions because it is an alternative to self-ego. When the adolescents start forming new identities, they put together some independent values and opinions that are different from their parents. For a bildungsroman heroine, identity construction is the discovery of self in a patriarchal or male-dominated society. The bildungsroman genre to this extent, provides a viable space to many authors to discuss social and cultural aspects of identity formation. Therefore, an author reflects on her identity within her milieu, and interrogates the various cultures that spur or mar their growth and maturity.

Self-identity is the way an individual defines himself or herself, what she believes, how she feels and how she acts in the society. Most heroines find identity very difficult to

construct because identity formation in a patriarchal society is characterised by traumatic stages or disillusionment. It is noted that the fundamental obstacle within the identity formation of bildungsroman heroine lies in the area of patriarchal subjugation. This is because women's identity revolves around cooking, cleaning, taking care of the household and especially the husband. In this regard, the heroine's identity formation in patriarchal society often leads to identity crisis because the protagonist wants to distinct herself from the culturally compliant society. This is necessary because the bildungsroman heroine needs to make a choice that would shape her personality and uniqueness in life.

#### 4.3.2.3 (i) **Marriage**

According to Dixon (1969), "marriage is the chief vehicle for the perpetuation of the oppression of women; it is through the role of wife that the subjugation of women is maintained". In many African novels, women are presented as second-class citizens who are inept to achieve autonomy and integrity because of marriage. Marriage, for a bildungsroman heroine, is very challenging as she leaves her father's home to live under the domination of her husband. The marital experience of Khady is beclouded with fear and silence due to the domineering attitude of her husband. As a woman without status due to her marital circumstances, which is surrounded by forced and arranged marriage factors, she rebels against her abusive husband who downgrades her to the position of a fling. This is because to Moussa, Khady's husband, marriage represents confinement.

Khady, in her repressed condition, gives her husband the first shock when she awakens from the slumber of being called a bride. As an innocent teenager, who undergoes the emotional trauma of child and forced marriage, Khady is prevented from interacting with any male relative or even male friends. The husband is always jealous whenever people pay Khady a visit. This dialogue ensues between them:

- C'est une femme mariée! Ces garçons n'ont pas à entrer dans sa chambre et à s'asseoir près d'elle!...
- Mes amis ont le droit de venir me voir! (*Mutilée* 69)
- Mon grand frère n'a pas le droit de s'allonger sur mon lit pour bavarder et rire avec moi
- Ça ne se fait pas (*Mutilée*, 72)

[She is a married woman! These boys do not have to be entering her room and sitting beside her. [...].

My friends have the right to come and see me].

- My elder brother has no right to lie on my bed to chat and laugh with me. That is not done. (*Our translation*)

Khady, with those courageous words, says, that would be her first time of addressing her husband verbally, and she does that in a bid to assert her autonomy. Her husband proves to be authoritative, on the contrary, the bildungsroman heroine is self-assertive and bold in constructing her identity. However, the courage to challenge her husband, of not being dogmatic to his commands is an emancipatory trope for Khady.

#### 4.3.2.3 (ii) **Sexuality**

Sexuality is also an issue that constitutes crisis in the construction of female identity. It is believed that “some controversial traditional cultural practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), has been described as an attempt at nullifying women's sexuality altogether”. (WHO, 2014). Khady writes:

L’endroit qui pouvait nous offrir cette sensation de désir puis de plaisir nous est enlevé pour freiner toute envie sexuelle (*Mutilée*, 77)

The place that could give us this sensation of desire and pleasure is removed to reduce all sexual desire. (*Our translation*)

Berman, (2012:171) maintains that, “a successful wife is defined by a body that will submit to supervision, domestic service, and strict enclosure...” This issue of sexuality is a calculated attempt deployed by Khady to express her feelings. Her description of sexual abuse by her husband is appalling because tradition and religion prevent her from reacting. This is because her body, heart and pleasure belong to her husband. Khady further laments that for a woman to be liberated from the physical as well as emotional distress, she needs a cool-headed man that is patient and attentive:

La seule chance pour une femme excisée d’être libérée de cet interdit, aussi physique que mental, est de rencontrer un homme attentif, patient, et surtout véritablement amoureux d’elle. (*Mutilée*, 77)

[The only chance for a circumcised woman to be liberated from this physical as well as mental attack is to meet a man who is attentive, patient and above all, a man truly in love with her].(*Our translation*)

Khady depicts her husband as an oppressor because he cannot equate love and affection with marriage. Khady is portrayed as a sex object and a reproductive engine. Having moved to Paris, the marriage brought five pregnancies consecutively. Women activists advocate that all women should have access to sexual healthcare particularly on

issues, such as birth control and family planning. Bodily autonomy and agreement between husband and wife are emphasised in female sexuality.

Khady in *Mutilée* says that sexual obligation is always the source of conflict in their marriage and the bed remains a permanent danger to her. « Il est plus fort que moi physiquement, je ne pouvais pas lutter contre le viol conjugal » (*Mutilée*, 153) [Physically, he is stronger than me, I could not wrestle against conjugal rape]. The author refers to sex without consent as “Viol conjugal” [conjugal rape] (*Mutilée*, 153). Khady declares that there is no iota of love in a man that forces her wife to bed. « Il n’y a pas aucun amour de la part d’un homme qui force sa femme. » (*Mutilée*, 129).

National Women Liberation (2017) (NWL) reacts to forced sex thus:

Women have full control over the decision to have children. We want free and full access to all forms of birth control, including contraception and abortion. We want to make these decisions without pressure to have children, [...] to take hormones, or to get sterilized. We want men to do their share of pregnancy prevention and disease prevention by wearing a condom without being asked, paying for birth control and/or getting a vasectomy....

Khady’s consciousness is awakened like a hungry lion when she unties herself from conjugal domination. She starts taking contraceptive pill, in order to have full autonomy over her body. This notion is, however, contrary to Khady under Islamic patriarchal society. A woman has no power over her body but the development of contraceptive pills makes headway for birth control. The pill, according to Frink (2011), “gave married women the greater ability to plan and space children, allowing them to pursue educational and career opportunities”. The idea of taking contraceptive pills deconstructs the women’s sole function for procreation. Countering this idea, Moussa paints Khady to be a whore:

... Vous, les femmes, c’est ça que vous prenez pour ne plus avoir d’enfants, et pour courir les hommes! Les femmes qui prennent ces pilules sont des putains!” (*Mutilée*, 122).

[...You, women, this is what you take so that you will no longer bear children, and be able to run after men! Women that take pills are whores] (*Our translation*)

Da Silva (2013), reports that “Only 12 percent of women in Senegal use contraceptives, which has led to a “baby boom” in the country. The belief is that contraceptives damage the womb and cause health problems. Such health problems include blood pressure and chronic headaches”. Khady does not share in this belief; but her continual pregnancy and childbearing get her frustrated. With access to the contraceptive pill, she asserts her identity and affirms her liberation after five children.



In reality, giving birth in quick succession may result in death; but, modern day bildungsroman writers do not want their protagonists to die. Thus, Khady is a survivor of maternal mortality. Khady creates awareness and breaks down the taboos revolving around contraception and baby explosion syndrome. The text, *Mutilée*, is a medium of sending message to Senegalese women on the need for family planning.

#### 4.3.2. 3. (iii) **Polygamy**

Polygamy is another problem that Khady faces, which destroys the harmony of her home. Mernissi (1975:16) avers that:

Polygamy entitles the male not simply to satisfy his sexuality, but to indulge it to saturation without taking into consideration the woman's needs, the woman being considered a simple "agent" in the process.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1994: paragraph 14 General Recommendation (21) also makes this strong comment:

Polygamous marriages contravene a woman's right to equality with men and can have such serious emotional and financial consequences for her and her dependents that such marriages ought to be discouraged and prohibited.

From the foregoing, it is evident that polygamy is a violation of women's right because it has always been said that justice or equality can never be maintained between two women. (CEDAW) has vehemently rejected polygamy because of the emotional trauma and economic consequence it has on both mothers and children.

In Senegal, polygamy is a thing of joy but Da Silva (2012) gets shocked when Aminata, a Senegalese woman opposes it. "Polygamy is a form of modern slavery. Women involved in this form of marriage have no voice and no channels to complain." Thus, polygamy, according to Aminata, throws women into enslavement. A woman under this condition has sold her happiness. It is certain that polygamy defies the principle of equality; it is malicious and it deters women's progress in society. It is full of deceptions. Khady's home is not exempted because, her husband is a polygamist. This picture testifies to polygamous celebration in Senegal:



*A group of women in rural West Africa participate in a traditional ceremony to celebrate a polygamist marriage. Credit: Fatuma Camara/IPS*

In France, for instance, polygamy is a taboo. It is forbidden for a man to have two wives. “La polygamie est interdite en France” (*Mutilée*, 144). Despite this convention, Moussa, out of sheer selfishness, announces to Khady his decision to take a second wife. « J’ai épousé une deuxième femme en Afrique » (*Mutilée*, 130). [I have taken a second wife in Africa]. The response of Khady shows that she does not entertain any fear when she says, “C’est très bien. J’espère qu’avec cette femme, ça marchera. » (*Mutilée*, 130). [It is well. I hope that with this woman, life will be fine]. The system of polygamy, which is described as a thing of joy in Senegal appears to be an avenue for Khady to gain freedom. According to her, Moussa’s second wife may relieve her from sexual obligation, which is the major source of their incessant quarrels. She is now in control of her body and she is free to take decisions. Khady projects a plan and reconstructs her identity as a modern woman:

[...] Je suis soulagée [...] Mon plan secret va prendre forme. Une coépouse, cela veut dire d’abord, pour moi, moins d’obligations sexuelles. Et immédiatement après, le divorce. La fuite, l’envol, je me barre avec les enfants! (*Mutilée*, 130-131)

[...I am relieved [...] my secret plan is going to take shape. A co-wife, firstly, means, for me, less sexual obligations. And immediately after the divorce, Escape, flight, I am taking off with the children] (*Our translation*)

The bitter experiences in Khady's matrimonial home, the rivalry in polygamous marriage, the death of one of her children, and the agony of a battered wife stimulate her action. This citation testifies to her melancholic condition:

[...] Mon mari commence à devenir violent, agressif. Ce qui n'était pas le cas au début. J'ai déjà reçu des coups plusieurs fois, surtout lorsque la deuxième épouse se mêle des disputes. Je suis la mauvaise, la jalouse, la méchante.... La dernière fois qu'il m'a battue, je suis allée au dispensaire, et on m'a donné des certificats médicaux. Mon avocat les a dans son dossier, et nous sommes convoqués tous les deux au tribunal [...]. (*Mutilée*, 140).

[My husband is becoming violent, aggressive. It was not so at the beginning. I have already received blows several times, especially when the second wife dabbles into disputes. I am the bad, jealous and wicked one. .... The last time he beat me, I went to the dispensary and they gave me medical reports. My lawyer has them in his file, and we have both been summoned to the tribunal] (*Our translation*)

It is revealed from the authorial voice that polygamy ruins Khady's relations and destroys the life of her children. Khady is already self-aware of her husband's abusive and arrogant nature. She is aware of the negative advice her husband receives from other Senegalese people who misguide him to take an illiterate wife because an illiterate wife will be submissive. This citation testifies to this assertion: «Il vaut mieux épouser une femme illettrée qu'une femme qui a été à l'école» (*Mutilée*, 131). [It is better to marry an illiterate woman rather than a woman that has been to school]. Truly, the second wife who is supposed to be in school at the age of fifteen is a stark illiterate. Thus, divorce makes Khady to define her sense of worth as a real woman and not a sex object. Khady makes up her mind to seek for divorce. This action paves way for her ultimate survival.

According to Weiner (2007:362), "Divorce isn't such a tragedy. A tragedy is referred to as staying in an unhappy marriage, [...] nobody ever died of divorce." It is apparent that Weiner is an advocate of divorce to a woman like Khady whose personality has been overwhelmed through the arduous expedition of matrimony. If a woman is not happy in her marriage, she should quit or separate her ways instead of wallowing in mental torture. The maxim 'men are not worth dying for' is achieved. Khady declares:

Le divorce était mon seul objectif... Je me considérais effectivement comme une femme battue, exploitée, et je devais aller jusqu'au bout de cette réflexion. (*Mutilée*, 148)

Divorce is my only aim. I considered myself effectively as a battered, exploited wife, and I had to get to the end of this thought  
(*Our translation*)

Consequently, Khady seeks for divorce and exit from the ‘hell fire’ marriage. This is another strategy of survival for Khady.

According to Sharma (2008: 226), “every married woman is entitled to live in the house in which her husband lives”. This may be true when love is still intact between husband and wife, but the moment the home is divided, love vanishes into the thin air. A woman may decide to leave irrespective of the religion she practises. This is the situation in Khady’s home. When she can no longer bear the pains, she secures her own accommodation and moves out of her matrimonial home in France. The separation, according to her, gives her victory :

C’est la plus grande de ma victoire, de mon existence. Je pleure de soulagement, de délivrance. C’est la fin du cauchemar. On peut m’insulter, dire tout ce qu’on veut sur mon dos, je ne recevrai plus de coups, Je suis LIBRE ! (*Mutilée*, 172)

[It is the greatest victory of my life. I cry of relief, of deliverance. It is the end of the nightmare. People can insult me, say everything they want behind my back, I will not receive blows any longer, I am FREE!] (*Our translation*)

For Khady to have made such declaration of “freedom”, it is obvious that she has undergone a lot of horrible and brutal experiences. Khady, later, finds her voice and carves a space for herself in a society dominated by patriarchal mores. She reconstructs her identity without feeling the shame of being a victim. Instead of living her life with pain and sorrow, she feels relieved. She is liberated from stereotypical tradition and domestic violence. In this regard, her rejection of an orthodox femininity enables Khady to become a new woman, a superwoman, an independent woman and indeed a survivor. She recounts the past and reorganises her life to project a comprehensible image of self.

Khady with her new identity becomes a role model for other oppressed women. Her story encourages other women to be optimistic of a better future. Having reconstructed her identity as a survivor and an independent woman, the heroine is on her voyage of self-discovery to make her choice on a particular career that would be beneficial and favourable to her.

#### 4.3.2.4 Self-discovery

Self-discovery is the most essential aspect of the youth in her formative years and this is the climax of any bildungsroman heroine. The journey and experiences being acquired by the heroine are expected to provide significant and imperative goals for her. The journey of self-discovery guides the heroine to acquire a new knowledge from other people. The heroine leaves her comfort zone and travels out into the world for growth and development. Khady needs a career that would better her lot. In essence, the journey of self-discovery brings Khady into an open rebellion towards social and cultural issues. Khady, in her journey, identifies and interacts with other women. She determines to break out from the captivity of the patriarchal society and to liberate young girls and women coming-of-age from the fetters of patriarchal hegemony. The journey of self-discovery leads us to Khady's working philosophy.

#### 4.3.2.5 Career plan

In the traditional African setting, instead of women to choose their careers as a means of livelihood, they are rather advised to choose husbands which always allow their growth and development to ground to a halt. However, in the genre of bildungsroman, career or vocational plan is paramount to any ambitious bildungsroman heroine who seeks a better life. This is a channel for survival. Khady learns the lesson of life in a hard way; probably this is the reason why she explores the skill of writing in the twenty-first century. A true bildungsroman heroine who embarks on the journey of self-discovery is targeting a particular goal in life. She might slip along the way, mistakenly make a wrong choice, but with full determination, she still realises her goals. Labovitz (1986:77) opines that "work, in the sense of self-development, was in direct conflict with the subordination and repression inherent in the feminine ideal". Occupation symbolises therapeutic healing for women as it heals all the matrimonial tortures, grants a woman a sort of autonomy and also ensures progressive ideas to shape their lives.

Khady, before reaching the threshold of her journey of self-discovery, sets a goal for herself. She is determined to upgrade her educational qualification, learns a trade, earns salary like all the young girls of Senegal, helps her mother, gives her better treatment and sends her to Mecca (*Mutilée*, 79). On the contrary, Moussa, Khady's husband, vehemently objects to the idea of a woman having career: Une femme ne doit pas travailler. Elle reste à la maison. (*Mutilée*, 114) [A woman must not work. She stays in the house] (*Our translation*)

Khady, in her reaction expects every husband to grant their wives the permission to have a good job (*Mutilée*, 115). When Khady liberates herself from the bondage of patriarchal oppression to envision a new direction for herself, her compatriots cut her off and they become hostile to her. In Soninke tradition, women are encouraged to be passive but a modern, educated and active woman like Khady who lives in Paris, does not succumb to their whims. The act of passivity is manifested in the text:

- Il faut que tu écoutes ton mari, tu es dans ce mariage, tu mourras dans ce mariage, tu ne sortiras pas de mariage. Alors, obéis à ton Mari! (*Mutilée*, 132)

[You must listen to your husband, you are in this marriage, you will die in this marriage. You will not get out of the marriage. Therefore, obey your husband!] (*Our translation*)

The author makes the public to realise that out of servitude and ignorance, Senegalese women give their salaries to their husbands: « –Les autres femmes donnent leur salaire à leur mari, c’est normal! » (*Mutilée* 132) [-Other women give their salaries to their husbands, it is normal!]. However, Khady let the readers know that she does not belong to the group of *bénioui-oui* like her fellow compatriots:

La révolte mûrit dans ma tête, jusque-là, j’ai subi toutes les traditions: l’excision, le mariage obligatoire, la sexualité obligatoire, je refuse de devenir un tiroir-caisse obligatoire. .... Je garde mon autonomie. (*Mutilée*, 118).

[The revolt ripens in my head, up till then, I underwent all the traditions: excision, forced marriage, obligatory sexuality; I refuse to become an obligatory money-box... I protect my autonomy.] (*Our translation*)

These dispositions portray Khady as a distinct woman. With all the above-mentioned issues, Khady refuses to abide with Senegalese patriarchal traditions. It is perceived that a good husband clothes, shelters and equally provides money for his wife. The reverse is the case in Senegal, according to the author. As women surrender their salaries to their husbands, they can never be economically independent. In this perspective, Khady proves to her husband that women too need to enjoy the fruits of their labour. With that decision taken, Khady declares it as the beginning of her independence: “Le début de l’indépendance...” (*Mutilée*, 99). Thus, Khady is self-reliant because she is in charge of her money. This financial triumph makes her to be a survivor.

#### 4.3.2.6 Role model or mentor

A mentor or role model is the leitmotif in the voyage of self-discovery. To thrive in a career, one needs a role model. Critics advise bildungsroman heroines to move out in order to grow and achieve a particular career. This assertion corroborates Rita Felski's observation in the female bildungsroman when she says:

Female self-discovery and emancipation are depicted as a process of moving outward into the public realm of social engagement and activity, however problematic and fraught with difficulties this proves to be (Felski, 1989: 126-7).

Labovitz (1986:4) also supports this idea when she says "After a long journey of soul searching, the protagonist makes a conscious decision to integrate him/herself into society". All these declarations are instrumental to Khady's voyage of self-discovery. Her sense of direction towards the journey acquaints her with other women. She learns and gains experiences from them; even some of the experiences are complex to an adolescent like her but she needs someone to look up to, an encourager to put her through. Abel et al (1983:9) support the assertion that "it is in a context of attachment and affiliation with others that the women characters develop". This act of attachment refers to a collective activism. Despite the fact that women across the globe are not biologically related, they form one indivisible bond and struggle for their survival together. In other words, collective action accentuates collective struggle.

Khady decides to Join GAMS (Groupe pour l'Abolition des Mutilations Sexuelles) [Group for the Abolition of Sexual Mutilation] through Koumba Touré. GAMS is an association devoid of tribal, religious or political affiliation. It comprises both African and European women. The aim is to fight against some of the patriarchal hegemonies that put young girls and women's lives on hold. Their mission is to fight forced marriage, maternal mortality, Female Genital Mutilation and to debunk the religious attachment associated with Female Genital Mutilation. With this new development, Khady's passivity changes into activism because she is no longer comfortable to be the submissive wife or passive woman who is always under the surveillance of an oppressive man. Activism is already in her even before she decides to join GAMS:

A l'époque de mon espoir de divorce, j'étais et je suis toujours-une révolutionnaire, en conflit avec la communauté. (*Mutileé* 145)

[At the time of my pending divorce, I was and I am still a revolutionary, in conflict with the community] (*Our translation*).

Another citation that testifies to Khady's activism goes thus:

Je militais en France depuis les années 1980. Je travaillais alors comme interprète, que je rencontre Koumba Touré, elle-même interprète et vice-président du GAMS. Elle m'a parlé de cette association, elle m'a entraînée et depuis nous y sommes avec une même conviction ... (*Mutilé*, 184)

I have been an activist in France since the 1980s. I was then an interpreter, when I met Koumba Touré, also an interpreter and vice-president of GAMS. She spoke to me of the association, she trained me and since then we have been there with the same belief (*Our translation*)

Felski (1989:132) posits that “knowledge [...] “provides a mirror in which the protagonist discovers herself, finding her own female identity reflected”. In essence, all the experiences Khady acquires both in the past and present, stand as a metaphorical mirror, which she uses to redefine her identity and also to discover her talents.

It is therefore, expedient that bravery and independence are the fundamental resolutions that make up self-discovery. The action of the female activists offers an alternative form of emotional healing to Khady. Through this platform, Khady discovers her true self. Koumba Touré appears as her mentor or role model who leads her to the path of action. She finds herself among the group of women who plan and work together towards the elimination of Female Genital Mutilation and child marriage not only in Africa but also in the world. Khady reaches the peak of her journey of self-discovery when she becomes the President of EURONET-FGM (European Network for the Prevention and Eradication of Female Genital Mutilation): This is evident in the text below:

Depuis 2002, j'assume la présidence du réseau Européen pour la prévention des mutilations génitales féminines (EURONET-FGM). » (*Mutilée* 198).

