

https://dspace.org/

# Exploring the Anti-Bildungsroman in Kopano Matlwa's Coconut (2007) and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's I Do Not Come to You by Chance (2009)

**Shirinde, Karabelo**

**2024**

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/44770

Shirinde, Karabelo. (2024). Exploring the Anti-Bildungsroman in Kopano Matlwa's Coconut (2007) and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's I Do Not Come to You by Chance (2009) [Masters dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg]. WIReDSpace.

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/




**MA African Literature**

**Research Report**

**Name:** Karabelo Shirinde

**Student number**: 1353878

Exploring the Anti-Bildungsroman in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007) and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's I *Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009)

**Date**: March 2024

Exploring the Anti-Bildungsroman in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007) and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009)

By

Karabelo Shirinde

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in African Literature

Supervisor

Professor G.A Musila

2024

## DECLARATION

I declare this dissertation is my own unaided work, submitted for the degree Masters of Arts in African Literature to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. There has been no submission before for any other degree or examination at any other university.



---

Karabelo Shirinde

On the 22nd of March 2024

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I'd like to thank God, the spirit of perseverance was surely upon me with this one.

Thank you to my supervisor, Professor Musila, your patience and continuous encouragement has been my driving force throughout this process. Thank you so much for your immense support and contribution to this work.

To my family, thank you guys for everything. Mom, dad, Khothatso, Karabo. Your support has been my anchor. I am truly blessed to have you guys in my corner. I love you all.

To my amazing friends, Kat, Kagiso, Sol, Karabo, Angel and Nkatii - every phone call, every text message, every prayer, every word of encouragement and every moment of laughter helped me get this done. Sending my love to all of you.

## DEDICATION

Let’s continue reaching for the stars, Mama. This one's for you.

## ABSTRACT

This study uses the term anti-bildungsroman to reference African post-colonial counter-discursive novels that reconfigure the conventions of the classical bildungsroman. The anti-bildungsroman allows post-colonial writers to 'talk back' to empire by claiming narrative forms and structures that have historically centred the bourgeois white male protagonist. This research study explores how the anti-bildungsroman centres post-colonial protagonists' coming of age in environments deeply affected by colonialism. The study examined the extent to which the coming-of-age novels *Coconut* (2007) by Kopano Matlwa and *I Do Not Come to You By Chance* (2009) by Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani reconfigure the traditional bildungsroman format to constitute an African counter discourse.

The study examines themes tied to the protagonists' social condition that influence their environment and shaped their daily experiences; the narrative structure and characterology which determined how the structural plots and goals of socialisation are reconfigured; and the historical, socio-political and cultural contexts in which the respective narratives are set, which take into consideration the history of colonialism, contemporary impacts of neoliberalism, and the struggles of nation-building within post-independent states.

The study concludes that *Coconut* (2007) and *I Do Not Come to You By Chance* (2009) are forms of anti-bildungsroman which express the challenges associated with coming of age in countries stained by the ramifications of colonialism. Matlwa and Nwaubani reject the ideological premises of the classical bildungsroman genre which is tied to European bourgeois subjectivity. Instead, they reconfigure the classical coming of age story in the context of the aftermath of empire.

## Table of contents


Chapter One: Introduction 8
1.1 Background 8
1.2 The classical bildungsroman 12
1.3 The anti-bildungsroman 13
1.4 Theoretical Framework 15
1.4.1 Knowledge and power 16
1.4.2 Counter-discourse: Talking back 17
1.5 Methodology 18
1.5.1 Theme 19
1.5.2 Narrative structure 19
1.5.3 Historical, socio-political, cultural and economic background 19
1.5.4 Setting 20
1.5.5 Characterology 20
1.6 Chapter outline 20
Chapter two: The bildungsroman and the goal of socialisation 22
2.1 Introduction 22
2.2 A 'born free' coconut 24
2.3 Ofilwe: Stuck between two worlds, shunned by both 27
2.4 Fikile: Black skin, white mask 31
2.5 Being the Opara 37
2.6 Kingsley: 'I am the Opara' 37
2.7 Conclusion 43
Chapter three: The bildungsroman and the nation 45
3.1 Introduction 45
3.2 Post-colonial bildungsroman: South African nation 46
3.3 The fractured Rainbow Nation in Coconut (2007) 47
3.4 Post-colonial bildungsroman: Nigeria 51
3.5 The fractured Nigerian nation in I Do not Come to You by Chance (2009) 52
3.6 Conclusion 54
Chapter Four: The bildungsroman, neoliberalism & Africa 56
4.1 Introduction 56
4.2 The Black Diamonds & BEE in Coconut 59
4.2 1 John Tlou 60
4.2.2 Uncle - Silas Nyoni 64
4.3 Quick wealth & the 419 scam in I Do Not Come to You by Chance (2009) 65
4.3.1 Mugu 67
4.4 Conclusion 70
5. Conclusion 71
6. References 74

# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Background

> Whether in the form of imaginative literature or in directly ideological terms, writing has served us as a means of appropriating the European languages [and forms] in an endeavour to transcend the vicissitudes of a problematic experience, in an effort towards an expressive grasp of the world in which that experience unfolds. (Irele 45)

In the above quote, Abiola Irele discusses the pertinence of African imaginative writing as a form of post-colonial counter discourse. Irele considers this African counter discourse as the "imaginative" and "intellectual" efforts of post-colonial writers to not only dismantle the negative representations of the 'native' in imperialist ideology but also articulate an alternative cultural history (Irele 48). Irele clearly notes that the primary dimension of this work is to "incorporate all the significant aspects of cultural nationalism that the discourse promotes [and] to give it an immediate link with black consciousness movements in the New World " (Irele 48).

Taking into consideration Irele's perspectives on African counter-discourse, this study is interested in the adoption, appropriation or reimagination of the classical bildungsroman genre by African writers and the extent to which such engagements result in what can be termed a post-colonial anti-bildungsroman. Such appropriation can essentially be read as 'writing back to the empire' - a mechanism that Irele describes as the refusal by post-colonial writers to privilege the language, literature and thought systems of the coloniser (Irele 50). Therefore by appropriating and simultaneously writing against the Western standard of the traditional bildungsroman, these literatures would essentially, as Helen Tiffin (1987) would say, operate in a dynamic post-colonial counter discourse that does not only seek to subvert the dominant discourse with a view that would take its place, but "instead evolve the textual strategies which continually consume their own biases, at the same time as they expose and erode those of the dominant discourse" (Tiffin 18).

The term bildungsroman can be described as the novel of "formation", "cultivation" or "development" (Austen 214). In the English-speaking world, the bildungsroman is broadly defined as "the novel of youth, the novel of education, of apprenticeship, of adolescence of initiation or the life-novel" (Labovitz 2). As a genre, the bildungsroman focuses on the development of character from early adolescence to young adulthood. In this period, the main character is questioning elements concerned with identity, career, marriage, and the overall formation of the character. Finally, throughout the novel, the main character is required to

have overcome certain steps within the bildungsroman structure in order to have been fully formed. These steps are: emotional loss for youth; youth leaves home on 'journey'; youth encounters many conflicts (protagonist vs society and protagonist vs themselves); youth learns and matures; young adult accepts values of society and society accepts her/him; adult returns home with new knowledge to benefit society (Tate).

Taking into consideration these core elements of the conventional bildungsroman, this study is further interested in the adaptability of this form in relation to imaginative post-colonial literatures and the extent to which it could be considered a counter discourse or what Barbra Harlow (1987) describes as resistance literature, thus becoming an anti-bildungsroman. Historically, the bildungsroman format is traditionally masculinist and classist. According to Jonathan Maniscalco (2021), the major goal of the classical literary bildungsroman was to socialise the young bourgeois protagonist who was developing in an industrialised colonial empire from youth to adult. The protagonists would be required to function as administrators of their society. By the end of the protagonist's full formation — the acceptance of society and society accepting the adult — marriage and children would complete the protagonist's socialisation, laying the foundation for the cross-generational continuation of the status quo (Maniscalco 1). White masculinity, classism, capitalism and the nuclear family were therefore the ruling tropes of the classical bildungsroman format in Western literature. The post-colonial interpretation of the bildungsroman reconfigures these tropes to showcase a coming-of-age narrative with post-colonial realities at its centre.