[Since 2002, I have been the president of the European network for the prevention of Female Genital Mutilation (EURONET-FGM)] (*Our translation*).

Khady, an African woman, becomes the face of an African ambassador in an utopian world. Education is a life-long process. If not for her educational advancement, her journey of discovery might have been in total disarray. The author suffers, learns and fights to develop herself in order to accomplish her utmost desires:

Central to the female bildungsroman is the exploration of self towards development. The female protagonist moves from victimization to consciousness and emerges with a sense of self-awareness as a woman” (Eysturoy, 1996: 20).



Khady's writing of *Mutilée* is a path to her career too. She finds success in it despite the fact that she stumbles upon several obstacles on her path of discovery. The author describes and interprets her own experiences through the exploitation of literary approach. As she has written about herself, some issues that had never been heard before are now brought to limelight. Her voice, which has been hidden, becomes predominant in the literary discourse. This true-life voice of Khady in *Mutilée* comes out in the public purview:

Je voudrais que ce livre soit pour toutes les femmes africaines un outil de réflexion et non de scandale....si j'ai raconté ma vie,...ce n'est pas pour y chanter mes louanges, c'est qu'elle illustre ce combat.... aux lumières des organisations internationales. De la mutilation intime et secrète à la lutte au grand jour. Notre devoir est de dire non, stop à toutes les formes de violence et de mutilation. Il est inacceptable de laisser mutiler des petites filles au nom de traditions ou de cultures..... Chaque femme africaine ...nulle n'a le droit de cacher la vérité sur le sexe des femmes africaines. Il n'est ni diabolique ni impur. (*Mutilée*, 210).

[I would like this book to be a tool of reflection to African women and not of scandal.... If I have told the story of my life ..., it is not to sing my praises; it is to illustrate this struggle...to the lights of international organizations. From the intimate and secret mutilation to open day struggle, our duty is to say 'no', to stop all forms of violence and mutilation. It is not acceptable to allow small girls to be mutilated in the name of tradition and culture [...] no one has the right to hide the truth over the sexuality of African women. It is neither diabolical nor impure.] (*Our translation*)

The above quote testifies to her survival. Her story is shaped in such a way that the self-discovery is a witness against Female Genital Mutilation, child marriage, and harmful traditional practices. *Mutilée* demonstrates a sequence of awareness in the course of coming-to-age. It is evident from the beginning that the heroine is on the verge of self-discovery, which is an attempt to break from the cruel ways of Senegalese life. She turns that awareness to herself and to a culture she perceives as intimidating.

In Khady's *Mutilée*, it is observed that GAMS gives the bildungsroman heroine self-esteem and dignity. She figures out what her values are and she builds her life around them. Khady takes several steps beyond the authoritarian cage of societal belief. On reaching her destination, Khady commands her space, which makes her to be a survivor, a unique bildungsroman heroine and an ambassador of social change. Khady is awakened to a new world, a world where there are no restrictions to patriarchal oppression and a world

where female wisdom is incorporated. The new image that Khady portrays is the foundation for women to resist internal oppression which renders them powerless.

Khady's *Mutilée* focuses on two important issues: the need for women not to be culturally dogmatic; secondly, women should step up by uniting (sisterhood bond) as entities, by sharing their stories, locating their inner strengths to query the patriarchal ideologies that have excessively dominated their identities.

This text deconstructs patriarchy and creates new possibilities for women's identity. Khady increases women awareness about equal opportunity, fairness and parity that are not only associated to social class, but also to gender. She makes sure women are engaged with equal partners and agents of change in a humanitarian world.

Khady's *Mutilée* gives voice to the yearnings and aspirations of young girls and women. She awakens the consciousness of millions of women, and transforms the cultural ideology of her community. The victory of Khady's liberation and survival goes around the whole world. She writes *Mutilée* in order to challenge and question the human race to recognise the scary continuance of women's oppression. In essence, Khady's *Mutilée* grants the oppressed young girls and women the opportunity for self-expression, self-development, and self-discovery.

As a survivor, Khady uses her pen as a tool to reconstruct and restore the identity and dignity of womanhood. She conserves new ideologies that undermine the socially imposed traditions called rites of passage in a male-dominated society. In her near death experiences, overcoming all the traumatic stress makes Khady to stand as a survivor and bildungsroman heroine.

In this chapter, we have examined the transition of young girls becoming adults. The next chapter presents the development of heroines that are already in their middle ages. The two narratives are presented as novels of epiphany. We explicate how epiphany gives the two protagonists the second chance to restructure their lives after their marital expeditions failed.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### EPIPHANY: WOMEN'S SECOND CHANCE STRUGGLES WITH LARGER VICTORIES

**5.0** This chapter foregrounds epiphany as a literary device and presents the analysis of Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail* (1998) and Regina Yaou's *Le prix de la révolte* (1997) with major emphasis on the protagonists. These novels are those of women development, the second narrative focus of the genre of female bildungsroman as proposed by Abel et al. (1983) which in this work, is termed "novels of epiphany."

The term Epiphany originated from Ancient Greek epiphaneia, meaning manifestation, striking appearance. In Christendom, the word epiphany is a biblical allusion which stands for vision. This vision can offer a signal to human nature and reality (Ferrer: 2002). To corroborate this assertion, Eliade (1987:132-133 cited in McDonald (2005: 11) defines epiphany as "the Christian feast of the manifestation of Jesus Christ". In another realm, Greek and pagan, according to McDonald (2005:17), describe epiphany as experiences of sudden and significant insight that can and do occur in the normal course of everyday life. This means that in one's lifetime, it is possible for an individual to experience a moment of epiphany. Berkuns, (2010:13-15) a psychologist, perceives epiphany as an "innovation which is an occasional bonus of working on tough problems" Nordquist (2017) traces the origin of epiphany to Christian theology. According to him, "the feast following the twelve days of Christmas (January 6) is called Epiphany because it celebrates the appearance of divinity (the Christ child) to the Wise Men". In literary perspective, Nordquist (2017) perceives epiphany as a sudden realisation, a flash of recognition, in which someone or something is seen in a new light".

Beja (1993:71) postulates that James Joyce, an Irish author was the person that re-establishes epiphany into literature when he published his novel, *A portrait of the Artist as young man* (1916). According to Beja, Joyce employs epiphany to reveal the profound insight of his central character in the novel. The author believes that "artists used their insight into the events of daily life by transmuting them to the celebration of humanity". Thus, Joyce sees epiphany as "a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether from some objects, scene, event, or memorable phase of the mind" (Beja, 1971:11). The distinctive contribution of Joyce to the development of epiphany is the non-spiritual meaning he gives to it.

In essence, epiphanic moments in literature emphasise how writers make their protagonists to perceive the world they live in or how they can achieve an understanding of their experiences. Though an author may not be sensitive to his or her epiphanic device in his or her narrative, it is the critic that foregrounds epiphanic moment in a character and this is why Colin (1994:123) avers: "The critic's function is to find ways of recognizing and judging the epiphanies of literature which, like those of life itself, [...] are partial disclosures or revelations, or "spiritual matches struck unexpectedly in the dark". Epiphany is considered an instrument of any narrative device. This is because growth and changes, ignorance to wisdom are the cures that make a good story about the protagonist of a novel. To this end, epiphany is characterised as an occurrence or incident that creates a sudden awareness in a character.

Walter (2004:146) refers to Conrad Joseph's definition of epiphany to mean "one of those rare moments of awakening" in which occurs "everything in a flash." This awakening may tend to change the protagonist's perception or increase his or her sense of understanding about certain set of challenges or circumstances. The moments all experiences are put together, the difficulties would come to an end toward the tail end of the story. Some scholars for examples relate this moment of epiphany to the climax of a literary work. This is the highest moment of tension when the identity and action of the protagonist are reconstructed and from which the author probably draws his or her conclusion. The epiphanic effects change a character's point of view.

Moreover, epiphany is the moment of truth whereby the character through self-reflection comes back to her senses in a flash, steps forward into an action that will get her liberated from all shade of lies or traditional myths she has been blindfolded with. Thus, epiphanic vision in character development becomes an eye-opener for the protagonist to change the ideological stance of a society.

The significance of epiphany to this study is to bring out a turning point or new life to the heroines who have gone through series of challenges and tribulations. All the experiences gathered (lies, betrayals, maltreatment, family and societal pressures among others) are suddenly compressed into epiphanic moments which trigger their second chance struggles. At this stage, the moments of epiphany are now seen as a revolutionary strategy that gives the protagonists the insight to discriminate falsity against reality; to fight for their rights in order to thrive and have a fulfilled life. For instance, Affiba in *Le prix de la révolte* experiences her epiphanic moments after the demise of her husband. Her moments of epiphany unveil the prolonged crisis of tradition that forbids Ivorian women to

have an equal share in the properties that the husband leaves behind. Thus, her moments of epiphany stimulate her consciousness to bring her in-laws down, make them understand that Ivorian widows have the fundamental human rights to have equal share of their husband's assets.

The journey of epiphany is psychological which is shrouded in dream or trance. Asta's moments of epiphany which occur like a flash is in dual folds: the self-realisation that divorce is the solution to her marital woes and secondly, the time she gains an insight that farming will put an end to mass exodus to Europe. Thus, all her experiences: marital subordination, racial discrimination, migration, imprisonment and the rest are fused together into brief epiphany. Waking up from the shadowy dream, the sudden flashes of vision serve as an eye-opener and a turning point for Asta. Her mentality about European world changes; she gives up her carrier and vows never to remarry. Asta's moment of epiphany helps her to reinterpret her life by making another vital decision of becoming a full-time farmer. Thus, the moment she realises her challenges, the epiphanic feeling suddenly enlightens how long she has gone astray.

Epiphany is also an embodiment of empowerment. Agricultural cooperative project that Asta embarks upon helps the entire community from famine and abject poverty. Affiba, in her own turn, fights to undermine the cultural mores which initially control her exploration of authentic self. Thus, epiphanic moments of the two protagonists become moment of great revelation that helps them to break loose from social and conventional institutions that block their chances of survival toward achieving their goals and also change the socio-cultural ideology of their societies. Finally, epiphany in literature is brief and sudden but its goal is change and positive transformation.

In novels of epiphany, an adult heroine operates a dual life: first, a way of life that conforms to patriarchal ethos and second, an inner life which questions that conformity. Subsequently, the epiphanic moments happen like a dream or trance, helping the heroine to exit patriarchal hegemony. The experience of such women is succinctly summarised by Hoover (1980) cited in Fuderer (1990:3):

The modern feminist *bildungsroman* usually depicts adolescent development to one extent or another, but it focuses primarily upon the crisis occasioned by a woman's awakening, in her late twenties or early thirties, to the stultification and fragmentation of a personality devoted not to self-fulfillment and awareness, but to a culturally determined, self-sacrificing, and self-effacing existence. This crisis and the resultant struggle for individuality and integration continue to occupy the central thematic position of the feminist *bildungsroman* in the mid-seventies.

The novel of epiphany indicates that women can develop later in life, after marital and motherhood life crumbles or turns sour. Thus, the heroines discussed in this Chapter have experienced troubles and miseries in their marriage and motherhood journeys. Damaged by the socio-cultural issues in their milieu, these women later renegotiate and reconstruct their identities as heroines strictly limited in the private sphere but motivated highly for public activism.

## **5.1 Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail***

### **5.1.1 Summary of *Douceurs du bercail***

Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceur du bercail* (1998) revolves broadly around the themes of homeland and exile, racial discrimination, gender and patriarchy. Aminata's major preoccupation reveals how African immigrants are ridiculed in European countries. As a result of this, she deconstructs exile as a place of discomfort as opposed to the idea of *Eldorado* "paradise" which Africans dream of. She admonishes African people to stay in their fatherland and embrace the popular ancestral farming, instead of running abroad only to pick up and get stuck to odd jobs. She specifically lays emphasis on land as offering hope when she writes "La terre ne ment pas" [Land does not lie], (*Douceurs du bercail* 88)

The novel begins at a French airport with a female Senegalese journalist, Asta Diop (divorcee and mother of three children (Miram, Sira and Paapi) travelling out to attend "The World Economic Order" conference in France. She formerly lives in France before relocating back to Africa because of hegemonic problems. Thus, she understands the problems that are associated with aliens who lack valid papers and the inherent danger of being an illegal immigrant in France very well. However, Asta has sufficient documents to back up her journey for the conference in France. They include her official letter of invitation to the conference, professional identity card, national identity card, official letter from her employer, lodging information with a valid international passport.

As Asta moves from one security guard to the other, questions are raised about the authenticity of her travel documents. She becomes frustrated and disappointed. This scenario makes her tell one of the airport agents that she is being ill-treated because they see every black as a future settler or refugee. Eventually, when a female official starts searching every part of her body including under the brassiere to the extent of intruding her private parts, Asta becomes infuriated and even attempts to strangulate the female official. This makes the airport security portrays her as a criminal and consequently imprisons her

for eight days in the airport dépôt (cell) with would-be immigrants who are searching for greener pastures through illegal ways.

Anne, a French woman (Asta's best friend), who is already in the airport to welcome Asta feels disappointed when she hears on the television that Asta is locked up. She, therefore, runs to the Senegalese embassy in France to secure her release but all to no avail. While in the dépôt, Asta dreams of going back home (Senegal) in order to regain her cultural identity, feminine dignity and freedom from racial prejudice. She puts her dream into practice when she returns to Senegal, buys plots of land for farming and creates a cooperative society named Naatangué together with her fellow citizens whom she meets in the dépôt. Sow Fall also delves into gender issues because the protagonist suffers marital oppression from her domineering, violent and arrogant husband, Diloudié. Asta later remarries to Babou, one of the deportees' cousins she meets in the dépôt.

### **5.1.2 Analysis of *Douceurs du bercail*: Asta Diop**

African women writers deploy literature as a medium to satirise the way the society works and this is confirmed by Aminata Sow Fall when she submits that "writing is an act of witnessing, a way of filtrating the social realities of the moment" (Aminata, Sow Fall cited in Orjinta (2013)). Following this declaration, Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail*, which belongs to literature of protest, is a way of sorting out the hard realities of life.

Aminata Sow Fall is among the first group of female writers whose literary production starts in the 1970s in Senegal. She has produced many fictional works, which include: *Le Revenant* (1976), *La Grève des Battus (The Beggars' Strike)* (1979), *L'Appel des Arènes* (1982), *L'Ex-Père de la Nation* (1987), *Le jujubier du patriarce* (1998) and *Festins de la détresse* (2005). Since the 1970s, francophone African women writers have written and are still publishing chains of literary texts, exploring the complexities of the conditions of men and women in the African society. Sow Fall specifically in post-colonial epoch has taken literature to another level by placing women above men in the construction of social and economic development of the Senegalese community. In *Douceurs du bercail*, Sow Fall's is to combat the oppression of African immigrants in Europe. The novel is treated as bildungsroman because it represents a novel of awakening, epiphany and development, which create social awareness for both men and women.

This African bildungsroman presents colonialism coupled with racism as a catalyst for the awakening of the protagonist's consciousness towards her thought-provoking

journey in the patriarchal world to the path of self-discovery. Through the characterisation Asta Diop, the protagonist, thematic thrusts related to immigration, racism, self-identity, gender, the female body, marriage and other related matters are explored. *Douceurs du bercail*, just like the previous texts, also addresses the theme of resistance through the central protagonist.

Migration, exile or journey as the dominant theme in *Douceurs du bercail* is “*Bildungs*” meaning education or part of learning process for the protagonist on her way to self-discovery. This protagonist travels from a rural community to the wider world to acquire knowledge. The explanation of the process of *bildungs* by Wilhelm Dilthey (cited in Abel et al. 1983) is recalled thus:

A regulated development within the life of the individual is observed; each of its stages has its own intrinsic value and is at the same time the basis for a higher stage. The dissonance and conflicts of life appear as the necessary growth points through which the individual must pass on his way to maturity and harmony (Abel, Hirsch and Langland, 1983:5)

Aminata Sow Fall reveals a similar outline in *Douceurs du bercail* through Asta’s friend, Anne, when she ponders on the advice of her father, Monsieur Francis Lebeau:

Les voyages forment la jeunesse ... faut voir les gens et leur diversité pour comprendre le monde » ... (*Douceurs du bercail* 31)

[Travelling broadens the mind ... you must see people and their differences in order to understand the world...](*Our translation*)

Following Asta’s learning process (*bildungs*), it is discovered that the fictional protagonist has an encounter with many people: European immigration officers, custom officers, police officers, African immigrants, expectant mothers and others around the world who put Asta’s bravery or courage to test through conflict, violence or peaceful interaction. All these experiences bring about change which eventually contributes to the growth and development of the protagonist. This explains why the author focuses on Asta in order to investigate her level of relationship with the world in general. Her coming across various people changes her destiny to be the chief leader of Naatangué “C’est Asta Diop, notre cheftaine” (*Douceurs du bercail* 220) [It is Asta Diop, our leader] (*Our translation*).

Drawing from the principles of the genre of bildungsroman, the journey towards development of a heroine is risky in a culture that is full of masculinist orders. This is because, in female bildungsroman, external world or society in general is usually hostile to bildungsroman heroine. As a result of this, Asta’s journey is full of disappointments and disillusionments. However, a successful developmental journey or growth involves the



existence of a suitable social perspective that gives the protagonist an insight from naivety to wisdom.

In a broad sense, Aminata Sow Fall's narrative focuses on the themes of racial oppression, gender and environmental issues. She wants her people to love natural farm products instead of relying on imported goods. Through these thematic preoccupations,, Sow Fall awakens the consciousness of Asta, as she moves from one socio-cultural space to another, struggling to find that identity which subsequently gives her life to improve her entire community. Analysing these themes makes the reader to accept Asta as an achiever, a custodian of culture and savior of her country from economic quagmire. Sow Fall puts her protagonist at the centre of the Senegalese community in order to change the feminine identity from subaltern to a go-getter, an agent of social change and a harbinger of a new reality. Also, as the protagonist is directly involved with historical and socio-cultural identity of Senegal, her story becomes more exciting because of her struggle against patriarchal conventions.

#### 5.1.2.1 **Awakening**

*Douceurs du bercail*, as a novel of epiphany, novel of women development and transformation for the married heroine, Asta, lays emphasis on the awakening of consciousness, revealing the true nature of the world and attaining the moral values which enable her to jettison the prescribed female roles, testing herself through adventures in the outside world to reconstruct her identity. This is why Aminata Sow Fall sends her protagonist on a pilgrimage to France in order to test her ability as a journalist in "The World Economic Order" (L'Ordre Economique Mondial) and to widen her horizon.

Her epiphany helps her to differentiate what is false and what is true as manifested in her quest to possess her body when she finds herself in the oppressive atmosphere of the French officials at the French airport. Her experience foregrounds the themes of racial discrimination and female body and awakening are fully explored.

#### 5.1.2.1 (i) **Racial discrimination**

Racial discrimination or racism occurs when a person receives unfair treatment because of his or her race, colour, national and ethnic origin or immigrant status. Racism is a global issue affecting African immigrants in European countries. Through *Douceurs du bercail*, Sow Fall awakens the consciousness of Africans that racism is still in existence considering the superiority complex of the white European race as opposed to "inferior" African black race. She indicates that migration to European countries is not the solution to

African problems. She exposes this stance in order to warn the Senegalese community and Africans as a whole, to stay in their own fatherland, enjoy the “sweetness of the folds” as the title implies, instead of subjecting themselves to torture and humiliation in the hands of white Europeans. The protagonist of the novel also corroborates this by saying, « L’eldorado n’est pas au bout de l’exode mais dans les entrailles de notre terre » (*Douceurs du bercail*, 87) [Eldorado is not at the end of emigration but in the bosom of our land] (*Our translation*). Sow Fall makes Asta the victim of racism in order to chart her transformation course and change the orientation of Senegalese community generally.

Asta Diop has series of awakening. First, her consciousness is awakened by the reality of being a black woman in a European country, particularly France where colonial power and racism are celebrated. Despite the fact that France colonised Senegal and the citizens speak her language, francophone people are still being discriminated against. Asta is a victim of racial discrimination in the hands of airport security officers in France. To the Whites, a black skin is an indication that someone is out of bound.

Sega, one of the characters in the novel, testifies to how the white people perceive the black skin colour when he refers to the hand gloves worn by the woman in uniform. “Ils ont peur qu’on les contamine” [They are afraid that one would contaminate them] (*Douceurs du bercail*, 48). As if it gives expression to this, Asta does not receive a warm reception from the security agents; she is seriously dehumanised in the course of investigating her travel documents. Asta travels for professional reasons as it appears in the novel “Je ne voyage que pour des raisons professionnelles” (*Douceurs du bercail*, 9) [I travel only for professional reasons] but she is erroneously paraded as an illegal immigrant. Regardless of all the bundles of documents that Asta tenders, the passport control officer still has the effrontery to ask her questions just to despise her. Asta is crushed by the antagonistic world and she strives to affirm her authentic self:

-Qu’êtes-vous venue faire?

- Vous le voyez bien sur l’invitation et sur l’ordre de mission! Je viens assister à une conférence. Et puis, pourquoi suis-je la seule parmi ces centaines et centaines de voyageurs, à être interpellée avant même d’arriver à l’endroit où le contrôle doit se faire? (*Douceurs du bercail*, 16)

[What have you come here to do?]

You can see it well on the invitation card and on the permission to travel! I have come to attend a conference. Besides, why am I the only one among these hundreds and hundreds of travellers, to be singled out even before arriving at the immigration control point?] (*Our translation*)

The passport control officer treats Asta as one of the illegal immigrants who regards France as a paradise (L'Eldorado). From all indications, Asta is frustrated and humiliated but she continues to demonstrate her oratorical ability (like a Senegalese griotte who understands the nitty-gritty of being outspoken), lashing the officer. She retorts:

-Tous ces traitements humiliants parce que vous voyez en chacun de nous un futur immigré! Non messieurs, vous vous trompez. Moi, j'habite chez moi et j'y suis bien. (*Douceurs du bercail*, 16)

All these humiliating treatments, simply because you see in every one of us a future immigrant! No, officers, you are making a mistake. Me, I live in my country and I am fine there. (*Our translation*)

Out of annoyance, one of the police officers asks Asta to go back to her country if she does not want to be checked by anyone: “Écoutez, ça suffit! Pas la peine de gueuler. Si vous voulez pas qu'on vous contrôle, y a qu'à rester chez vous ». (*Douceurs du bercail*, 17) [Listen, enough of that! It is not a matter of yelling. If you do not want anyone to check you, you only have to stay there in your home]. (*Our translation*) This is racial arrogance, which signifies love-hate condition between the coloniser and the colonised subject. Asta is downcast but, as Rivero (2015:39) opines, “The disintegration of self is not always bad but is necessary for personal growth”. Sow Fall encourages African women to express themselves since responses to racial prejudices reveal the resilience and determination that make African women to stand out. Asta is put into the ‘cellar or dungeon’ (dépôt) :

Asta est dans les caves de l'aéroport. Un espace rectangulaire surpeuplé d'hommes, de femmes et d'enfants. L'endroit s'appelle officiellement “le dépôt” [...] Des noirs, des métis et des arabes pour la plupart. Tous attendent d'être expulsés vers leurs pays d'origine (*Douceurs du bercail*, 39)

Asta is in the cave of the airport. A rectangular space, full of men, women and children. Officially, the space is called “the depot”.... Blacks, half casts and mainly Arabs. All are waiting to be deported back to their countries of origin (*Our translation*)

Anne, Asta's friend, who is a white woman of French origin, condemns the evils of racial discrimination when she says:

Tolérance...Tous les hommes-Sont égaux-Non au racisme-  
Oui à l'amour-Entre les peuples-Au-delà des races-Et des  
Croyances. (*Douceurs du bercail*, 149).

[Tolerance...All men-Are equal-No to racism-Yes to love-  
Between people-Beyond races-And faiths] (*Our translation*)

Thus, Sow Fall (2000) corroborates the assertion of Anne thus:

Toute l'humanité doit veiller à la dignité de l'être humain en lui reconnaissant son intégrité, c'est-à-dire son droit inaliénable à être respecté, quelques soient son âge, son sexe, son origine, sa race ou sa religion.

[All humanity must protect the dignity and recognise the integrity of a human being, that is to say, his absolute right should be respected, irrespective of his age, sex, origin, race or religion] (*Our translation*) (Interview granted to Gaash, 2000).

To Sow Fall, no race is superior to the other; every race should be accorded respect. Thus, racial discrimination or segregation is an anathema.

#### 5.1.2.1(ii) **The female body**

The theme of the female body is another subject matter in post-colonial African women's writing. Sow Fall in *Douceurs du bercail* depicts out physical harm that African immigrants encounter in Europe, such as rape, sexual exploitation and other misuse of female bodies. Bodies of colonised females have been subjected to scrutiny and control. Fall, through her literary prowess, has contributed enormously to the foregrounding of African female body as a means of expressing the true African women identity.

The fact of woman crossing the border all by herself has several connotations and possible risks. It speaks power, dominance, and could bring about gender violence and sexual exploitation. Just as the journey creates the danger of failure, so also does it offer the possibility of gain which may be in form of wealth, skill, knowledge or wisdom. In the case of the protagonist here, her voyage is a bitter-sweet experience. Because of the way Asta shouts the custom officer down, "Votre gueule est plus dégoûtante" [Your shout is too disgusting] (*Douceurs du bercail*, 25), Asta is subjected to a strip-search by "une dame en uniforme" [A lady in uniform] (*Douceurs du bercail*, 27). She is tortured, dehumanised and even imprisoned in the dépôt (cell) because of her attempt to preserve her feminine dignity. Bordo (1993:18) perceives this as "a clear example of the *disciplining* of the female body – to preserve personal beauty, woman's glory!" The passport officer orders Asta to undress for a thorough search. This scenario is regarded as "violence against women" (Amnesty International, USA 2005).

Violence against women is compounded by discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, sexual identity, social status, class, and age. Such complex forms of discrimination further reduce women's choices, increase their vulnerability to violence and

make it even harder for them to obtain justice. Asta is humiliated and subjected to a thorough search. According to the author:

Asta a accepté d'enlever sa veste, ses chaussures et ses bas. Elle refuse d'ôter le reste. Des mains gantées lui balaient toutes les parties du corps, passent sous le soutien-gorge, descendent jusqu'aux genoux, remontent sous la jupe. Asta frissonne de dégoût. [...]. Asta réalise qu'une main insolente bifurque et cherche à forcer un passage fermé. Asta serre les jambes. La main insiste... Asta ne veut pas être vaincue....."Jamais!" ... Une rage bestiale la saisit. Elle voudrait hurler sa colère mais ne peut émettre aucun son. Ses deux mains, comme les crocs d'un automate, se ferment brusquement sur le cou de son vis-à-vis. Asta s'y agrippe de toutes ses forces, les dents serrées, et n'entend même pas le cri déchirant qui attire une meute de policiers. (*Douceurs du bercail*, 27-28)

[Asta agrees to remove her jacket, her shoes, and her stockings. She refuses to remove the rest. The gloved hands ran over all parts of her body, pass under the bra, move down to the knees, move back up under the skirt. Asta trembles with disgust ...Asta realises that the insolent forklike hand seeks and tries to force its way into a closed passage. Asta tightens her legs. The hand insists. Asta does not want to be overpowered. ..."Never"! ... A bestial rage takes hold of her. She would like to yell her rage but cannot emit any sound. Her two hands, like the hooks of a robot, close suddenly around the neck of her adversary. Asta holds on to it with all her strength, teeth clenched, and do not even hear the piercing cry that attracts a pack of police men. (*Our translation*)

De Beauvoir (1952) maintains that "All oppression creates a state of war". This is true of the present circumstance. Asta feels oppressed and she declares war on her oppressor. The nudity search situation is systematised oppression and woman inhumanity to woman. The female security guard is normally expected to empathise with Asta, her fellow woman; but her sexist behaviour makes her contribute to the humiliation Asta is subjected to. Women are expected to collectively form an emotional strand for the sake of womanhood.

Pence (2016:45) elucidates on the negative treatments that white women mete out to black women, "The oppression of men toward women is in so many ways parallel to the oppression of white women toward women of color". Thus, it seems evident that the same resentment and frustration that women have in dealing with men are the frustration and anger white women feel towards black women. Thus, Asta is awakened by the exploitation she is subjected to from her fellow woman. The consciousness and anger empower her to flout the order of the white female security officer. She declares her position as a cultured Senegalese woman who protects and regards her body as a haven; therefore, her body

cannot be treated anyhow. Defying the order of the white officers at the airport is a move towards emancipation on Asta's part. She is incarcerated for assaulting the female security officer. She is put in the dépôt (cell) for eight days. One would expect that under feminist movement, women irrespective of race, colour or ethnicity work together as a body. The level of discrimination against the black woman, however, leads to African-American feminism, tagged "womanism". Hooks (2000: 12) avers:

The condescension [of white women] directed at black women was one of the means they employed to remind us that the women's movement was "theirs". That we were able to participate because they allowed it; after all we were needed to legitimate the process. They did not treat us equal.

Cixous (1976: 879) asserts that "Woman must write herself". She equally urges women to salvage their bodies, desires and identities through writing. The idea portrayed in Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail* finds fulfillment in that of Cixous since every woman has a right to her body. Asta disallows her body from being completely traumatised by the police officer. Cixous (1976) posits further that once a woman reclaims her body, she can regain her position in the world; she can gain power through self-expression in order to rebel against any subordination. This action makes Asta to be a survivor. She refuses to lose her African cultural identity under the duress of European racial oppression, she refuses to be part of the "sleeping people" of the world as described by Tom Montalk (2015):

The world is an insane asylum but society is too asleep to notice the insanity [...] those in power who are awake have the advantage. Sleeping people are easily controlled. They possess little or no freewill because they have abandoned the awareness necessary to harness it.

Gramsci (1977:13) cited in Fontana (2009:86) aptly summarises the state of being conscious in his article, "Power and Democracy: Gramsci and Hegemony in America"

To know oneself means to be oneself, to be master of oneself, to distinguish oneself, to free oneself from a state of chaos, to exist as an element of order but of one's own order and one's own discipline in striving for ideal.

Asta is described as a well-composed woman who is distinguished amidst the fellow passengers who run as if they are searching for a lost soul. « Les voyageurs passent. Ils courent tous comme s'ils allaient à la recherche d'une âme perdue » (*Douceurs du bercail*, 15) [The travellers pass. They all run as if they are searching for a lost soul]. Asta is not interested in the exodus syndrome that Senegalese young men and women

embark upon towards France. She is different from the other detainees: “Rien dans l’attitude d’Asta ne permettait de penser qu’elle ferait comme les autres” (*Douceurs du bercail* 43) [Nothing in the attitude of Asta gave the impression that she would act like others.](*Our translation*) Anne’s sincere admiration is expressed: « C’est une femme courageuse. Elle a de classe. Une femme vraiment comme il faut.» (*Douceurs du bercail*, 71) [She is a courageous woman. A woman of class. A woman truly worthy of the gender] (*Our translation*)

Asta herself makes a clarion call to all Africans that: “Il est temps de croire... que nous devons inventer au lieu de consommer, consommer seulement et oublier...” » (*Douceurs du bercail*, 160). [It is time to believe....that we must invent instead of consuming, consuming only and forgetting...”] (*Our translation*) With this declaration, we can identify Asta as a forward planner and a seer of happiness.

#### 5.1.2.2 **Self-identity**

The term ‘identity’ is used to refer to many different phenomena, including people’s goals, values and beliefs, group memberships and roles played in the larger society (Vignoles, Schwartz, and Luyckx, 2011:1-28). The quest for self-identity is another core issue in the composition of female bildungsroman. In this regard, we examine the marital perspective of the protagonist in order to ascertain how oratory helps her to construct her identity in a patriarchal society.

This novel portrays how the protagonist defines herself differently as distinctive, socially, culturally and economically from other women. For a woman to construct her identity in a male-dominated society, she should be economically viable and independent. Being independent for a married woman like Asta, means to be self-reliant in order to provide for herself, should her marriage turn sour. The ability to speak her mind without fear is another important issue in female bildungsroman. Feminist bildungsroman believes that for a woman to achieve a realistic identity, self-oratory is considered to be a subversive weapon. In other words, the oppressed woman should be eloquent and bold to define her feminine identity in a male-dominated society.

#### 5.1.2. 3 **Marriage**

Conventionally, marriage is an act of bringing man and woman to become husband and wife based on love; but in this contemporary era, the institution of marriage to some people, is just for procreation and to relegate women. Proctor (2008: 113) posits that:

A husband is. . . an elective obligation. This is the position many feminists . . . take on the institution of marriage. Yet, [...] women are coerced into the institution of marriage as a result of their gender inequality and male domination.... This group of feminists advocate for the complete eradication of marriage because of the inherent danger and inequality perpetuated by the institution... the institution of marriage was set up as a method to further subordinate women.

Calder, (1976: 63) corroborates this assertion when she says:

If women's claims were granted, if she could secure a liberty as great as men, in all the relations of life, marriage as we now understand it, would cease to exist.

Women are not as free as men in marriage because of religious or cultural laws and rules, also because of the selfish nature of some men. The protagonist of *Douceurs du bercail* takes marriage to be a 'child's play' but later discovers that it is an institution, surrounded by spikey string. In the novel of female bildungsroman genre, every questing heroine seeks a role model or a mentor in order to be properly guided. In *Douceurs du bercail*, Sow Fall establishes mother-daughter relationship between Asta and her mother, Fanta. The relationship is partly to guide the girl in matters of marriage. In pursuit of her independence and because she thinks that getting married early would probably free her from domestic or childhood roles, Asta turns down her mother's advice:

-Mère...Je voudrais me marier [...]

- J'ai essayé mille fois, je ne savais pas comment te dire...

- Qui est-ce ?

-Diouldé Lam.

-Ce garçon n'est pas beau ! Il est même trop vilain!

- Il est vrai qu'un bon mari n'est pas forcément le plus beau...  
(*Douceurs du bercail*, 173)

[-Mother, I would like to get married [...]

-I have tried a thousand times; I did not know how to tell you...

-Who is it?

-Diouldé Lam

- That boy is not handsome! He is even much ugly!

- it is true that a good husband is not necessarily the most handsome... ] (*Our translation*)



Fanta wisely states: “Avec beaucoup de sagesse”

- Pas forcément le plus riche, mais le plus humain, le plus brave, Pour protéger son épouse et toute sa famille...
  - Pour moi, c’est celui qui saura m’aimer, m’écouter, me comprendre.... (*Douceurs du bercail*, 173)
- [- Not necessarily the richest, but the most humane, the most courageous, to protect his spouse and the entire family...  
- For me, he is someone that will love, listen to and understand me.] (*Our translation*)

Fanta asks Asta what Diouldé does for a living:

- Football.
- Football ! Avec le baccalauréat en poche, tu vas épouser un footballeur ! [...]Asta, la vie n’est pas un rêve !... Le mariage, c’est du sérieux...
- Nous serons heureux, j’en suis sûr. Si tu veux mon bonheur... (*Douceurs du bercail*, 173-174)

[Football! Football! With a senior secondary school in yourpocket, youare going to marry a footballer!... Asta, life is not a dream!...Marriage is a serious issue.

We shall be happy, I am sure of it. If you want my happiness...](*Our translation*)

Bildungsroman heroines are expected to look up to their mothers as role models or mentors because of their rich experiences in marriage, but most of them usually view their mothers as anti-social or the ill-fated women who probably do not experience the sweetness of marriage. Asta finds her mother’s opinions oppressive, and believes instead that early marriage is a ‘bed of roses’ and a way to live an active life. Asta abandons her studies and gets married to Diouldé. The marriage that has a good start later “hits the rock” as a result of vague and contradictory promises. Asta also accuses Diouldé of diverse escapades and antics :

... Dis-moi si tu as des leçons à donner sur ce chapitre. Tu as trahi tous les beaux serments que tu m’avais faits et auxquels j’ai cru comme une idiote! Serments d’amour, de fidélité [...] et tu m’as menti sur tous les plans. J’ai été stupide au point de laisser tomber mes études quand tu m’as fait crier que toi et moi n’étions qu’une entité et que tes gains astronomiques n’étaient pas pour toi, mais pour l’entité que nous constituions. Aujourd’hui, qu’en est-il de toutes ces promesses ! Je suis devenue une esclave qui vit à ta charge, qui doit donc accepter tous tes caprices et maintenant ta violence! Je n’en peux plus! (*Douceurs du bercail*, 168)

Tell me if you have some lessons to give on this matter. You have broken all the beautiful promises that you made to me and which I believed like an idiot! Oaths of love, of fidelity ... and you lied to me on all plans. I was stupid to the point of abandoning my studies when you made me cry that you and I are nothing but one entity and that your astronomical gains are not for you, but for the entity we constituted. Today, what has become of all those promises! I have become a slave that depends on you to live, that must therefore put up with all your whims and endure your violence! I can't cope with it any more! (*Our translation*)

Labovitz, (1986: iv, 646) maintains that,

In one way or another, men and women are incompatible... Only in silence, in complete self-possession, possession of the inwardness of being, can lovers fully meet...Marriage usually a separation...

Asta's marriage to Diouldé, a professional footballer, is like a hell on earth. Sow Fall depicts Diouldé as a womaniser, a brute and a domineering husband who turns Asta, his wife, into a punching bag whenever they quarrel. Asta in her melancholic mood says that: « La vie ne m'a jamais rien offert sur un plateau d'argent sauf l'enfance » [Life has never offered me anything on a platter of gold except during my childhood] (*Douceurs du bercail*, 86). The novel thus, draws the readers' attention to women's oppression, exploitation and discrimination through the humiliation Asta suffers in the hand of Diouldé. Marriage then becomes pointless and unsuccessful if there is no love between husband and wife. Divorce suit ensues :

-Nous ne pouvons plus vivre comme ça...Ce n'est pas digne, ni pour nous, ni pour les enfants...Demain lundi, je déposerai une requête de divorce (*Douceurs du bercail*, 172)

-We can no longer live like that... It is neither worthy of us, nor of the children...Tomorrow Monday, I am going to request for divorce (*Our translation*)

Felski (1986:134) has this to say on separation:

The act of leaving a husband, lover or family, [...] is an awareness of the falsity of existing gender stereotypes; in turn this psychological shift requires a physical departure, given that autonomy cannot be asserted in a repressive environment.

The path towards an individual's self-realisation, at times, requires a total rejection of certain actions in order to assert one's identity. Instead of conforming societal expectations, Asta calls it quit with her husband in order to have a purposeful life. Probably, this is the reason why Pratt (1981:37) takes the genre of bildungsroman to mean "novel of selfhood rather than of social conformity". The act of separation makes Asta to

be a survivor. She rejects domestic violence against women which Sow Fall integrates as one of the thematic issues in *Douceurs du bercail*, to awaken the consciousness of young men and women coming-of-age. Domestic violence is no longer a family affair but a criminal offence that violates the dignity of women's right. Such acts of violence include beating, acid burning and "honour" killings, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), domestic violence, stabbing, strangling, widowhood cruelty, murder and others. Sow Fall uses her fiction to warn the society in general that domestic violence against women is inimical to women's lives.

Bâ Mariama (1960 :107) in *Une si longue lettre* declares « Le mariage n'est plus une chaîne-c'est une adhésion réciproque à un programme de vie » [Marriage is no longer some chain; it is a mutual agreement over a life's programme.] The awakening of consciousness frees Asta from the marital imprisonment and this makes her to define her identity, to take the 'bull by the horn' in divorcing Diouldé. Walking out of the obnoxious marriage makes Asta to be a survivor. Mortimer (2007:76) opines that:

Through her portrayal of Asta, (Sow Fall) the Senegalese novelist subverts the paradigm of the African woman defined in terms of her domestic role; she proposes instead a new female subjectivity located in a place beyond the double restriction of African patriarchy and European colonialism.

This is possible because a writer is expected to speak to others. Thus, "the writer serves as both a voice for the voiceless and as a witness for the inarticulate. He or she also helps to form a community of one mind. This is because, "the writer can reveal that what we thought to be a private hallucination is actually a collective thought, and literature can grant us sanity" (Stimpson 2003:238). It is believed that any woman searching for independence in a male-dominated society is doomed but in Asta's case, with the spirit of self-assertion, she breaks boundaries and achieves her feminine freedom. She declares to Diouldé that she is a subject and not an object to be decorated with gold: « Mais je n'ai pas besoin d'être couverte d'or et considérée comme une marionnette [...] Je n'en peux plus. » (*Douceurs du bercail*, 169). [But I don't have to be covered with gold and be considered a puppet [...] I can't take it any more]. (*Our translation*) In this regard, the opinion of Emerson (1998:1623-1632) shows its relevance:

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. I must be myself. I cannot break myself any longer for you. Nothing can bring you peace but yourself.

The philosophical words of Emerson align with Asta's decision. Asta is now her real self, she is no longer a slave to a husband, Asta has achieved inner peace and integrity and she swears never to remarry: « Asta lui avait juré qu'elle ne se marierait plus jamais. Jamais, au grand jamais! » (*Douceurs du bercail*, 151). [Asta vows to her that she will never remarry any longer. Never, big never]. (*Our translation*). She also reveals to Anne during her courtesy visit to her when she is released from the prison (*dépôt*):

Je suis bien dans ma peau. Le traumatisme du divorce, c'est passé. J'ai moult problèmes. Je lutte pour les résoudre, je me sens solide sur mes deux pieds. Alors, pourquoi tenter encore une aventure toujours incertaine? (*Douceurs du bercail*,180)

I am alright within myself. The trauma of divorce has gone. I have many problems. I am struggling to solve them. I feel strong on my two legs. Then, why tempt again an adventure that is always uncertain? (*Our translation*)

Sow Fall portrays Asta as a woman who has successfully developed, learnt and grown up. Self-assertiveness enables Asta to make decisions for her independence and for her brilliant future. Sow Fall, through her literary vision, shows that women are independent rather than dependent. She also shows that women can achieve selfhood and freedom with or without men. Sow Fall admonishes women to cross the hurdles of male domination and get equal opportunity for themselves within the society. Through the portrayal of her character in *Douceurs du bercail*, she proves that women are equal to men socially, economically and even politically.

#### 5.1.2.4 Education

“Education is the most important asset for those who want to change the world...” (Wallin, 2011). A rich academic attainment of a bildungsroman heroine is crucial in the novel of women development. The educational attainment also brings the heroine to a high level of consciousness through series of experiences that lead to her development. At times, education creates conflict in the matrimony because it is instrumental to the heroine's independence and freedom. Consequently, bildungsroman heroine's task is to advance her education, search for a goal and broaden her talents. In addition, bildungsroman heroine is always on the heroic quest because the genre portrays women as active and vibrant. Along this line, *Douceurs du bercail* presents a dynamic woman.

In spite of the victimisation that Asta receives from her husband, she does not lose hope as she has confidence in her future. As she casts off the marital yoke, her interest in becoming a new woman in a man's world is rekindled. She casts her mind back to her

mother's advice and she later realises that education is the passport to her new world and that the concept of freedom is synonymous with the world of education.

In a patriarchal society, it is common for marriage to hold back the growth and development of the heroine. Youthful exuberance factor makes Asta to rush into marriage, but she later realises that marriage is not a bed of roses. Her mother's counsel to her to take education serious just like rings the bell of her epiphany:

Je ne te demande qu'une chose,... Continue à étudier et cherche plus tard un métier. Je veux que, .... tu puisses, grâce à Dieu subvenir à tes besoins. (*Douceurs du bercail*, 175).

I don't ask for more than one thing from you... Continue to study and later look for a job. I want that [...] by God's grace you could provide for your needs (*Our translation*)

Through self-assertion, Asta walks out of the thorny matrimonial home, picks up the pieces of her life and heads to school to take a degree in Sociology and later a diploma in Journalism (*Douceurs du bercail*, 18); education eventually leads her to the ladder of self-discovery and she becomes the proprietress of Naatangué Cooperative. The author's message is clear: Education is a catalyst to women's independence; and female writers do not relent in their efforts to put women in focus. Education paves way for her survival.

#### 5.1.2.5 Self-discovery

Aristotle asserts that "knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom" cited in (Kurdi, 2017). To Asta, "knowing herself" comes through the higher consciousness. With self-determination, she learns a new way to assertiveness and a sense of moving forward through space. Aminata Sow Fall foregrounds this mode of self-discovery to advance Asta's knowledge in order to actualise her dreams. The words of Christian-de-la-huerta (2014) expatiate on the journey of self-discovery:

The journey of self-discovery is the most important journey we can take. It is an inner journey, and a heroic one. The dragons to be slain are our own fears and insecurities and outgrown belief systems, behavior patterns and life situations. Challenges to be overcome include family, social and cultural conditioning.

This is interrelated with Asta's independent life as a "New woman". She has slain the dragon of fear of being a battered wife, of being dependent on any man to provide for her. She has equally overcome the fear of the social and cultural conditions that put her life on hold. She changes her behavioural lifestyle from a stereotypical wife to an active agent who changes the destiny of a whole nation.

### 5.1.2.6 Career plan

Having survived the trauma of marital oppression, Asta tenaciously holds on to her career as a journalist in order to actualise her dream. At this level, Sow Fall subjects Asta to the brief journey in France (self-redemptive) to attend a World Economic Order Conference as a journalist. This journey allows her to discover her inner strength though she is there faced with challenges. Asta's short incarceration becomes a period of self-discovery and her epiphany process starts from the depot as her identity changes from that of a muted woman to a diplomatic heroine who tries something new in order to devise solutions to problems encountered in her community. The direction of the novel consequently changes from individual freedom to collective liberation.

The perception, action and subsequent victory are then larger personally. The illegal immigrants create awareness for Asta about the social problems in the whole country of Senegal. In order to accomplish her dream, she has to mingle with the immigrants further because identification with people paves way for individual identity and communal action. This is the channel to women development. It is observed that "stories give shape to lives" Abel et al.(1983:211). While Asta and the illegal immigrants await deportation back to Senegal, stories from different immigrants concerning their stay in France are brought to the fore. According to Asta's interpretation, their desperation revolves around the 'will to survive' but Asta counsels that: "L'eldorado n'est pas au bout de l'exode mais dans les entrailles de notre terre" (*Douceurs du bercail*, 87) 'Eldorado is not at the end of the exodus but in the depths of our land' (*Our translation*). This means that running to the Western world cannot solve the problems of Africa and Africans. Nevertheless, she is inspired by their stories and she determines to create the vision of reality by transforming the exodus syndrome into stay-in-your-homeland principle. Asta awakens the spirit of the immigrants to embrace land farming instead of making France a 'paradise':

Malgré tout, je continuerai à prêcher: aimons notre terre.... La lumière de notre espérance nous guidera, nous récolterons et bâtirons. Alors seulement, nous pourrons emprunter les routes du ciel, de la terre et de l'eau sans être chassés comme des parias. Nous ne serons plus des voyageurs sans bagages. (*Douceurs du bercail*, 88).

[Despite everything, I will continue to preach: let us love our land .... The light of our hope will guide us, we will harvest and build. Then only can make for the skies, over the land and water, without being chased about like outcasts. We will no longer be passengers without luggage] (*Our translation*)

Sow Fall also portrays the land as a gift of nature that will be of benefit to the entire citizenry. The land thus, plays a vital role in Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail*, inspiring Asta's setting up of Naatangué.

Self-reflection is another component of the female bildungsroman. Lorna (1999:25) recognises this as a vital narrative factor of the genre. To her, self-reflection is "the protagonist's ability to learn and grow, from her experiences." As Asta moves on, she ponders on past occurrences and actions and she remembers her mother's words: "Tant que va la vie, tout peut arriver" [While there is life, there is hope.] (*Our translation*) This brings about a drastic transformation in the life of Asta right from the dépôt or cell while she is seeking freedom from racial tyranny. After recovering from the dépôt experience, she takes her destiny in her hands and opts for a different approach in the quest for self-realisation. The assertion "Life is a creation, self and circumstances the raw material" gives a full understanding to Asta's decision (Labovitz, 1986:40). Giving herself a new and clear sense of bearing, Asta summons the courage to create something new and be of service to humanity. In her discussion with Anne, she states :

Je pense que l'occasion m'est donnée de tester l'adage: « *La terre ne ment pas* ». Je n'ai pas de moyens matériels, mais j'ai la fois, j'ai des idées, j'ai la volonté et j'ai l'espérance, vois-tu...c'est l'occasion de ma vie. Je crois en mon intuition; avec la terre, ça marchera! (*Douceurs du bercail* 188)

[I think the incident made me to prove the adage that says: "Land does not lie". I do not have the material means, but I have the faith. I have the ideas, I have the will and I have the hope, you see....it is the chance of my life. I believe in my instinct; with land, things will work]. (*Our translation*)

For a female bildungsroman heroine to develop successfully, she has to be re-integrated into the society she once leaves and Sow Fall creates this ambiance in *Douceurs du bercail*. After Asta has discovered herself, she starts mobilising men and women in her agricultural project in order to reform the lives of the immigrants and the society in general. This aim is achieved because Asta has moved beyond authoritarian confinement of marital and societal oppression. She begins to think about her prospective plan. Morgan (1972:185 cited in McWilliams (2009:19) avers:

The novel of apprenticeship (bildungsroman)[...] is admirably suited to express the emergence of women from cultural conditioning into struggle with institutional forces, their progress toward the goal of full personhood, and the effort to restructure their lives and society according to their own vision of meaning and right living.

When Asta and her friends start strategising how Natanguée would become a reality, they take a decision by saying:

Nous pourrions creuser un canal, irriguer les deux hectares, acheter une camionnette tous terrains pour écouler la production” (*Douceurs du bercail* 200).

[We can excavate a canal, irrigate two hectares, buy an all-terrain pick-up to distribute the produce]. (*Our translation*)

The bildungsroman heroine has to be enthusiastically involved in her developmental race. This is because, the actualisation of goals or dreams in bildungsroman is snailly. Life runs a natural progression in the genre of bildungsroman. Asta sources for money from three financial organisations for rural projects. She procures two hectares in an area where land is very fertile and states:

C’est l’ineffable bonheur de sentir la terre, de communier avec elle quand, de son sein, jaillit la vie, la nourriture qui donne vie et consistance...c’est très profond dans mon cœur... (*Douceurs du bercail*, 200)

[It is an inexpressible joy to feel the land, to be in communion with it when, from its bosom, springs forth life, food, which brings life and energy...it is very deep in my heart...] (*Our translation*)

Here, Asta ascertains her inner strength and emphasises her autonomy only that she cannot do it alone but she remains the founder and proprietress of *Natanguée*. The establishment of *Natanguée* turns out to be a space of change and the transformative process ranks Asta as a first agent and a survivor.

NATANGUEE est en effervescence. Depuis les premières heures de l’aurore, hommes, femmes et enfants viennent de partout en tenue de grands jours pour assister à la fête de la première vraie moisson dans le domaine des *Waa Reewu Takh*. (Ceux des villes en béton) (*Douceurs du bercail*, 203)

NATANGUEE is bubbling with excitement. Since the wee hours of dawn, men, women and children come from everywhere in festive dresses to take part in the harvest feast in the area of *Waa Reewu Takh*-Those of the surrounding town (*Our translation*)

Asta realises her dreams at last in collaboration with the ex-immigrants forming this highly functional agricultural cooperative society. Members plant cotton, groundnuts, maize, Okra and so on. They even plant some foreign seeds that Anne sends from France. They label their products *Douceurs du bercail* (217) [Sweetness of the folds]. According to them, Natanguée symbolises:



Les bonheurs, les angoisses, les jours de grisaille et les matins de soleil; avec les joies, les difficultés et le combat quotidien, comme dans toute œuvre humaine. (*Douceurs du bercail* 216)

The joys, the anguish, the dull days and sunny mornings; with the joys, the difficulties and the daily struggles, as in all human efforts. (Our *translation*)

Eventually, their dreams come true. « Le rêve enfin » and their lost dignity is reclaimed. « Leur dignité retrouvée » (*Douceurs du bercail*, 217). « Douceurs du bercail, c'était un label de réconciliation de soi, c'était une griffe, c'était un style » ((217) [Sweetness of folds, it was a label of reconciliation with self, it was a stamp, it was a style]. *Douceurs du bercail*, as the title suggests, is a resolution of the dilemma of the "self", within and with the component of the genre of bildungsroman. Asta makes the resolution and goes back home. This is the stage of reintegration into the society in the bildungsroman. Sow Fall presents a creative and new structure of narrative style (female bildungsroman) to expose a female hero's self-development. She portrays a single woman's high level of competence, which later becomes an optimistic channel for positive communal transformation. Asta first "assails her womanhood" (Labovitz, 1986: 252) before she defines herself and her true role in the society. By rebelling against and resisting patriarchal norms, Asta becomes a revolutionary. The heroine symbolically represents a real agent of change, both locally and internationally. The bond between Anne, the French woman, Asta, an African woman is the suppression of racial discrimination and the connection together as women encourages equality in an utopian world.

Sow Fall does not only suppress racism but also foregrounds homeland as a vision of reality. She makes African races as a whole to understand that exile is a foreign land that can never be like one's fatherland. Homeland is the originality of vision. This explains why the author lays emphasis on loving homeland. The author undermines the rigidly structured environment of racial discrimination, and constructs Natanguée, a place flowing with milk and honey in Africa that is extolled with social justice, freed from racial oppression and raised to an egalitarian society. Sow Fall broadens the bliss of the bildungsroman heroine, Asta, who under the oppression of patriarchal hegemony creates social ideology for communal survival.

At the denouement of the story, Asta Diop gets married to Babou, the cousin of one of the ex-immigrants (Dianor). Sow Fall initially portrays Asta as a radical feminist taking into cognizance the way and manner she speaks to her husband, Diouldé and the way she files for divorce. One expects Asta to stand by her words when she vows not to remarry but

Sow Fall takes us to another variant of feminism, womanist trend that Anih (2013) suggests in his article: “The womanist reading of *Douceurs du bercail*” towards a complementary role between men and women. The move also demonstrates that it is not good for an African woman to remain unmarried and men and women need to work together for the upliftment of the society.

Finally, the journey of self-discovery moves Asta from hegemonic problems (internal and external) to female empowerment and awakened possibilities of a world, where men and women coexist. Thus, Sow Fall makes a wonderful contribution to the second chance of sub-genre of female Bildungsroman through *Douceurs du bercail* which implies “no place like home”.

## 5.2 **Regina Yaou’s *Le prix de la révolte***

### 5.2.1 **Summary of *Le prix de la révolte***

Regina Yaou is an Ivorian novelist. She has authored many literary texts, such as *Lezou Marie or Les écueils de la vie* (1981), *Le prix de la révolte* (1985), *Aihui Anka* (1988) *Les germes de la mort* (1999), *L’indésirable* (2001), *Le glas de l’infortune* (2005), *Histoires si étranges* (2009) among others. *Le prix de la révolte* is set in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire and it revolves around Affiba, who is in direct conflict with tradition and patriarchy. Regina Yaou narrates the plight of Affiba, a widow, who is demeaned by her father-in-law, Le vieux Mensah, because of the inheritance (a house and other properties) left behind by her husband. It is forbidden for the wife of the deceased to inherit the properties of her husband, no matter the contributions made by the women to the amassing of those assets. All the properties belong to the husband. Koffi’s father, Le vieux Mensah, an adherent of tradition, aims at acquiring his son’s wealth from the wife. In view of his patriarchal connection, he orders Affiba to release all the properties that Koffi leaves behind to be shared among the extended family. However, Affiba, who makes more financial contribution than Koffi in the accumulation of their assets, vehemently refuses to surrender to the threats of her father-in-law. The whole issue takes ten years before it is resolved.

The story depicts a sharp contrast between tradition and modernity. Affiba’s mother, Gnamke and Koffi’s extended family stands for tradition, while Affiba and her father Ezan stand on the side of modernity. Thus, Affiba is a modern woman. She is an intellectual who chooses to be free from sentiments and savage traditions, which have denied women chances of self-expression. She is a social woman who prefers to be

independent in taking decisions. She focuses on her goals, plans and profession. Affiba and Koffi, her husband, go to school in France, and have their first daughter there. The story takes a dramatic turn when she discovers that Koffi has another wife and a male child out of wedlock. A lot of argument ensues between the two women but they later come together as friends and settle their grievances. Their coming together reinforces the struggle for emancipation. After many meetings, deliberations and threats, Le vieux Mensah withdraws all prerogative statements against Affiba over Koffi's assets; summons the courage to declare to the family members that Affiba has been right all along. Ivorian women are enthused because the thorny tradition is jettisoned. Le vieux Mensah organises a reconciliation feast during which he publicly praises Affiba.

## 5.2.2 Analysis of *Le prix de la révolte*: Affiba

### 5.2.2.1 Awakening

The awakening revolves around Affiba's developmental process to wifehood, motherhood and widowhood stages. The difference between Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail* and this text is that the latter is not a widow. However, the two are portrayed as novels of self-transformation.

#### 5.2.2.1(i) Widowhood practice

The author of *Le prix de la révolte* depicts the developmental expedition of Affiba and Koffi as the beginning of another journey. The demise of Koffi awakens the consciousness of Affiba towards the imposition of cultural norms in Ivory Coast. Throughout the novel, Affiba becomes gradually more sensitive and takes cognizance of arriving at a self-restricted identity. She is convinced that her voice would take her to "heroic self-hood" as stated in Brenda (2009:6). When a protagonist attains that level, she successfully subverts those conventions that oppress and subordinate her. She creates an identity that embodies her unique individual experiences within the social trend. The female protagonist achieves heroic status when she creates a "community of equals" that sustains or promises the survival of her newly created self-identity (Brenda, 2009: 6). Hence, Regina Yaou, with the use of subversive strategy, makes Affiba a superwoman and a reassuring subject for African women. Eysturoy (1996:5) posits that:

It is the protagonist's response to his or her particular environment and the interplay between social and psychological forces that determines the direction of the process of self-development.

Through the acts of questioning and interpreting her socio-cultural context, Affiba gains a new understanding of herself and her position (as a widow) in the community. Literature reveals that being a widow in some African communities is like a source of joy to the members of the husband's family. The belief is that members of the husband's family would be enriched through the assets the deceased leaves behind. Family members design a strategy of sending the woman away and if she is the stubborn type, like Affiba, the heroine of this text, the in-laws may kill her through whatever means.

Akujobi (2006: 9), while appraising widowhood practices and effects on the psyche of widows postulates that:

Human greed which exists in African societies very much like others makes it possible for the easy exploitation of widows, the urge to acquire material wealth, particularly what is considered "free" wealth controls the treatment of widows in society, all other activities, including levirate, may serve the same purpose. So any mystification and rituals, superstitious practices are all geared toward the oppression of the widow more importantly for economic gains. In the same light, the dehumanization and humiliation the widow passes through in society is all a ploy to make her economically weak and voiceless.

Umeh (2005:66) corroborates the observation of Akujobi (2006) when she declares that widows in some parts of West Africa are often forced to go through traditional rites and rituals that deprive them of their dignity, health, and wealth. For example, the widow in Igbo land as observed by Umeh (2005) are isolated and confined to the family compound from two weeks and six months immediately after the death of a spouse. She describes her plight thus:

She is forced to dress in old, ragged clothes and is seated on the floor. The widow does not move out of the compound for the necessary economic activities to sustain her and the children. During the mourning period, the widow is seen as unclean and sympathizers cannot shake hands with her. Instead, they leave gifts of money on the floor for her. After the official burial and funeral ceremonies are completed, the widow spends from three to twelve months at home, mourning for her husband. She depends on family and friends to help her during these difficult times and for economic survival.

Thus, the condition of widows is deplorable in Africa. They suffer a lot of anguish from the society, the husband's family and from traditional beliefs. Should the husband die, the wife would be labelled as a witch, a fetishist or an adulterer. Okunmadewa et al (2002:106) confirm this when they state:

Women's well-being often deteriorates quickly after the loss of their husbands, when they suffer threats of both their physical security and property. A widow often loses her husband's property to the in-laws in accordance with family traditional rules.

These scholarly explorations stress that oppression against women is the aftermath of power inequality that exists in society and explain the unfair treatment of women.

#### 5.2.2.1(ii) **Inheritance**

Inheritance of assets is another aspect through which oppression is displayed. This is instrumental to the consciousness of Affiba in Yaou's *Le prix de la révolte*. The protagonist, Affiba, denounces tradition by setting herself free from her in-laws who plan to deprive her of the inheritance of her husband. The Ivorian tradition empowers the extended family to possess all properties of the deceased. This tradition is presented as an act of social injustice that sows a seed of discord between Affiba and her in-laws. Le vieux Mensah, the father of the deceased, is bent on taking over his son's assets for distribution among the extended family members while accepting responsibility for the sustenance of the widow and her children:

Je suis content que vous soyez venus pour m'accompagner sur la tombe de mon fils Koffi hier et m'aider à résoudre ce problème d'héritage qui nous touche tous. Mon fils nous a quittés voilà dix ans et, jusqu'à ce jour, sa femme Affiba ... détient toujours les biens du défunt. Illégalement, puisqu'elle n'était que son épouse. En dépit de toutes les interventions, cette soi-disant veuve éplorée ne veut pas entendre raison. (*Le prix de la révolte*, 16)

[I am happy that you came to follow me to the grave of my son Koffi yesterday and also to help me in resolving the problem of inheritance that touches us all. My son left us ten years ago and till today, his wife Affiba... illegally holds on to the assets of the deceased. Despite all interventions, this so-called depressed widow, does not want to see reason.] (*Our translation*)

After a series of emotional pleadings, Koffi's family sends delegates to Affiba's parents. However, when Ezan, Affiba's father, is asked to call his daughter to order to relinquish Koffi's assets to the members of his family, he advises the family to adopt modern strategy to resolve the issue as he stands for modernity. He has this to corroborate his argument:

A quel siècle vous croyez-vous? Est-ce que vous vous rendez compte que les temps ont changé et que ce qui se faisait hier ne peut pas forcément se faire aujourd'hui? S'il était normal autrefois de prendre à une veuve et à ses enfants tout ce qu'elle et son mari avaient acquis ensemble, aujourd'hui, cela ne l'est plus [...]. La participation de la femme n'est plus seulement physique ou morale, elle est aussi et surtout financière, et on voit mal comment une personne peut accepter d'être d'épouillée de son propre bien. (*Le prix de la révolte*, 27)

What century do you think you are in? Do you realise that times have changed and that what was done yesterday may not necessarily be done today? If it was normal in the past to take from the widow and her children all that she and her husband had acquired together, today, it is no longer so.... The contribution of the wife is no longer physical or moral, it is also and even above all financial, and one finds it abnormal to see how someone can accept to be deprived of her own property. (*Our translation*)

Ezan's message symbolises freedom for Affiba and all African widows. He advises family members to jettison the traditional belief and follow the modern trend.

Apart from her refusal to be dispossessed of her late husband's assets, Affiba resists all other degrading approaches intended against her by her in-laws. Thus, the women writers of the female bildungsroman subvert the very structure of society by raising the question of equal opportunity. By so doing, African female writers have proved literature as a deconstructive weapon in interrogating women's condition. Eysturoy (1996:19) declares:

While male *bildung* is typified by the confrontation of the male hero within his milieu, the confrontation turns into rebellion for the female protagonist, a necessary rebellion against social and cultural gender norms essential to an empowered and self-actualised identity.

In female bildungsroman therefore, the development and the construction of an autonomous female subject are of primary importance. Affiba employs the confrontational and defiant attitude highlighted as effective strategies to move her from passive object to an autonomous subject. Rebelling against tradition becomes a fundamental weapon for the reconstruction of her identity as a separate individual. Consequently, her inclination towards rebellious tactic makes her to be a survivor.

#### 5.2.2.2 Self-identity

The recurring theme of patriarchal oppression in women's literature is particularly pronounced in female bildungsroman because it is within its defining conditions that the protagonist must pursue her quest for a self-defined identity. We recall here the view of Labovitz (1986:246) who opines that, "Individual rebellion would manifest itself in ways, including attitudes on marriage, children, careers, and politics that define the lives of these women". Affiba, indeed, gains a rebellious voice as she negotiates between her family-in-law and culture. She rejects her culturally imposed identity and creates her self-identity through self-assertion and education.

Speaking out against intransigent traditional practices has been one way of effecting a change. In this novel, Affiba narrates her plight with Koffi during the course of their studies in Paris, how she baby-sits and cleans white men's houses. She tries as much as possible to get her in-laws convinced that she works and makes huge financial contributions to what they believe is single-handedly accumulated by Koffi. Le vieux Mensah retorts that Kofi is no longer alive to confirm Affiba's story: « Koffi n'est plus là pour nous le confirmer » (*Le prix de la révolte* 159). [Koffi is no longer here to confirm this to us]. (*Our translation*)

Affiba's resistance to Papa Mensah's argument takes on a dramatic significance when her personal struggle assumes the wider scope of a collective agitation in respect of African women. She narrates the roles of African women during colonial period; precisely how Ivorian women marched to Bassam to get their men liberated from the irons of the colonisers. She stresses that, upon all, women are formally cut off in subsequent national politics. According to her:

Nous les femmes, nous serons toujours celles qui travaillent dans l'anonymat et pour rien. Que la femme sue sang et eau pour aider l'homme à réaliser ce qu'il veut, jamais elle n'en sera remerciée comme il se doit. Les femmes de ce pays ont marché sur Bassam pour que leurs maris soient libérés des chaînes du colonisateur, mais combien d'années se sont-elles écoulées avant que d'autres femmes participantes à la vie politique du pays en tant que ministres, députés ou maires? (*Le prix de la révolte*, 159)

[We, women, we shall always be the ones working anonymously and for nothing. Let the woman sweat-blood and water to help the man realise what he wants, she will never be thanked as she should be. The women of this country marched on Bassam so that their husbands would be released from the chains of the coloniser, but how many years have passed before other women could take part in the politics of the country as Ministers, Representatives or Mayors?]  
*Our translation*

Affiba, in the same vein, reminds Papa Mensah how men subject their mothers and grandmothers to farming and performing various tasks for men. However, when the husband dies, a woman is said to have no right to the husband's properties. She states :

La bataille gagnée, on les a laissées dans l'ombre, après leur avoir rendu un 'vibrant hommage'. Nos grands-mères, nos mères, se sont éreintées dans des plantations, à travailler pour constituer les richesses de leur époux: mais du jour où ceux-ci sont morts, elles ont été dessaisies de tout et la sueur qui avait coulé sur leur front .... Elles ont accepté et se sont tues. Aujourd'hui, c'est terminé, la résignation des femmes. (*Le prix de la révolte*, 159)

[The battle having been won, they were left in obscurity, having been paid a 'vibrant homage'. Our grandmothers, our mothers, exhausted themselves in plantations, working to build up the wealth of their husbands; but the day the husbands died, they were deprived of all they sweated for. ....They accepted without complaint. Today, the resignation of women is over.] (*Our translation*)

Oyewumi (1995:257) corroborates women's losses and jeopardy under patriarchal oppression:

During colonial era, African females were colonized by Europeans as Africans and as African women. They were dominated, exploited, and inferiorised as Africans together with African men and then separately inferiorised and marginalized as African women.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994:30) also notes that:

The colonialism systems negatively encouraged or brought to the fore the traditional ideologies of the patriarchy of male superiority, which originally existed in African societies. Thus, colonialism has brought out the basic sexist tendencies in pre-capitalist Africa. It has calcified existing ones and introduced others.

This means that the repression of African women started from the era of colonisation. African men have been occupying the position of dominance and power over women for decades. For men to accomplish their plan, they render women voiceless in order to gain control over them. As Affiba becomes more self-conscious, she begins to realise that she cannot accept the role of a traditional Ivorian woman who is contented with her life as wife and mother. She is not happy being docile, submissive and dominated by tradition. From all indications, Le vieux Mensah sounds unconvinced. He is inclined to the suppressive tradition and this makes him to reiterate his stand:

C'est vrai que tous les temps ont changé ...Mais nous les vieux, nous qui sommes garants de la pérennité de nos traditions, nous userons de tous les moyens pour nous soustraire à ce naufrage. (*Le prix de la révolte*, 160).

[It is true that times have changed ... but we elders, we who guarantee the continuity of our traditions will use all possible means to save them from sinking. (*Our translation*)

From the African cultural perspective, women's lives revolve around the good, the selfless, the nourishing and the respectful. Patriarchy is prepared to ensure the perpetration of all the virtues, and indeed, this heroine, Affiba, possesses these qualities but she refuses to be a passive personality.



### 5.2.2.3 Polygamy

Feminist bildungsroman views the institution of marriage as dangerous to women; because it diminishes the woman's identity, which leads to subordination. It is seen as an oppressive system, a central institution of women's oppression. Yaou depicts Affiba's case as a double tragedy: an abandoned wife who later becomes a widow. Frank (1987:18) maintains that: "polygamy, of course, is the most glaringly inequitable and sexist feature of traditional African society". Feminists declare that any woman who marries another woman's husband or encourages the advances of a married man hampers the total liberation of womanhood. This can be seen in the case of Affiba and Mireille, Koffi's second wife. This conversation ensues between the two:

- Savez-vous, Mireille, qu'il est interdit d'aimer le mari d'une autre femme?

- Qui l'a interdit?

- La loi, L'église aussi. (*Le prix de la révolte*, 96)

[Do you know, Mireille, that it is forbidden  
To love another woman's husband?

- Who forbids it?

- The law, the church also.] (*Our translation*)

The response of Mireille concerning polygamy shocks Affiba:

Je voulais seulement vous faire comprendre que le fait que Koffi vous ait épousée ne signifiait pas forcément qu'il vous aimait. (*Le prix de la révolte*, 97)

[I only wanted to make you understand, that the fact that Kofi married you did not necessarily mean that he loved you.] (*Our translation*)

What Mireille insinuates is that Koffi never loves Affiba, which explains why Koffi takes her (Mireille) as a second wife when he is alive. If he ever loved Affiba, he would not have picked a second wife. On the contrary, Affiba rejects the exploitative nature of her husband and the reliance of a woman on man for survival. Truly, Affiba is an abandoned wife. She lives all alone with her children before Koffi's death. Thus, bildungsroman heroines can live independently without men. This is why the genre states the way forward for women when all hopes seem lost. When Tante Yaba asks Affiba to remarry, she retorts:

- Tu n'envisages même pas de te remarier?
- Non, Tante Yaba, plus jamais de mariage pour moi. L'expérience avec Koffi m'en a dégoûtée. Aimer, marier, tout cela représente, à mes yeux, trop de tourments (*Le prix de la révolte*, 13)
- Aren't you thinking of marrying again?
- No, aunt Yaba, Marriage is no longer for me. The experience with Koffi has disgusted me of it. To love, to marry, in my eyes, amount to too much torture. (*Our translation*)

From Affiba's comment on marriage, it is glaring that the institution wreaks a lot of havoc on women. However, education has given a lot of exposure to contemporary women. It soothes emotional traumas and changes the condition of women. They may even become tolerant of the "other woman"

#### 5.2.2.4 Education

The protagonist's level of education makes her a formidable bildungsroman heroine. Education is a vital theme in bildungsroman and it has been identified as a tool to free women from ignorance and backwardness, bringing them to a position of liberty and awareness. Moreover, the provision of education is a sure means by which women can acquire power to free themselves from barbaric traditions and savage customs. Bildungsroman educates its protagonists as well as its readers. The importance of educating one's children could also be seen in the words of Ezan, Affiba's father, when he says:

J'ai donné à Affiba l'éducation que reçoivent presque toutes les filles de temps modernes. Elle m'obéit; mais l'obéissance des enfants d'aujourd'hui n'est plus cette soumise autrefois (*Le prix de la révolte*, 25)

I have given Affiba the kind of education that all modern girls receive. She obeys me, but the obedience of children of nowadays is no longer subservient like the past (*Our translation*)

Affiba's father sensitises his in-laws about the importance of education. To him, it is the most effective weapon for African women in their fight for personal identity, self-respect, equal right and equal justice. Affiba continues to unleash her anger on Papa Mensah until he reasons with her. Her ten years of resistance to relinquishing all Koffi's assets to the in-laws takes a new dimension when Ama, Le vieux Mensah's granddaughter, who is a Law student, sheds more light on the whole issue. Knowing that Le vieux Mensah would want her to settle down and quickly get married, Ama informs him

that she wants to work and accumulate her own property in order not to find herself in Affiba's position:

Nous vivons dans un monde mercantiliste aujourd'hui. Plus grande sera, ma chance d'épouser l'homme qui me plaît. (*Le prix de la révolte*, 188).

[We live in a commercial world today. That will give me the big opportunity to marry the man that pleases me] (*Our translation*)

Ama sounds like Affiba's mouthpiece. It is also obvious that from Affiba's predicament, she gets an idea of how her marital life will be if she finds herself in Affiba's shoes. Ama defends Affiba and condemns tradition. She asks Le vieux Mensah to embrace the law of the white people and states that:

... Vous ne nous aidez pas! Regarde encore tante Affiba! Cela fait dix ans qu'elle lutte pour vous faire réfléchir, vous faire comprendre que la seule solution à ce problème, c'est un compromis, qu'il n'y a plus d'autre alternative. [...] Dix ans dans la vie d'une femme encore jeune ... vous avez traité Affiba de tous les noms, Vous avez porté mille coups bas, elle a résisté. (*Le prix de la révolte*, 189)

You are not helping us! Consider again Aunty Affiba! For ten years now, she has been struggling to make you think, to make you understand that the only solution to this problem is compromise; that there is no other alternative.....Ten years in the life of a young woman [...] You have called Affiba all sorts of names, you have thrown her a thousand under-hand blows, she has resisted. (*Our translation*)

The term 'compromise', according to the heroine, means to accept the method of sharing according to the European law. In her bid to convince Mensah of the wisdom in Affiba's proposal, Anna says:

-[...] Maintenant, c'est la loi des Blancs qui est appliquée parce que choisie par notre Assemblée Nationale et nos dirigeants -Il faut accepter le compromis qu'elle propose. (*Le prix de la révolte*, 189-190)

[Now, it is the White Men's law that is applied because it is chosen by our National Assembly and our leaders. It is necessary to accept the compromise that she proposes]. (*Our translation*)

Ama's defence for Affiba is in line with the tenets of female bildungsroman. According to Collins (1998:48) "The breaking of silence is not just a literary tactic designed to heal black women's victimization. Breaking silence lays the foundation for a collective group voice".

Ama argues further:

À quelles atrocités, sous le fallacieux prétexte du respect des coutumes, ne s'est-on pas livré? [...] Nous sommes à l'aube de l'an 2000 et ces pratiques continuent d'exister. Nous n'en avons pas besoin, Pépé. (*Le prix de la révolte*, 190)

[To what atrocities, under the fallacious pretext of respect for customs, has one not turned? ... We are at the dawn of the year 2000 and these practices continue to exist. We do not need them, grandpa]. (*Our translation*)

Female bildungsroman believes in the independence and freedom of fellow women. Ama exhibits these virtues for Affiba and herself in the literary text. She puts herself in Affiba's shoes when she says: « Aujourd'hui c'est la veuve de votre fils que vous torpillez, mais que demain ce sera votre fille que quelqu'un d'autre torturera. » [Today, it is your son's widow that you attack but tomorrow it will be your daughter that someone will torture]. (*Our translation*) Ama persuades her grandfather, Le vieux Mensah, to embrace modernity. She believes that if Affiba is liberated, she has also liberated herself from the yoke of tradition and patriarchy. However, as a man and by virtue of his position; he does not want to succumb willingly to a woman, especially Affiba.

#### 5.2.2.5 Self-discovery

This is the process of acquiring an insight into one's own character. Affiba's metaphorical journey is described as a journey of self-discovery. She undergoes the most challenging journey to make the Ivorian society recognise her and appreciate its own weakness. She possesses the power of endurance and foresight, which contributes to the happiness of others. After series of discussions and agitations, Le vieux Mensah is left with no other choice than to accept Affiba's offer of "compromise", which is the sharing of Koffi's properties to put an end to the inheritance stalemate. As a result of this, he invites Ismael Koulibaly, Police officer, and Koffi's best friend for a discussion. Le vieux Mensah admits that, all along, Affiba has not been wrong: « J'ai réfléchi, réfléchi, réfléchi. J'ai compris qu'Affiba n'avait pas tort. » (*Le prix de la révolte*, 203) [I have thought and thought and thought. I have understood that Affiba was not wrong] (*Our translation*). Ismael is astonished to hear such comments from Le vieux Mensah declares

Affiba est dans le vrai. Le monde est en perpétuelle mutation. Et à ce changement, il faut s'adapter ou périr. Nous avons adopté le modernisme. Aujourd'hui, presque tous les problèmes se règlent d'une façon nouvelle. (*Le prix de la révolte*, 203)

[Affiba is right. The world is in perpetual mutation. And to this change, one has to adapt or perish. We have adopted modernism...Today; most of the problems are settled in a new way].  
(*Our translation*)

It is incredible that Le vieux Mensah could have a change of mind! He says it three times that he has pondered over the issue and has concluded that it is certain that Affiba and the children have the right to share in Koffi's assets. He succinctly states:

Compromis est le mot clé qui doit régler nos problèmes quand ils mettent face à face la tradition et le modernisme, nos coutumes et celles des Blancs.[...] Je voudrais tant dire à Affiba qu'elle a raison et qu'après mûre réflexion, je crois que je suis disposé à envisager le partage. (*Le prix de la révolte*, 203-204)

[Compromise is the key word that should solve our problems when tradition and modernism are put face to face, our customs and those of the Whites. Really, I would like to tell Affiba that she was right and that after deep thought, I believe that I am disposed to look forward to the sharing]. (*Our translation*)

With this self-discovery on the part of Le vieux Mensah, Affiba becomes a true model of representation of bildungsroman heroine in victory. Yaou allows her protagonist to be a voice by which she interrogates the patriarchal environment she lives in and the breakdown of those limits imposed on her as a widow. At last, Le vieux Mensah stands for modernism and later embraces the word "compromise" which he confirms as the solution to the problems of the changing African world. The self-discovery of the heroine restored peace to women and the whole community.

#### 5.2.2.6 Career plan

In the traditional African setting, when an educated woman strives for a change, the society sees her as a threat to the stability of the home and society. In the literary text, Affiba appeals to all women to team up with her in order to subvert and resolve hegemonic problems confronting them. This plea is necessary because some women are never in support of their fellow women. They are regarded as agents of patriarchy. This is manifested in the text:

Qui donc soutiendrait les femmes dans une lutte pour les femmes, si les femmes elles-mêmes n'étaient plus solidaires les unes les autres?  
(*Le prix de la révolte*, 14)

[Who would support women in the struggle of women, if women themselves were not in solidarity with one another?] (*Our translation*)

An incident is that of Efoua, Le vieux Mensah's daughter who aggravates Affiba's crisis. She disagrees with Le vieux Mensah on his decision to allow Affiba share the assets with them. She appears to have forgot that she also has a daughter that may be in Affiba's shoes one day. One would have expected her to accept Le vieux Mensah's opinion in order to prepare a better future for her daughter. It is Le vieux Mensah that makes her daughters to learn and obey from the voice of reason and wisdom. He advises them :

...Mais l'époque où l'on ne comptait que sur les héritages est révolue. Chacun se doit de travailler pour subvenir à ses besoins ou s'enrichir. Il est plus que temps de se mettre à la tâche pour préparer l'avenir de ses enfants et ne plus compter sur autrui. (*Le prix de la révolte*, 208)

[But...the era when one relies only on inheritance is gone. Everyone must work for his needs or to get himself rich. Time is more than ripe to face the task of preparing the future of one's children and to stop relying on others] (*Our translation*)

Le vieux Mensah brings the two extended families together, declares all of Koffi's assets, and announces that Affiba is the rightful owner. The news of the heroine's victory spreads fast. She is indeed a survivor. This initiative sensitises women and social attitudes start to change. The joy of emancipation is seen in Myriam, Ismael's wife, who declares:

- Ah bon! Affiba, permets-moi de te féliciter. Il n'est pas donné à n'importe qu'elle femme de bousculer des habitudes, des pratiques coutumières vieilles de plusieurs siècles!

- Merci, Myriam. Mais ce que j'ai fait, beaucoup de femmes le peuvent aussi. Il suffit d'y croire et de se montrer obstinée car la vérité triomphe toujours (*Le prix de la révolte*, 223)

[-Well! Affiba let me congratulate you. It is not given to any woman to reverse habits, and old customary practices of several centuries!

-Thank you, Myriam. However, what I did, many women can do it too. One only needs to believe and be obstinate because the truth always triumphs.] (*Our translation*)

Affiba's case has brought about a social change, which also makes Edrah, Koffi's aunt, and Efoua to thank Affiba. Edrah says : « A présent, Affiba, grâce à toi, beaucoup de choses vont changer pour les veuves et leurs enfants au sein des communautés ». (*Le prix de la révolte*, 236) [At present, Affiba, thanks to you, so many things will change for the widows and their children within the communities]. *Le prix de la révolte* truly portrays Affiba as a bildungsroman heroine, an overcomer and a survivor of oppression. For a period of ten years, she resists all threats from her in-laws. She finally liberates herself

from the entire crisis and thus, represents the image of the new Ivorian woman, who enters into successful and harmonious relationship with her in-laws. Affiba's victory is a permanent one, unlike Malimouna in *Rebelle* who, according to Fatou Kéïta, still awaits other crises. One would have expected Fatou Kéïta to grant her heroine permanent liberation as well. All the same, the two of them are survivors.

Thus, the complementary relationship between man and woman is inevitable. Although the heroine takes radical steps: aggressiveness, assertiveness and oratorical power to actualise her independence; she refuses to be separated from men (in-laws). Indeed, Affiba is a one-woman squad in a battalion of men. She single-handedly fights the battle and wins. This heroine is depicted as "une femme-garçon" [A tomboy]. This near-masculine appellation is attributed to Affiba's father, Manza, as he admires her daughter's heroic struggle:

En réalité, Affiba est tout simplement ce qu'on appelait communément chez nous "une femme-garçon" [...]. Affiba est comme un fils premier-né pour moi (*Le prix de la révolte* 121)

[In reality, Affiba is someone we simply called, generally in our community a tomboy. Affiba is like a first son for me] (*Our translation*)

Affiba survives all the traumas inflicted on her, while her victory symbolises deliverance and emancipation for the Ivorian and African women in general. Amidst tears, Affiba expresses her joy: « Je pleure encore. Et alors ne vois-tu pas que c'est parce que je suis heureuse? » [I am crying again. And can't you see, it is because I am happy?] (*Our translation*), Affiba is liberated at last and she raises her hands toward the sky, thanking God for her triumph. This is the kind of faith that bildungsroman inspires:

Ô être Suprême! Toi qui es le maître de toutes choses, ô Dieu de mes ancêtres... vous qui m'avez aidée et protégée dans ma lutte ... vous qui m'avez fait triompher, c'est en votre nom que je crie VICTOIRE! (*Le prix de la révolte*, 235)

Oh, Supreme Being! You, who are the master of all things, Oh God of my ancestors... You, who helped and protected me in my struggle ... You, who have helped me to emerge victorious; It is in your name that I shout VICTORY! (*Our translation*)

Affiba, in her triumphant message, remarks that certainly she can never forget the day Le vieux Mensah accepts the proposal that she tags "compromise" (sharing of properties) but her real day of victory is when all women join her in the struggle for their emancipation. This collective action as a team spirit enables women to reach an accord, based on unity, against all attacks from patriarchal hegemony. Collective oppression

creates collective understanding and common interest upon which all women come together for social justice.

Affiba, through her courage, awakens the consciousness of Ivorian women in revolting against the strong grips holding down the self-worth and independence of Ivorian women. The following declaration expresses her joy and freedom :

Ce jour-là, n'était pas celui de ma victoire, mais le jour de la victoire de toutes les femmes qui luttent pour leur émancipation ». (*Le prix de la révolte*, 235)

That day, was not the day of my victory, but the day of victory for all women that struggle for their emancipation (*Our translation*)

As a result of Affiba's self-awareness and the rejection of the oppressive tradition of her society, she becomes a role model to every woman as she cuts a new path.

*Le prix de la révolte* realistically portrays the negative effects of tradition on the African widow. Affiba, the heroine, is unique in her willingness to embark upon and successfully end her pursuit of autonomy and justice. Though the pace is slow, she achieves her freedom through confrontation, obstinacy and negotiation. Affiba liberates Ivorian women who have been deprived of their human dignity. The narrative encourages self-determination in women and this concept helps all heroines to overcome their problems.

### 5.2.3 The world of harmony

As demonstrated in the last two novels studied, it is evident that female bildungsroman projects complementary relationship between men and women. The last two heroines reject patriarchal tyranny but they are not separatists. Despite their challenges in the hands of men, they still regard men as help. Thus, it is pertinent to note that womanism becomes a workable theory in female bildungsroman. This is because, the genre advocates that men and women can be together, as supporters and promoters of humanity.

Pope Francis (2015) declares that "Man is for woman and the woman is for man" without any "subordination" between the two [...] we have to recover the honour of marriage and the family." The Pope elucidates further: "The image of the 'rib' does not express inferiority or subordination, but, on the contrary, that man and woman are the same substance and are complementary". In essence, Pope suggests reciprocity between man and woman. Women need men and men need women as well. Thus, it is exemplified in the two texts that the two heroines "are committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people".



(Walker, 1983: xi). Therefore, women are the epitome of progress and not second class citizens.

To achieve harmony, it is considered necessary to eschew violence, exploitation and discrimination as this will promote communal relationship between men and women.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

#### RESISTANCE TO AND VICTORY OVER OPPRESSION

Resistance is a refusal, or an act deliberately not in conformity with the existing ideas. Resistance, either in speech or in writing, as a revolutionary strategy, and a major finding in this study, is the resistance to oppression. Sometimes, resistance is undaunted, as demonstrated by Mokkedem's *L'interdite*. At another time, it is more antagonistic and heroic, as established in Kéïta's *Rebelle* and Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceurs du bercail*. Sometimes, resistance is blatant, as found in Yaou's *Le prix de la révolte* and it could be activism as exhibited by Khady's *Mutilée*. It could also be the determination to endure and survive, as demonstrated by all the heroines discussed in the novels studied in this work.

Close reading has been adopted as the mode of analysis that explores the selected narratives from the lens of characterisation, events and themes. These narrative devices help to establish women's fictional writings as reliable, passive weapons of resistance in fighting against all the oppressive systems that put women in subordinate position. Consequently, the selected texts symbolise subversive "guns" of resistance.

In matters of significance, the adopted theory cannot be underestimated when we consider resistance ideology and cultural myths on gender issues. Feminist writers have long argued that gender ideology and hegemonic patriarchal beliefs play critical roles in perpetrating women's oppression. The study is able to bring Algeria, Ivory Coast and Senegal as empirical examples to foreground the image or status of francophone African women in the North and West Africa, respectively. It is established that colonial administration deterred the political, economic and educational condition of francophone women. It also fortified the subordination of women and facilitated gender condition with its patriarchal policies.

Socio-cultural conformity is set against an individual autonomy in Algeria, Senegal and Ivory Coast. As women are kept under inferior situation, it means their condition affords them little or no opportunities. In the area of politics and labour workforce, women are underrepresented and they are relegated to the background. Contemporary African women are generally making progress to confront the socio-cultural and religious principles that deter their advancement, but in a country like Algeria, it is overt and clearly spelt out that gender parity is a nightmare, owing to the principles of Islamic fundamentalism. Thus, without defying the tradition and religious bigotry and non-

acceptance of women in the public space, the stigma of discriminatory and undignified practices towards women would continue to persist in African society.

Literary works provide important insights into culture, myth and gender to confirm the magnitude of women's oppression. The genres of bildungsroman which have been studied in this work bring up female writings that depict the themes of domination, awakening of consciousness, self-identity through key life experiences and trajectory of struggles that are central to theorising gender experiences. The genres of bildungsroman considered are deeply concerned with man and woman in the society, be they fictive or figures in the world of empirical reality. Thus, literature and life merge, become a mirror of the reality that subsists in the society. Therefore, 'the study and appreciation of literature is a pre-condition to the health of the society' (Akorede, 2011) particularly on the subject, gender, oppression and resistance. This way, the study and appreciation of literature become part of the pre-condition to the health of the society.

The inclination of women to literature and the value of their literary texts interpret and assess the social reality that has produced the works. Feminist writers (male or female) reproduce materials sourced from the world of reality to underscore the background of women's struggles and conflicts. Feminist critics too highlight the marginalisation of women in male-dominated societies, stressing that the experience of women in patriarchal societies is nothing but the dehumanisation of women by men. Consequently, the rapport between men and women is seen as one of oppression. The female writers' perspective on literature is to confront issues such as male chauvinism, sexist unfairness, psychological and physical exploitation with hegemonic tendencies.

This study highlights the huge contributions of francophone women writers to the genre of female bildungsroman. Their adoption of the genre goes beyond exploration of self and the individual. The genre expands their scope to many issues that were forbidden to early African female writers. Today, however, themes such as higher education, female genital mutilation, child-marriage, widowhood practices, religious prejudice, sexuality, rape, racial discrimination, marital oppression and other harmful traditional practices that are ruinous to young girls' coming-of-age have become the major preoccupation of many African female writers and most especially the third generation African writers. These themes open up the society for discussion, permitting the female bildungsroman genre to grow and develop.

While European genres of female bildungsroman concentrate on the exploration of issues like personal, private or individual conflicts mainly (with parents), sexuality, higher

education, romantic story, journey and marriage as barriers to female development, francophone genres of female bildungsroman reveal the aforementioned heartbreaking issues which are detrimental to girls in the process of becoming adults within a larger society. Resistance then becomes a major perspective for the francophone female bildungsroman focusing on all issues that impede young girls' to assertion of their autonomy. Furthermore, the female contemporary writers in Africa also embrace the genre of bildungsroman to explore cultural and gender norms. This is because of their closeness to their society. Focusing on the African traditional norms and gender issues particularly from a perspective of resistance to oppression, makes African female bildungsroman richer than the Europeans.

In this study, it becomes pertinent to distinguish between the young and adult heroines of coming-of-age narratives and novels of epiphany, respectively. In patriarchal society, human activities operate under men's control which prevents women to achieve equal status. In this modern period, some women prefer to remain single or opt for divorce which purports to predict the achievement of their independence or freedom.

In all the selected novels examined, all the five heroines, both young and adult women are victims of patriarchy. They are submissive, passive and compliant but afterwards, undergo radical transformation by resisting patriarchal domination. Three heroines are studied under the selected coming of age narratives and it is discovered that they all have the tone of feminist temperament. The young heroines in coming of age stories are depicted as modern women, diligent and early achievers who imbibe Radical feminist principles by choosing singleness, separation and divorce as their watchword..

The heroines are bold, courageous, aggressive and violent. One of the three young heroines, Sultana, does not believe in marriage. She chooses to be a free woman to avoid marital subordination. The remaining two: Malimouna and Khady are married but their lifestyles do not conform to the norms of African standard. They detest servitude status. For this reason, they move their identities beyond sexual roles of being wives and mothers in order to attain their freedom and also to be on equal footing with men.

Women in the novel of epiphany evolve from young fragile and subservient girls into resilient women who have absolute control over their own lives. Their marital lives are full of problems. They experience wife-battery; they are coerced and humiliated to the point of divorce. Asta, the heroine of Aminata Sow Fall, makes a vow not to remarry again. Having achieved everything in life, she has a rethink that she needs a man again in her life, a protective guard that will value her with a certain degree of respect. It is

forbidden for a typical African woman to stay alone to avoid sexual immorality. In this respect, Onyemelukwe (2001:82) declares “For any meaningful fulfilment or happiness to be obtained, a woman needs to live with a man [...] and discharge her career duties, albeit not in an inferiorised state but in a position of complementarity of man and woman.” Asta remarries again to reaffirm her dignity and personhood.

Affiba in *Le prix de la révolte* believes in accommodation of male and female, young and old. Despite what she goes through in the hands of her in-laws after the demise of her husband, she refuses to remarry. She prefers to care for her children, nurture and give them sound education. Despite her struggle to suppress patriarchy, the humiliation from the in-laws, she does not look down on them. Complementarity is the maxim for the sake of her children, to have a pedigree and a solid family background.

The heroines of Aminata Sow Fall and Regina Yaou take pain to rebuild the African culture in a way that changes the mindset of African men and women. In other words, complementarity brings harmony, emotional sustenance, happiness and survival to the whole community.

The study has been able to answer the research questions. First, the study established that the selected texts are used as subversive weapons to deconstruct the patriarchal injustices against women in African culture. This is manifested particularly through their presentation of the protagonists in the novels. Through a careful and critical analysis of the works of Malika Mokkedem, Fatou Kéïta, Aminata Sow Fall, Regina Yaou and Khady Koita, the study identifies traditional men in female writings as dominant and full of life. The women are largely compliant and subservient: they are wives and mothers that operate within the private domestic sphere of the home to live out their servitude status. However, refusal to comply with patriarchal rules or tradition is seen as an act of rebellion. This study portrays all bildungsroman heroines: Sultana, Malimouna, Affiba, Asta and Khady, as rebels against stereotype label on women. This is because the selected writers through their literary texts, deconstruct gender inequality as well as socio-cultural traditions that put women on hold in patriarchal society. Resistance is full-blown.

Furthermore, the study reveals that the conditions of women in Algeria, Ivory Coast and Senegal has ascertained patriarchy as a major factor that has hampered the developmental stages of the heroines. The study has equally established in the selected narratives that religion, domestic violence and barbaric traditional practices have been the fundamental tools employed to subdue women in francophone African society. In this study, tradition, culture and religion give precedence to men but the heroines of the

selected novelists strive in their own ways to reject and react vehemently against these practices particularly when they fall victim to them.

Consequently, the study is able to identify and gauge the bildungsroman heroines' steps to their freedom. The study points at a major implication of the authors' works for the contemporary Francophone African women's voice of liberation; helping those young girls and protective women in their coming-of-age, in their resistance to and actually combating the tradition of patriarchal domination that once relegated them in their developmental stages socially, religiously, culturally and economically.

The examined fictional writings are synonymous to diverse voices, which are the major acts of resistance. The selected narratives create space for each writer to make her voice heard on issues she could not otherwise declare in the open world. Thus, One of the selected novels Khady's *Mutilée* turns out to be narrative of testimony because of its autobiographical and confessional nature. The remaining authors are also confrontational against various oppressive systems of women in francophone African society. These writings have given these authors the chance to voice out their rejection of the problems and challenges that confront women in African patriarchal society. With their novels, their stories have been shared around the world as their divulgations of various kinds of oppression. In the "space" offered by writing, the chosen novelists through their heroines deconstruct, confront, challenge and resist oppressive systems. They redeem the personhood and dignity of their bildungsroman heroines.

The second research question identifies the strategies of resistance deployed by each heroine to surmount her problems. Through the critical appraisal of the novels, it is evident that all of them adopt subversive strategies of resistance that transform socio-cultural and religious structures in the communities depicted. A major strategy of violent behaviour or aggression put up by bildungsroman heroines is a ploy to denounce and confront all the barbaric traditions that humiliate and inflict pains on young girls and women. Malimouna in Fatou Kéïta's *Rebelle* resists and subverts the adverse effects of child marriage. Through aggression, Affiba, the heroine of Regina Yaou, overcomes the torment of her in-laws concerning her husband's inheritance. In addition, Sultana becomes a defiant in order to overcome the trauma of Islamic fundamentalists. Asta Diop, Sow Fall's heroine, also tows the line of transgression to resist racism from the airport officers in France and to free herself from the oppressive marriage.

Another strategy of resistance binding all the bildungsroman heroines together is confrontation. Affiba, through her oratorical prowess, confronts her in-laws and even slaps

her sister-in-law over false allegation of having illicit affairs. All of the heroines confront their oppressors who want their journeys of self-discovery to grind to a halt.

The *bildungsroman* heroines' rebellion against the institution of marriage is another mark of resistance. Through the heroines, different kinds of oppression in the institution of matrimony: servitude, wife battery, domestic-violence and conjugal rape are identified. When their marriages become dreadful, Malimouna opts for separation, while Asta and Khady file suits of divorce against their husbands in order to regain a self-fulfilling life. Affiba loses her husband to death but becomes free, while Sultana bluntly refuses to get married.

Two of the *bildungsroman* heroines employ the strategy of escape to resist marital oppression. Malimouna employs escape to circumvent the problem of Female Genital Mutilation and arranged marriage. She resists these problems by fleeing to exile where she learns to reconstruct her identity and character development. Sultana as an orphan who could not get help from her community flees away from the sexist society of Algeria.

In addition, collective action constitutes another strategy of resistance adopted by the heroines to cope with various forms of oppressions. Collective action helps Sultana to wage war against Islamic bigots; it helps Malimouna to escape banishment from the Council of Elders. Through collective activism, Asta forms an Agricultural Cooperative Society, which paves way for communal survival in Senegal and through collective action, Khady becomes the President of GAMS, with the aim of eradicating Female Genital Mutilation, child marriage, illiteracy, domestic violence against all young girls and women in the process of coming-of-age around the globe.

“Talking back” demonstrates a significant strategy in suppressing patriarchal oppression. Malika Mokkedem's *L'interdite* is a semi-autobiographical novel. Sultana, the heroine and the survivor in the text, represents Malika Mokkedem herself in a symbolic way. Mokkedem uses her novel to “talk back” to those Islamic fundamentalists that victimised her in her prime, and to those social structures that still hold her and other women in the position of silence and subjugation.

In the same vein, Khady's autobiographical novel portrays “talking back” as a resistance strategy since the novel reflects the tension between the past and the present. Khady, in a bid to reconstruct her society in a modern way and to thwart the efforts of African cultural stereotypes against women, puts her experiences into writing in order to reach out to the whole world. Khady uses rhetorical forms of resistance through self-representation in her autobiographical novel *Mutilée*. She uses her text to address her

community and the people that cut her genitalia at the age of seven and marry her off at the age of thirteen and a half. Through the work, she preaches that women should say 'no' to all sorts of violence against young girls and women. All the five bildungsroman heroines employ these strategies to assert self-identity, self-preservation, self-dignity and freedom.

Educational empowerment is identified and proposed as the most substantial among all the strategies of resistance. All the heroines are educated in the course of their journeys, makes them to wrestle and confront all their difficulties. They use formal education as a subversive weapon to fight all cultural traditions that once weaken their gender. Education prevents them from the ill-treatment and violence of the patriarchal ethos and transforms their lives socially and economically. They actualise their dreams and become independent through the instrumentality of education, which equally paves ways for their emancipatory and survival trope. Sultana becomes a doctor, Malimouna, a social worker, Affiba works in an insurance company, Asta is a secretary and agriculturalist, while Khady is a social activist.

The opportunity of educational empowerment to all bildungsroman heroines in this work help to consider them as agents of social change. Mokkedem, through her heroine, Sultana, gives voice to Algerian women by taking them out of the captivity of Islamic fundamentalists that prevent women from gaining access to education, self-development, physical movement, sexuality, and freedom. Through Sultana, men and women start to play complementary roles. Malimouna, as a proactive agent of socio-cultural change, liberates young girls and women from female circumcision and child marriage. She assures women that they have control over their bodies in fictional community of Ivory Coast. She liberates them from illiteracy by organising adult education for women; she advocates individual freedom and creates awareness for women in achieving financial independence.

Educational empowerment also makes Affiba to subvert and avert the tradition that for ages, prevents women from enjoying the assets left behind by their husbands when they pass away. She sounds a note of warning to Ivorian men and women not to depend on the properties of deceased persons; that people should work hard for the betterment of lives and of society. Sow Fall's heroine, Asta in the same way demonstrates her leadership role by forming agricultural cooperative that would liberate the Senegalese people from abject poverty and famine. She equally denounces and discourages massive migration to Europe, specifically France. Khady, through her activism as the president of GAMS (Group for the Abolition of Sexual Mutilation), fights against female genital mutilation, and by the year 2013, the problem of excision has reduced to 2% in the fictional Senegal. This was



revealed through the interview Khady granted to a French woman, Madame Lefigaro in 2013. It is also gathered through a certain magazine “UNCut/Voices Press” that Khady in her campaign for women’s welfare, had minimised maternal mortality and had established an organisation called “La Palabre”, a place of refuge for girls fleeing FGM in Senegal. In addition, Khady’s autobiographical *Mutilée* is regarded as a double-voiced communication that fictionally presents the socio-cultural legacies of both the voiceless and the dominant.

The heroines in this study are depicted and confirmed as survivors and agents of social change. In the selected texts, they are traumatised physically and emotionally, feeling dejected, isolated, depressed and disgraced by the society. The heartbreaking consequences lead to humiliation: the five heroines are seriously degraded every time they are oppressed. However, the positive effects of emotional traumas signify a great empowerment for the female characters. Each selected author portrays her heroine as strong-minded and resistant, contrary to the general depiction of the female gender as the weaker sex. These positive emotional effects later become the solid rock for the oppressed heroines to stand upon, and make them to emerge as survivors in the multiple facets of oppression.

This study has been able to reveal the bildungsroman heroines: Khady, Malimouna, Sultana, Asta and Affiba as survivors and agents of social change. They represent all the features inherent in the theory of female bildungsroman. They are awakened by self-consciousness, which leads them to both arduous and psychological journeys; they fall in love and at the end of their “journeys”, they become educated, socio-culturally and economically emancipated and financially independent.

In addition, it is discovered that bildungsroman heroines are oppressed because of their gender, which subjects them to all unfair acts of inequality or control characterised by domination and subordination by men. Owing to this, it is found out that the selected female novelists are proficient not only in voicing out their tortures, pains and woes but also in standing, fighting and winning as survivors. All of them produce recalcitrant bildungsroman heroines who face the prejudice of a violent world. They make their mark not only for women but also for the sake of humanity generally.

This study demonstrates the impact of exile or urban setting in the life of the mainly rural heroines. All the selected authors have made their heroines to experience some strenuous journey prevalent to the genre of bildungsroman, before they discover themselves. Exile, for the bildungsroman heroines, consequently serves as an escape strategy from patriarchal entrapment. Exile or urban life has positive influence on all the

heroines because it gives them space to think and also the opportunity to gain access into real world in order to broaden their philosophical mission and to develop themselves. All the heroines become educated; they have careers and are economically buoyant. In addition, exile enables them to confront, challenge, survive and thrive in the male-dominated world. The study, therefore, reveals that life is a continuous process of breaking-through. The heroines explore new experiences and forms of knowledge that assist their personal growth as true bildungsroman characters. This suggests that it is imperative to be active, striving to shape one's life, instead of wallowing in dejection and self-pity, or remaining as victims of circumstances, deterred by obstacles.

In all the selected novels, a common bond holds the heroines together: the female's search for the self in a male-dominated world, a strong determination to have authority over their own minds and bodies, great efforts to gain freedom and a will to rapidly advance via self-development. Malika Mokkedem's heroine, Sultana, searches for identity in a hostile environment of Islamic fundamentalists, Fatou Kéïta's heroine, Malimouna, heads for exile in search for self, after defying the tradition that subjects her to Female Genital Mutilation and child marriage. Regina Yaou's heroine, Affiba, in her psychological journey, defies tradition in an effort to secure the inheritance her husband leaves behind. Aminata Sow Fall's Asta believes in an authentic self after she gains freedom from European prison as an illegal immigrant and from marital oppression of her arrogant husband. Asta, armed with self-confidence, creates an utopian society for the entire community of Senegal. Khady Koita, as revealed in her autobiographical novel, could not escape tradition because of her naivety and ignorance but she searches for self in order to gain freedom from the yoke of an imposed marriage and to eradicate all the barbaric traditions that make her life miserable in her dystopian community. She extends this vision to the whole world through activism, which makes her to pursue her personal mission for unity and integrity across linguistic boundaries.

Moreover, all the selected five novels fulfil an alternative function in that they adopt a point of view that reconstructs a new concept and space for the exploration of female identity through the female bildungsroman which initiates high qualities of livelihood: first, an ability to identify oneself; second, an awareness of one's feelings, third, being able to put the views across bravely and fourth, the new self-identity in the bildungsroman gives women emotional sustenance and a good working philosophy that makes life existence meaningful.

The major findings of this study revolve around patriarchy, oppression, the dignity and liberty of the female gender. The study has been able to affirm that patriarchy and oppression belong together on one side of the same coin. On the other side of the coin is the dignity of womanhood. Thus, it is indicated that patriarchy manifests its power on women and on adolescents' coming-of-age. While acknowledging the various ways in which patriarchal institutions do oppress women, the chosen authors often reject allegations and enforcement of absolute male power and control. This study, therefore, reveals that most of the oppressive systems that are highlighted in the selected novels are masterminded by patriarchal structures. Some are rooted in cultural and societal norms; while some others are rooted in religious fanaticism supported by patriarchy for its own purposes. The selected authors demonstrate that the developmental process of a young girl coming-of-age is further complicated and hindered by her culture, religion as well as by her gender, all to the advantage of patriarchy.

The consequences of patriarchy and oppression on the heroines are observed and It is discovered that all of them, at some critical stage refuse to endure patriarchal oppressions. In this vein, female bildungsroman acts as the basis of support and empowerment. African women become survivors and they are no longer confined to household chores and rearing of children; they are actively competing with men in all spheres of life. Even the theories used in this work give women writers the opportunity to voice their worries about African reality and bring them to the public forum, home and abroad.

One of the qualities of the chosen texts as bildungsroman is the departure from the traditional variants of the genre. The heroines begin their stories from personal experiences and from different backgrounds, but as the narratives draw near to the denouement, the "self" is embraced by the larger collective "self" of the African community. The study submits that, for a woman to come-of-age, develop and exit from patriarchal tyranny, the sense of "collective action" should be emulated as a major resistant weapon. From there, the women heroines become true African female survivors of oppression and at the same time, structurally, they become models of *bildungsroman* heroines.

It has also been observed that the selected female authors themselves imply their literary works as 'therapeutic force' because of their commitment to social and cultural changes in their own world. We recall that as far back as 1975, Oladitan had indicated that,

[...] Committed writing [...] is a reflection [...], a perception as well as an interpretation of reality, a reaction to the immediate world, which involves taking a definite and militant stand, and at the same time suggesting a course of action to the writer's audience. Such writing acquires the value of a warning to the people criticized and a condemnation of ideas. In the noblest sense of the term, it becomes propaganda.

Oladitan (1975:385) sums it up that:

Committed writing is therefore deliberately subjective, openly partial to the cause, which it embraces and concerns itself first and foremost with its message. The content of the work is the preoccupation; the form is in fact, made to suit the message

The preoccupation of a committed writer includes, carefully deconstructing certain beliefs. This is necessary because the writer's focus is to change a specific situation or alter certain philosophies in order to achieve positive transformation in the immediate territory or province. To accomplish this goal, 'Pen' or writing becomes a major weapon for the authors. They use it to convey a message of caution or warning to their people and the battle-cry against unyielding foes. The literary works of the female writers are therefore, recognised as fine and refined propaganda and war instruments, which they, through their heroines, use to address patriarchal issues and womanhood problems of freedoms, rights and liberties. In so doing, they work passionately to alleviate women's pains, grieves and sorrows and equally relieve emotional trauma.

The five selected works are novels of awakening, formation, transformation, self-development and self-discovery, with clear positions taken in favour of the liberation of women. Initially, the heroines may be inexperienced but their consciousness later gets awakened, compelling them to transformational individuation. They face many trials and obstacles but their heroic reactions to the bitter experiences enable them to build their identity positively. They may be overtly challenged, but they confront their world of patriarchal oppressions to discover the path of victory and survival.

From the foregoing, it is suggested that women generally, the world over, should take inspiration from the francophone African female bildungsroman heroines' struggles and sense of collective action. Women should come together to strengthen and broaden their movement towards liberation. Solidarity among women can be a powerful instrument of change, and can influence future development in a beneficial way, not only to the crowning of women, but also to the betterment of the human race.

Female Genital Mutilation and arranged or girl-child marriage should be eradicated with the active participation of women themselves. Society should take care of widows instead of dispossessing them. In essence, women should stop being agents or sustainers of patriarchy.

Religious oppression is detrimental to the lives of women. It breeds domination, intolerance and humiliation in women's lives. Religious bigotry cannot move the society forward; men and women should condemn militant leaders who oppress women in the name of any particular religion.

Wife battery is an abhorrent violent behaviour. Thus, dialogue is suggested as one of the ingredients of love between man and woman. Polygamy breeds hatred among women and since God is the only "Perfect Being" that maintains equal justice, the idea of monogamy is ideal in an utopian society, difficult as that may appear in African context with the burden of tradition.

In addition, this study strongly suggests formal education to African girls and young women as education serves as an illuminator that prompts social change and moves women into a different and higher sphere where they would no longer be subjected to domestic and other veritable subaltern positions. Education would imbue women with a true sense of freedom. It would serve as a veritable means for women to escape poverty and other impediments that limit their horizons. African women should therefore, take education as the most important weapon for their economic liberation and viable survival in a future that would guarantee them great confidence and self-fulfillment. This would bless all humanity and positively regenerate human condition.

Finally, this work has investigated women's writings in Africa, situated within the genre of female bildungsroman after independence. A significant limitation is that it has concentrated on francophone African nations. However, it opens new vistas in various directions. For example, subsequent research could investigate bildungsroman heroes in francophone male writings with the aim of unearthing the developmental process of young boys and men. Scholars may also investigate bildungsroman in francophone male writings that portray young girls and women coming-of-age in various male-dominated African societies, not minding the language of expression and the period of writing or period of focus.

## REFERENCES

### Primary sources

- Kéïta, F. 2009. *Rebelle*. Abidjan : Nouvelles Éditions Ivoiriennes Présence Africaine.
- Khady, K. 2005. *Mutilée*. Paris. Oh! Éditions.
- Malika, M. 1993. *L'interdite*. Paris: Édition Grasset et Fasquelle.
- Sow Fall, A. 1998. *Douceurs du bercail*. Abidjan: Nouvelles Éditions Ivoiriennes.
- Yaou, R. 1997. *Le prix de la révolte*. Abidjan. Nouvelles Éditions Ivoiriennes.

### Secondary sources

- Abel, E., Hirsh, M. and Langland, E. 1983. *The voyage in fictions: novel of female development*. Hanover and London: UP of New England.
- Abrams, M. H. 1985. *A glossary of literary terms*. 5th ed. Fort Worth: Saunders.
- Adebayo, A. 1996. Tearing the veil of invisibility: the roles of West African female writers in contemporary times. Aduke Adebayo. Ed. *Feminism and black women's creative writing: theory, practice, criticism*. Ibadan: AMD Publishers.
- Adebayo, A. 1999. Feminism and its implications for Nigerian society. *Beyond the marginal land: gender perspectives in African writing*. Opara, C. Ed. Port-Harcourt: Belpot Nig. Co. 24-32.
- Adebayo, A. 2000. Feminism in francophone African literature: from liberalism to Militancy. *Introduction to francophone African literature*. Oke, Olusola and Ojo, Sam Ade. Eds. Ibadan: Spectrum. 275-298.
- Adeleke, J. A. 2004. A stylistic analysis of the forms of oppressions in selected francophone West African women's novels. PhD.Thesis. Department of European Studies. University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Adesanmi, P. 2002. Constructions of subalternity in African women's writing in French. Ph.D. Thesis. Department of French, Hispanic and Italian studies, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.
- Akiode, S. 2012. How self-discovery can help your career. Accessed March 3, 2015, from [http:// venturesafrica.com/how-self-discovery-can-help-your-career/](http://venturesafrica.com/how-self-discovery-can-help-your-career/)
- Akorede, Y.A. 2011. *Feminism and literature: womanism and the intra-gender conflict theory*. Porto-Novo: Republic of Benin Sonou Press.
- Akujobi, R. 2006. Yesterday you were divorced today I am a widow: an appraisal of widowhood practices and effects on the psyche of widows in Africa. Department of English and Literary Studies, College of Human Development. Covenant University, Ota.

- Ali, A., Keith, O. and Brenda, B.T. 2001. *Emotional abuse in women: the encyclopedia of women and gender*. Worell J. Ed. Washington DC: American Psychological Association and Academic Press.
- Amnesty International. 2017. Violence against women. United State of America. <http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/issues/women-s-rights/violence-against-women>.
- Anon, 2006-2017. Raising children network. (Australia) Limited. [https://www.google.com.ng/search?q=Raising+children+network&rlz=1C1CHZL\\_enNG723NG723&oq=Raising+children+network&aqs=chrome..69i57.1821j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com.ng/search?q=Raising+children+network&rlz=1C1CHZL_enNG723NG723&oq=Raising+children+network&aqs=chrome..69i57.1821j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8).
- Anih, U.B. 2013. A womanist reading of *Douceurs du bercail* in African cultures and literatures. *Miscellany Journal for African Cultures & Society*. Gordon Collier Ed. New York. Rodopoi. 105-124.
- Anna, K. 2005. Gender-based violence: a price too high. Retrieved from: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/swp05\\_eng.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/swp05_eng.pdf)
- Al-Bashir, O.H. 2015. Polygamy in Africa. <https://www.polygamy.com/articles/89746509/polygamy-in-africa>. Accessed September 30th, 2015.
- Bâ, M. 1960. *Une si longue lettre*. Dakar: Les Nouvelles Éditions Africaines.
- Bâ, M. 1981. La fonction politique des littératures africaines écrites. *Écriture française dans le monde*. 5.1 7.
- Bailey, W. C., and Peterson, R. D. 1995. Gender inequality and violence against women: the case of murder. *Crime and inequality*. J. Hagan & R. D. Peterson. Eds. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 174-205.
- Bandlamudi, L. 1999. Developmental discourse as an author/hero relationship. *Culture Psychology*. 5.41:41-65.
- Bat-ami, B.O. 1994. *Engendering origins: critical feminist readings in Plato and Aristotle*. Albany, New York: Suny Press.
- Beja, M. 1971. *Epiphany in modern novel*. Seattle, W.A. University of Washington Press.
- Berger, I. and Frances, E. W. 1999. *Women in sub-saharan Africa: restoring women to history*. Indiana University Press.
- Berkuns, S. 2010. The Myths of Innovation . Accessed 15 October 2011. O'Reilly Media, Inc. <http://www.creativity-innovation.eu/epiphany-feeling/>
- Berman, J. 2012. Modernism in the zenana: the domestic spaces of sorabji, hussain and ishvani in the *modernist commitments: ethics, politics, and transnational modernism*. New York: Columbia University Press. 139-183.

- Beyala, C. 1996. Beyala: entre le terroir et l'exil 'interview granted to Matateyou Emmanuel. The French review. France. <http://www.academicroom.com/article/calixthe-beyala-entre-le-terroir-et-lexil>. 69: 4. Accessed January 8th, 2013. 605-615.
- Bijay, K. D. 2005. *Twentieth century literary criticism: the theory of deconstruction: retrospect and prospect*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.
- Bladon, L. 2012. Awakening to wholeness: a practical guide to psychological healing, personal development and spiritual growth. from <https://esotericscience.org/book2.htm>
- Boes, T. 2006. *Modernist studies and the bildungsroman: a historical survey of critical trends*. Yale: Blackwell Publishing.
- Bonnie G.S. 2008. *The oxford encyclopedia of women in world history*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Booker, K.M. 1994. *The dystopian impulse in modern literature*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Bordo, S. 1993. *Unbearable weight: feminism, western culture and the body*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Boyle, K. and Sheen, J. 1997. *Freedom of religion and belief: a world report*. London: Routledge.
- Braendlin, B. H. 1980. New directions in contemporary bildungsroman: Lisa Alther's Kinflicksin *gender and literary voice*. Janet Todd. Ed. New York: Holmes & Meier. 160-171.
- Bryce, J. 2002. Interview with Yvonne Vera. *Sign and Taboo – Perspectives on the Poetic Fiction of Yvonne Vera*. Muponde Robert, Taruvinga Mandi Eds. Harare: Oxford Weaver Press. 217-226.
- Buckely, J. M. 1975. Teaching of English fiction <http://202.201.1.71/jpk/common/editer/openfile/get.jsp?fid=2371>.
- Buckley, J. M. 1974. *Season of youth: the bildungsroman from dickens to golding*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Calder, J. 1976. *Women and marriage in Victorian fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Camara, C., Clark, A. and Hargreaves J.D. 2018. République du Senegal, Republic of Senegal. <https://www.britannica.com/contributor/Camille-Camara/466>
- Candice, A. G. 2008. An analysis of alternative to the radical feminist position on the institution of marriage. *Journal of Law and Family Studies*. Vol. 11 <http://epubs.utah.edu/index.php/jlfs/article/view/88>



- Cavallaro, A. 2014. Gender inequality in the Ivory Coast. <http://www.borgenmagazine.com/gender-inequality-ivory-coast/>
- Cazenave, O. 1991. Gender, age, and reeducation: a changing emphasis in recent African novels in French, as exemplified. *L'appel des arènes* by Aminata Sow fall. *Africa Today*. 38.3
- CEDAW, 1994. Convention on the elimination of discrimination against women, polygamous marriage. General Recommendation No. 2113th session. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm>
- Chigbu, U. E. 2015. Repositioning culture for development: women and development in a Nigerian rural community. *Community, work and family*. 18.3: 334–350.
- Chopra, C. R. 2012. Women and discrimination. *The Watch Tower*. 133:17:3.
- Christian De la Heurta. 1999. The power of self-expression. Retrieved from: <http://soulfulpower.com/the-power-of-self-expression/>
- Cixous, H. 1976. *The laugh of the medusa: a reading rhetorical theory*. Barry Brummett. Ed New York: Harcourt. Accessed 2000. 879-893.
- Clignet, R. and Foster, B. 1977. Social change and sexual differentiation in the Cameroun and the Ivory Coast, *Signs* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women\\_in\\_Ivory\\_Coast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Ivory_Coast). 3.1:244-60.
- Colin, F. 1994. *Myth, truth, and literature: towards a true post-modernism*. 2nd ed. Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Collins, P. H. 1998. *Fighting words: black women and the search for justice*. USA: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cooper, F. 2014. *Citizenship between empire and nation: remaking France and French Africa, 1945–1960*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- D'Almeida, I. 1994. *Francophone African writers: destroying the emptiness of silence*. Gainesville, FL: UP of Florida.
- Daly, M. 1978. *Gynecology: the metaethics of radical feminism*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- DaSilva, I. S. 2012. Polygamy throttles women in Senegal. Accessed 12/11/17 from [:http://allafrica.com/stories/201209120567.html](http://allafrica.com/stories/201209120567.html)
- DaSilva, I. S. 2013. Senegal seeks to curb baby boom. Accessed 12/11/17 from <http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/01/senegal-seeks-to-curb-the-baby-boom/>
- DaSilva, I. S. 2013. Senegal growing up over marriage. Accessed 12/11/17 <http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/02/senegal-growing-up-over-marriage/>.

- David, A. J. 2015. *Resisting injustice and the feminist ethics of care in the age of Obama: "suddenly... all the truth was coming out"*. Routledge.
- David, K., Macdonald, D. and O'Sullivan, M. 2006. *Handbook of physical education*. London: Sage Publishers Ltd.
- Davis, J. L. 1975. The dialectics of rape. Ms. *SAGE* 3 : 106-108.
- De Beauvoir, S. 1993. *The second sex*. David Campell Publishers Limited.
- De Groot, G. and Peniston-Bird, C. 2000. *A soldier and a woman: sexual integration in the military*. New York: Longman.
- DeMan, P. 2014. *On reading Rousseau. The Paul de man notebooks: frontiers theory*. Edinburgh: University Press.
- Dixon, M. 2000. Marriage: genesis of women rebellion in *radical feminism: a documentary reader* Babara, A. Crow. Ed. USA: NYU Press. 76-81
- Dr.Y. and Afroleghs.com. 2015. Queen Ndate Yalla Mbodj: Senegalese queen leading the resistance against French colonization. Retrieved from <https://afroleghs.com/2015/06/08/queen-ndate-yalla-mbodjsenegalese-queenleading-the-resistance-against-french-colonization/#8230>
- Dubber, M. D. 2005. *The police power: patriarchy and the foundations of American government*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica: 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Algeria/Cultural-life>
- Edwige, H.2005. « Entretien avec Aminata Sow Fall Africultures. Accessed 12 May 2010]. <http://www.africultures.com/php/index.php?nav=article&no=4048>.
- Ellington, A. 1992. Aminata Sow Fall's demon woman: an anti-feminist social vision. *Contributions in Black Studies* 9.9: 132-146.
- Emerson, R. W. 1998. *Self-reliance: the health anthology of American literature*. Ed. Paul Lauter et al. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 1
- Encyclopædia Britannica. 2008. *Bildungsroman* <<http://search.eb.com/>>."Bildungsroman" NE. se-*Nationalencyklopedin*.
- Eysturoy, O. E. 1996. *Daughters of self-creation: the contemporary Chicana novel*. Albuquerque: New Mexico.
- European Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2005. Definition of forced marriage. Accessed December, 2014 from [http://www.stopvaw.org/definition\\_offorced\\_marriage\\_3](http://www.stopvaw.org/definition_offorced_marriage_3) paragraph 4.

- Ezeigbo, T.A. 1994. "Women empowerment and national integration: Bâ's *So long a letter* and Warner Vieyra's *Juletane*. Emenyonu, E.W.N. and Nnolim, C.E. Eds. *Current trends in literature and language studies in West Africa*. Ibadan. Kraft books ltd. 7-19.
- Fanon, F. 1965. *Algeria unveiled: a dying colonialism*. Trans. Haakon Chevalier. New York: Grove Press.
- Fanon, F. 1967. *Black skins, whites masks*. Grove Press: New York
- Ferguson, K. E. 1999. Patriarchy. In Tierney, Helen *Women's studies encyclopedia*, Volume 2. Greenwood Publishing. 1048.
- Ferrer, J. N. 2002. *Revisioning transpersonal theory: toward a participatory vision of human spirituality*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Felski R. 1986. The novel of self-discovery: a necessary fiction? *Southern Review*. 19: 131-148.
- Felski R. 1989. *Beyond feminist aesthetics: feminist literature and social change*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. UP.
- Feng, P.1998. *The female bildungsroman* by Toni Morrison and Maxine Hong Kingston. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Firestone, S. 1970. *The dialectic of sex*. New York: Bantams Books.
- Fishbein, H. D. 2002. *Peer prejudice and discrimination: the origins of prejudice*. (2nd Ed. New York: Psychology Press.
- Flood, M.G. 2007. *International encyclopedia of men and masculinities*. London: Routledge.
- Fontana, B. 2009. Power and democracy: Gramsci and hegemony in America in *Perspectives on Gramsci: politics, culture and social theory*. Joseph Francese. Ed. London: Routledge. 80-96
- Fraiman, S. 1993. *Unbecoming women: British women writers and the novel of development*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Frank, K. 1987. Women without men: the feminist novel in Africa. *Women in African literature today*. Jones, E.D. Ed. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press. 15-34.
- Frink, B. 2011. The pill and the marriage revolution. Accessed September 29, 2011 from <http://gender.stanford.edu/news/2011/pill-and-marriage-revolution>
- Frye, N. 2003. Culture as Interpenetration. *Northrop Frye on Canada*. Ed. Jean O'Grady and David Staines. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 12: 521-530.

- Fuderer, L. S. 1990. *The female bildungsroman in English: an annotated bibliography of criticism*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.
- Gaasch, J. « Aminata Sow Fall: entretien avec Gaasch J. ». *La Nouvelle sénégalaise: texte et contexte*. Accessed 12 May 2010. [http://aflit.arts.uwa.edu.au/int\\_gaasch2.html](http://aflit.arts.uwa.edu.au/int_gaasch2.html).
- Gagiano, A. 2013. *African library: the forbidden woman*. <http://www.litnet.co.za/african-library-the-forbidden-woman/>
- Gayle, G. 1992. *Reading, writing and consciousness-raising: changing the story: feminist fiction and the tradition*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Gennep, A. V. 2003. *Rites of passage, grolier encyclopediea medicine anatomy and physiology anatomy and physiology*. International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family: The Gale Group Inc.
- Gentry, C.E. and Sjoberg, L. 2011. The gendering of women's terrorism. *Women, gender, and terrorism*. L Sjoberg and C. Gentry. Eds. University of Georgia Press. 57-82.
- George L.A. 2012. *Hercircle: a magazine of women's creative arts and activism*. Accessed from: <https://uncutvoices.wordpress.com/2012/08/22/her-circle-e-zine-features-khady/>
- Gervais, J. 1995. Calixthe beyala, 'africaine et Rebelle', *Amina*, <https://www.google.com.ng/search>
- Glasberg, D. S., and Deric S. 2011. *Chapter 1. political sociology: oppression, resistance, and the state*. California: Sage.
- Goodman, C. 2013. The lost brother, the twin: women novelists and the male-female *bildungsroman novel: a forum on fiction* (1983): *JSTOR*. Web. 3 Dec. 2013. 17.1:28-43.
- Gray, D.H. 2009. Women in Algeria today and the debate over family law. *MERIA Journal*. <http://www.rubincenter.org/2009/03/gray-2009-03-05/>. 13:01. 16
- Griffiths, C. 2002. Education in transition in francophone West Africa: gender access and issues of equity in Senegal and Gabon. *Education in transition: international perspectives on the politics and processes of change*. Rosarii Griffin Ed. United Kingdom: Symposium Books.
- Guardian*, 2012. 'Senegal makes headway on gender equality – but not everyone is happy'. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/aug/16/senegal-headway-gender-equality>.
- Hader, S. 1996. The Victorian web: literature, history & culture in the Victorian Age (the Bildungsroman genre). <http://www.victorianweb.org/genrehader1.html>. Accessed [ February 21, 2005].

- Hamilton, J.2004. *Ivory Coast in pictures*. Twenty-First Century Books. Minneapolis: USA Lerner pub group. 2nd edition.
- Hanisch, C. 2000 The personal is political. *Radical feminism: a documentary reader*, Barbara A.Ed. New York: University Press. 113-121.
- Hawkins, P. 1988. An interview with Aminata Sow Fall. *Africa Affairs*. 87.348: 419-430.
- Houghton, M., 2000. *The American heritage dictionary of the English language*. USA: Houghton Mifflin Pub.
- Helen, C. 1989. Positivism and female crisis: the novels of Buchi Emecheta. *Nigerian female writers, a critical perspectives*. Otokufenor, H.C, et al. Eds. Nigeria: Malithouse Press. 2-18.
- Henderson, M.G. 2000. Speaking in tongues: dialogics, dialectics, and the black woman -- writer's literary tradition. *Changing our own words*. Cheryl Wall Ed. Rutgers University Press. 7-21.
- Herondale, L. 2015. Blood-stains--a-child-of-africa-reclaims-her-human-rights. Retrieved from:<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/9993558->.
- Hooks, B. 1989. *Talking back: thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston: South End Press.
- Hooks, B. 2000. *Feminism is for everybody: passionate politics*. London: Pluto Press .
- Hooks, B. 2000. *Feminist theory: from margin to center*. London: Pluto Press.
- Hooks, B. 2004. *Understanding patriarch: the will to change: men, masculinity, and love*. USA. Washington Press.
- Houghton, M.H. 1999. *The American heritage dictionary of the English language: the theme of coming-of-age*. Harcourt Publishing Company. 5th edition.
- International Congress. 2011. *Eradicate forced and early marriages*. California: University of Southern California.
- [http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/french\\_honproj/6](http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/french_honproj/6)
- <http://www.litnet.co.za/author/annie-gagiano/>
- <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/23696/797440WP0Cote00Box0379789B00PUBLIC0.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- <https://www.britannica.com/place/Algeria/Cultural-life>
- <https://www.quora.com/What-is-patriarchy#!n=12>

<https://afrolegends.com/2015/06/08/queen-ndate-yalla-mbodj-senegalese-queen-leading-the-resistance-against-french-colonization/> <a href="http://family.jrank.org/pages/1414/Rites-Passage.html">Rites of Passage - Rites Of Passage Cross-culturally, Cultural Performance, Social Drama, And Rites Of Passage</a>

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/algerian-americans>

[https://data.mongabay.com/reference/country\\_studies/algeria/all.html](https://data.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/algeria/all.html)

Igoudjil, K. 2014. Postcolonial Algerian writers in French: language as representation and resistance. American University Washington DC. 181. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311982994>

Irving H. 2017. *Constitutions and gender: research handbook in comparative educational law series*. USA: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Iverseen, A. T. 2009. *Change and continuity: the bildungsroman in English*. Munin. University of Tromsø.

Jackson, G. 2005. *Women leaders of Africa, Asia, Middle East, and Pacific*. Xlibris Corporation.

Jean Suret-Canele. 1971. *French colonialism in tropical Africa 1900–1945*. New York: Trans. Pica Press.

Jennifer, B. H. 2010. *African women resistance: an anthology of contemporary voices*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Kabira, W. M., and Nzioki, E. A. 1993. *Celebrating women's resistance: a case study of women's groups movement in Kenya*. Nairobi: New Earths Publication.

Kale, Y. 2014. National Bureau of Statistics. [http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/annual\\_abstract\\_pdf2012](http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/annual_abstract_pdf2012). 54-62.

Karmioli, E. 2017. Eradicating FGM lacks political will: an interview with Khady Koita. <http://www.ipsnews.net>

Kéïta F. 1998. *Rebelle*. Interview granted to coulibaly, I.B. [aflit.arts.uwa.edu.au/AMINA\\_Kéïta\\_F2.html](http://aflit.arts.uwa.edu.au/AMINA_Kéïta_F2.html).

Keddie, N. and Beth B. 1991. *Women in Middle Eastern history: shifting boundaries in sex and gender*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Kelly, K. C. 2000. *Performing virginity and testing chastity in the Middle Ages*. London: Routledge.

King, A. 2004. *Africa: new francophone stories*. USA: University of Nebraska.

- Koita, K. 2012. Lose your clitoris and you lose your independence: wants the world to know *her circle*. *A magazine of women's creative arts and activism*. <http://www.hercircleezine.com/2012/07/02/lose-your-clitoris-and-you-lose-your-independence-khady-wants-the-world-to-know/>.
- Koita, K. 2016. Eradicating FGM lacks political will. Retrieved <http://www.ipsnews.net/2007/05/qa-eradicating-fgm-lacks-political-will/>
- Kolawole, E. M. 2005. Re-thinking sexualities in Africa: reconceptualizing African gender theory: feminism, womanism and the arere metaphor in African sexuality/Sexuality in Africa: tales and silences Signe Arnfred Ed. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute. 251-265
- Kolawole, E. M. 1997. *Womanism and African consciousness*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- Koso, T. 1987. *The circumcision of women: a strategy for eradication*. London: Dotesios Ltd.
- Kuhlman, E. A. 2002. *A to Z of women in world history*. New York: Infobase Publishing.
- Kumah, C. 2006: African women and literature. Retrieved from:[http://www.the\\_patriotic\\_vanguard.com/book-review-african-women-and-literature](http://www.the_patriotic_vanguard.com/book-review-african-women-and-literature).Book Review.
- Kurdi, H. 2017. Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom. <https://medium.com/@HanzK/we-really-want-to-know-who-we-are-cee5a4b0226c>.
- Kurkowski, C. J. 2004. Classifying Maya Angelou's *I know why the caged bird sings* as an african-american female *bildungsroman*. <http://www.mindspring.com/~blkgrnt/footlights/foot76.html>
- Kushigian, J. A. 2003. *Reconstructing childhood: strategies of reading for culture and gender in the Spanish American bildungsroman*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP.
- Labovitz, E. 1986. *The myth of the heroine: the female bildungsroman in the twentieth century: Dorothy Richardson, Simone de Beauvoir, Doris Lessing, Christa Wolf* New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.
- Lazreg, M. 1994. *The eloquence of silence: Algerian women in question*. New York: Press.
- Lennon, K. 2014. Feminist perspectives on the body. *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*.(Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta Ed. Retrieved from URL = [<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/feminist-body/>](https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/feminist-body/).
- Lerner, G. 1986. *The creation of patriarchy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Levin, T. 2012. Lose your clitoris and you lose your independence: Khady wants the world to know. Retrieved from: <http://www.hercircleezine.com/> Accessed 2012/07/02/[lose-your-clitoris-and-you-lose-your-independence-khady-wants-the-world-to-know/](http://www.hercircleezine.com/2012/07/02/lose-your-clitoris-and-you-lose-your-independence-khady-wants-the-world-to-know/)
- Literary Devices Editors.2013. Metaphor. Accessed Nov. 4, 2014, <https://literarydevices.net/metaphor/>
- Long, C. R. and Averill, J. R. 2003. Solitude: an exploration of the benefits of being alone. *Journal for the theory of social behaviour*. 33.1: 21-44.
- Lorde, A. 1984. *Sister outsider: essays and speeches, freedom*. USA: The Crossing Press.
- Lorna, E. 1999. *Appearing to diminish: female development and the British bildungsroman, 1750-1850*. London: Bucknell University Press. Print.
- Lupton, M. J. 1998. *Maya angelou: a critical companion*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Lynch, J.1999. Glossary of literary and rhetorical terms, entry for *bildungsroman*. [http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/Bildungsroman?View=embedded#cite\\_note-FOOTNOTELynch1999-2](http://self.gutenberg.org/articles/eng/Bildungsroman?View=embedded#cite_note-FOOTNOTELynch1999-2)
- Mabana, C.K. 2012. The body in female writings of francophone Africa and the Caribbean. Retrieved from: [https://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/fhe/histphil/cave-hill-philosophy-symposium-\(chips\)/2012/papers/mabana2012.aspx/](https://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/fhe/histphil/cave-hill-philosophy-symposium-(chips)/2012/papers/mabana2012.aspx/)
- Macmaster, N. 2007. The colonial “emancipation” of Algerian women: the marriage law of 1959 and the failure of legislation on women’s rights in the post-independence era. *Journal of African Studies*. 12: 91-116.
- Mansouri-Acherar, L. 2000. “Algériennes à l’école: du savoir à la politique,”in *Les Algériennes, citoyennes en devenir*. Oran: C.M.M., p. 163.
- Marcus, M.K. 1998. *The forbidden woman*. London: University of Nebraska Press.
- McDonald, M.G. 2005. Epiphanies: an existential philosophical and psychological inquiry. Ph.D Thesis. University Technology, Sydney.
- McWilliams E. 2009. *Margaret Atwood and the female bildungsroman*. Surrey Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Meredith, M. 2005. *The fate of Africa*. New York: Public Affairs. Kindle edition.
- Mernissi, F. 1975. *Beyond the veil: male-female dynamics in modern Muslim society*. London: Al Saqi Books.
- Minh-ha, T. T. 1997. Mother’s talk. *The politics of (M)othering: womanhood, identity and resistance in African Literature*. Ed. Obioma, Nnaemeka Ed. London: Routledge. 26-32.



- Moghadam, V. M. 1994. *Gender and national identity: women and politics in Muslim societies*. London: Zed.
- Mojola, I. 1997. The onus of womanhood: Mariama Bâ and Zainab Alkali in *writing African women: gender, popular culture and literature in West Africa*. Newell S. Ed. London and New Jersey: Zed Books. 126-136.
- Mongabay.com.2014.Algeria.[http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country\\_studies/algeria/all.html](http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/algeria/all.html)
- Montalk.T. 2015. Stages of conscious awakening. Accessed 7 January 2015 from <http://montalk.net/metaphys/117/stages-of-conscious-awakening>.
- Moradian, A. 2009. Domestic violence against single and married women in Iranian society. Accessed 2015 from *Tolerance.org*. par. 1
- Morgan, R. 1970. Sisterhood is powerful. Redstockings Manifestos. Accessed 2011 from <http://history.msu.edu/hst203/files/2011>.
- Morris, Pam. 1993. *Literature and feminism: an introduction*. Oxford. Blackwell publishers.
- Mortimer, M. 2007. Domestic matters: representations of home in the writings of Mariama Bâ, Calixthe Beyala and Aminata Sow Fall. *International Journal of Francophone Studies*. 10.1-2: 67-83.
- Mujčinović, F. 2004. *Postmodern cross-culturalism and politicization in U.S. Latina literature: from Ana Castillo to Julia Alvarez*. New York: Peter Lang. Publishing Inc.
- Napikoski, L. and Lewis, J.J. 2018. Oppression and women's history. <https://www.thoughtco.com/oppression-womens-history-definition-3528977>
- National Women's Liberation. (NWL). 2017. Abortion and birth control. Retrieved from <http://www.womensliberation.org/priorities/abortion-and-birth-control>.
- Nfa-Abbenyi, M.N. 1997. *Gender in African women's writing: identity sexuality and difference*. Indiana University Press.
- N'Dris T. A. 1996. *Les africaines dans la politique: femmes baoulé de Côte-d'Ivoire*. Paris, L'Harmattan.
- Nordquist, R. 2017. What Is an Epiphany? Accessed Sep. 11, 2017 from [thoughtco.com/epiphany-fiction-and-nonfiction-1690607](http://www.thoughtco.com/epiphany-fiction-and-nonfiction-1690607).
- Norris,C.2002. *Deconstruction: theory and practice*. London: Routledge. Third edition.

- Obama, B. 2012. Universal declaration of human rights. Accessed 2012 from <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> article. 26:1.
- Ogini, E. 1995/96. From feminism to womanism: an instance of Sembene Ousmane and Mariama Bâ. *Ekpoma Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 8.
- Ogundipe-Leslie, M. 1994. *Recreating ourselves: African women and critical transformations*. Trenton: Africa World Press.
- Ogunyemi, C.O. 1985. Womanism: the dynamics of the contemporary black female novel in English. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 11: 63–80.
- Okunmadewa, F., Aina, O., Ayoola, G.B., Mamman, A., Nweze, N., Odebiyi, T., Shedu, D. and Zacha, J. 2002. Ill being and insecurity. *Voices of the poor from many lands*. Narayan, D and Petedch, P. Eds. Washington D.C: Oxford University Press and World Bank.
- Okuyade, O. 2011. Narrating growth in the Nigerian female *bildungsroman*. *The ana chronisT 16 winters*. 152-170.
- Oladitan, S.O. 1975. The theme of violence in the African novel of French expression. PhD Thesis. Department of European studies. University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Olayinka, E. B. 2014. Patriarchal oppression and neurotic individuals in selected novels of Calyxthe Beyala and Buchi Emecheta. PhD Thesis, Department of European studies. University of Ibadan.
- Olivia, M. 2000. Algerian Americans: the news circle/arab-american magazine. Retrieved from [http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Br/AlgerianAmericans.html#Comments\\_form](http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Br/AlgerianAmericans.html#Comments_form)
- Onyemelukwe, I. 2001. Freedom, feminism and femininity. Zaynab Alikali's *The stillborn* and Mariama Ba's *une si longue lettre*. *Focus, critical perspectives on a female voice from the northern Nigeria*. Amali, I. Ed. Zaynab Alikali. Maiduguri: Kamel prints. 73-89
- Orjinta, I.A. 2013. Aminata Sow Fall: the author, her background and her literary works. A womanist appraisal. *Interdisciplinary Academic Essays*. Munich, GRIN Verlag, <https://www.grin.com/document/203348.4>.
- Osoimehin, B. 2012. *Marrying too young-end child marriage*. New York. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
- Oyewumi, O. 1995. *Colonizing body and mind: the post-colonial studies reader*. London: Routledge.
- Pell, N. 1977. Resistance, rebellion, and marriage: the economics of Jane Eyre in nineteenth century fiction. Accessed from JSTOR. Web. 22 October 2013. 31:4. 397-420

- Pence, E. 2016. Racism - A White Issue. *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, 2nd edition. Akasha G. T., Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, Barbara Smith. New York: Eminent Press at the City.
- Petrakis, P.E. and Kostis, P.C. 2013. Economic growth and cultural change. *Journal of Socio-Economics*. Issue C. 47:147-157
- Francis, P. 2015. Francis defends covenant between man and woman. <http://www.lastampa.it/2015/04/22/vaticaninsider/eng/the-vatican/francis-defends-covenant-between-man-and-woman-jl6S1ak6IIUwOUksluCZvI/pagina.html>
- Prasanna, S. S. 2005. *Indian women writing in English: new perspectives*. India: Sarup & Sons Inc.
- Pratt, A. 1981. *Archetypal patterns in women's fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Proctor, C. E. 1990. *Women, equality and the French revolution*. United States of America: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Rawat, P.S. 2014. Patriarchal beliefs, women's empowerment and general Well-being. *Vikalpa: The Journal for Decision Makers*. 39.2: 43-55.
- Rivero, L. 2015. Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration: the awakening of self-awareness. Retrieved from: Wisconsin.<http://www.lisarivero.com/2015/11/14/self-awareness/>
- Robert, E. H. 1988. *Cote d'Ivoire: a country study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress.
- Robbins, R. 2005. *Subjectivity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rohloff, C. 2012. Reality and representation of Algerian women: the complex dynamic of heroines and repressed women" Honors Projects. Paper 6 [http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/french\\_honproj/6/](http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/french_honproj/6/): 1-37.
- Rolfe, G. 2005. *The deconstructing angel: nursing, reflection and evidence-based practice*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Rosowski, S. J. 1983. The Novel of Awakening. *The voyage in: fictions of female development*. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland. Eds. Hanover. London: University Press of New England. 49-68.
- Ruedy, J. D. 2005. *Modern Algeria: the origins and development of a nation*. Indiana: University Press.
- Sachin, K. 2012. The resistance theory: deconstruction for beginners. Retrieved from: <http://resistancetheory.blogspot.com.ng/2012/06/deconstruction-forbeginners.html>

- Sanusi, R.A. 2005. Fatou Kéïta/Regina yaou and the re-definition of Ivorian cultural and patriarchal ethos: *Rebelle and le prix de la revolte*. *A Journal of the Department of European Studies*. University of Ibadan. Nigeria. 5: 73-91.
- Senatfr.[http://www.senat.fr/colloques/actes\\_mondialisation\\_francophonie/actes\\_mondialisation\\_francophonie10.html](http://www.senat.fr/colloques/actes_mondialisation_francophonie/actes_mondialisation_francophonie10.html).
- Shaaban, B. 1988. *Algeria: sharing the struggle both right and left handed: Arab women talk about their lives*. Bloomington: Indiana UP.
- Sharma, A. 2008. *The world religious after September, 11*. India.ABC-CLIO.
- Schmidt, E. 1991. "Patriarchy, capitalism, and the colonial state in Zimbabwe." *Signs* 16.4: 732-756.
- Shea, M., Wong, J.Y., Sandy W., Sherry W., Jimenez, V., Hickman, S.J. and Julie, R. 2014. Toward a constructionist perspective of examining femininity experience: the development and psychometric properties of the subjective femininity stress scale. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. Academic Search Complete. 38.2: 275-291.
- Sheldon, K. 2005. *Historical dictionary of women in sub-saharan Africa*. Maryland: Scarecrow Press.
- Showalter, E. 1977. The female tradition. *A literature of their own: British women novelists from Brontë to Lessing*. Princeton: N.J. Princeton University Press. 3-36.
- Showalter, E. 1981. Feminist criticism in the wilderness. *Critical inquiry*. University of Chicago. 179-205 <https://philpapers.org/rec/SFOFCI-3>
- Siwoku-Awi, F. 2004. Psycho-realist approach to the study of patriarchy in feminist counter-culture in the selected works of female writers. PhD Thesis. Department of European Studies. University of Ibadan.
- Slyomovics, S. 1995. Hassiba ben bouali, if you could see our Algeria: women and public space in Algeria. <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer192/hassiba-ben-bouali-if-you-could-see-our-algeria>.
- Smith, B.R. 2009. We need a hero: African American female bildungsromane and Celie's journey to heroic female selfhood in Alice Walker's *The colour purple*. Kheven LaGrone. Ed. Netherland. 3-22.
- Sow Fall, A. 1994. L'oeuvre litteraired' Aminata Sow Fall face à la critique. *Notre librairie*: 118: 25-28.
- Stimpson, C.R. 2003. *Doris Lessing and the parable of growth* in Doris Lessing (Bloom's modern critical views). Harold Bloom. Ed. USA: Infobase Publishing. 235-256.

- Stein, M. 2004. *Black British literature: novels of transformation*. USA: Ohio State University Press.
- Sumaree, B. 2002. Being a woman in Senegal. Senegal / Interview Saturday, 15 June 2002 / Bamby Sumarée/International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine. <http://www.everyculture.com/Sa-Th/Senegal.html#ixzz51tZVh1FM>
- Summerfield, 2010. *New perspectives on the European bildungsroman*. London, New York: Continuum.
- Tad, D. 2012. The forbidden woman: “celebrating woman around the world.” [www.belletrista.com/2012/issue15/index.php](http://www.belletrista.com/2012/issue15/index.php).
- Taylor, S. 2010. The fall: the insanity of the ego. *Human history and the dawning of a new era*. U.K.: John Hunt Publishing.
- Taylor, S. Teaching of *English fiction*. 202.201.1.71/ jpk/common/ editor/openfile/ get.jsp? fid=237
- Tetlow, M.E. 2004. *Women, crime and punishment in ancient law and society: the ancient near east*. New York, London. The Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd.
- Thangaraj, K. 2014. Wife beating and subjugation of women: ingod of small things and the inheritance of loss. *An International Refereed E-Journal of Literary Explorations*. 2: 3.
- The Holy Bible. 1984. USA. *New international version International Bible Society*.
- The Holy Quran. *King Fahd glorious Quran*. Madinah, K.S.A. 1434 A.H.
- The universal declaration of human rights article 26 united nations <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>. Theory of Edinburgh University Press, U.K. 81.
- Thursen, M. T. 2000. Algerian women in the liberation struggle and the civil war: from active participants to passive victims? *Social Research*. 69.3:890.
- Tigges, W. 1999. Moments of moment: aspects of the literary epiphany. Accessed 16 October 11 from <http://www.creativity-innovation.eu/epiphany-feeling/>
- Tong, R. 2013. *Feminist thought: a comprehensive introduction*. Routledge.
- Tørraasen, M. 2017. Gender parity in Senegal – a continuing struggle. <https://www.cmi.no/publications/6230-gender-parity-in-senegal-a-continuing-struggle>
- Tripp, A. M. 2015. *Women and power in post-conflict Africa*. Cambridge University Press.

- Tylerdevault1234, 2013. A journey of self discovery. Bloomington. [http://www.teenink.com/nonfiction/personal\\_experience/article/568981/A-Journey-of-Self-Discovery/](http://www.teenink.com/nonfiction/personal_experience/article/568981/A-Journey-of-Self-Discovery/)
- Udousoro, I. 2013. Aminata Sow Fall's Works: A Compendium of Development-Oriented Issues. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. University of Rome. Published by MCSER-CEMAS-Sapienza. 4 : 6
- UK Border Agency, 2011. Algeria country of origin information (coi) report [https://www.ecoi.net/file\\_upload/90\\_1320762880\\_algeriacoir-ukbawebste-11-11-3.pdf](https://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/90_1320762880_algeriacoir-ukbawebste-11-11-3.pdf) 13
- Umeh, M. 2005. Property rights in West Africa: unveiling the visions of women, gender and land compendiumofcountrystudies,rome.unfac) <http://www.carcafriculture.org/docs>.
- UNICEF, 2016. Child protection from violence, exploitation and abuse. [https://www.unicef.org/protection/57929\\_58008.htm](https://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_58008.htm)
- United Population Fund, 2010. UNFPA and adolescents. United States of America. Warwick, New York <https://www.jw.org/en>. <<http://www.unfpa.org/adolescent/>
- United Population Fund, 1997. Female genital mutilation: a joint WHO/UNICEF/ statement. Geneva, World Health Organization. <http://www.worldcat.org/title/female-genital-mutilation-a-joint-whounicefunfpa-statement/oclc/37029347>
- UN WOMEN 2012. Definition of forced marriage [http://www.stopvaw.org/definition\\_of\\_forced\\_marriage\\_3](http://www.stopvaw.org/definition_of_forced_marriage_3).
- USAID Gender Assessment/Senegal. 2010. [https://www.kstate.edu/smil/docs/gender/Senegal\\_Gender\\_Assessment\\_Jun-2010.pdf](https://www.kstate.edu/smil/docs/gender/Senegal_Gender_Assessment_Jun-2010.pdf)
- Vanguard. 2017. More Algerian women work, but husbands control wages <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/03/algerian-women-work-husbands-control-wages/>
- Vignoles, V. L., Schwartz, S. J., and Luyckx, K. 2011. *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Volet, J.M. 1997. Tradition and modernity are here to stay: an analysis of francophone African women's writings. *Research in African literature*. Indiana University Press 30.2:182-183.
- Walby, S. 1990. *Theorizing patriarchy*. Oxford , UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Walker, A. 1983. *In search of our mother's garden: womanist prose*. San Diego: Harcourt Publisher.

- Wallin, S.2011. No society is sustainable without gender equality. Nordic cooperation.<http://www.norden.org/en/news-and-events/news/no-society-is-sustainable-without-gender-equality>
- Walter, J. 2004. *Rhetorical investigations: studies in ordinary language criticism*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press.
- Webb, B.1926. *My apprenticeship*. London: Green andco. <http://webbs.library.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/315>
- Weiner, J. 2010. *Fly away home: a novel*. New York: Atria Books, Simon & Schuster Inc.
- Welman, J. 2015. Bible verses about equality. Retrieved from: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/author/jwellman/>
- White, A. 2008. Fanon and the African women combatant. *The roots of African conflicts: the causes and cost*. Nhema, A and Zeleza, P. Pretoria: UNISA Press.
- Wollstonecraft, M. S. 1792. *A vindication of the rights of woman*. Shmoop Editorial Team. (2008). Accessed May 13, 2018, from <https://www.shmoop.com/a-vindication-of-the-rights-of-woman/>
- Woolf, V. 1981. *A room of one's own*. Harvester Wolf. New York: Peter Lang.
- World Bank Abidjian, 2013. Women of Cote d'Ivoire speak out. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/08/06/women-of-cote-d-ivoire-speak-out>.
- World Health Organization. 2002. *World report on violence and health*. Geneva.
- World Health Organization. 2010. World health organisation: female genital mutilation. Accessed August 4, 2010. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>. www.uncutvoices.com 2011 "Focusing on the fight against FGM"
- World Health Organization. 2014. Classification of female genital mutilation, Geneva. <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/overview/en/>
- Yaou, R. 2006. *Le glas de l'infortune*. Abidjian. Edition N.E.I-CEDA.