The anti-bildungsroman in post-colonial coming-of-age narratives attempt to re-visit and undo the presumed normalcy of masculinist, bourgeois, imperialist values, and subvert that status quo. The anti-bildungsroman further takes into account gendered and racial diversity as well as socio-economic structures; and places these post-colonial protagonists at the centre of these structures in order to showcase the inaccessibility of the traditional institutions that they were expected to navigate through to be able to successfully formulate their adult selves and integrate into society.

This study examines Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007) and Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You By Chance* (2009) as two African coming-of-age novels with keen interest in how the two authors appropriate a traditionally Western literary format to articulate a counter-discourse on the limits of this inherited coming-of-age narrative frame.

A related concern in the study was the implication of drawing on imperial narrative conventions to stage a counter-discourse. In order to disrupt the classical bildungsroman format which prioritises the white male-centred European coming-of-age narrative, literary works would require a narrative format that would be inclusive in engaging with post-colonial structures and experiences that portray manifestations of post-colonial, African coming of age contextual realities.

The coming-of-age literary genre is pertinent because it allows for the exploration of themes such as self-discovery, identity and personal growth, in conjunction with an individual being fully accepted and productively integrating into society. *Coconut* (2007) and *I do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009) are two African novels that adopt the coming-of-age structure, with the main characters of each novel having to undergo a journey of self-discovery and personal growth in their respective socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. This study examines these two texts alongside each other due to their distinct engagement with the coming of age format in two postcolonial contexts. South Africa and Nigeria have a shared legacy of colonialism and its accompanying harms, even as the specificities of colonial histories, political structures, economic structures and demographics manifest differently, as seen in the respective protagonists' coming of age journeys. There is a clear gap between the traditional Western bildung and the process of self-discovery as it pertains to a character coming of age in a formerly colonised society and this study is interested in how Matlwa and Nwaubani contribute to configuring the post-millennial African coming of age novel.

*Coconut* is a 2007 novel by Kopano Matlwa which explores two variations of black experiences in post-apartheid South Africa through two protagonists, Ofilwe (Fifi) and Fikile (Fiks). The first half of the novel follows Ofilwe, whose parents are part of the newly wealthy black elite in the 'new South Africa'. Her family's lifestyle is centred on the modernity associated with what is conventionally coded as white culture. Simultaneously, Ofilwe's larger extended family continues to retain their traditional African language and culture. Ofilwe attends a suburban Model-C[1] school with wealthy white children, speaks English and enjoys the luxuries her social class affords. Throughout her narrative, Ofilwe's greatest challenge is reconciling her black and 'white' (Western) cultural identities. The second half of the novel focuses on Fiks, a young woman from a poor township background who works as a waitress in an up-market restaurant frequented by Ofilwe's family. Inspired by European and American beauty magazines, Fiks has a strong desire to become white, as she associates it with a

[1] 'Model-C' has come to be used to designate former white schools which admitted students of varying races during the transition into post-apartheid (Christie & Mckinney 9).

dignified life and success. She has her infinity dream to cosmetically transform into a white version of herself. At work she cultivates contact with high profile customers while rejecting anyone who is too black or poor. The novel essentially grapples with the challenges faced by young 'born-frees' (people born post-apartheid) and the various ways in which they attempt to negotiate a space for themselves in the post-apartheid era and its socio-cultural and political transformations (Gerrish 5).

*I Do Not Come to You by Chance* is a 2009 novel by Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani. The story follows protagonist Kingsley who is a young graduate with a degree in chemical engineering. As the first-born son (Opara), Kingsley is seen as the source of hope in his newly impoverished family, whose fortunes, like the Nigerian nation's, once looked promising, thanks to his parents — professionals with postgraduate qualifications — and their firm belief in hard work and education. But as Nigerian society dives into institutional decay and corruption, the family's savings and business both melt away. Despite his education, Kingsley cannot secure a job as connections and corruption overshadow merit. When his father dies unexpectedly, Kingsley is left with the responsibility of providing for his family and must choose whether to persist in an honest struggle or accept his uncle's invitation into the life of 419 - internet scamming. The latter offers a better opportunity to initially provide for his family's basic needs, and later access the lush consumer lifestyle that he has always dreamed of. The narrative is set in Nigeria, a country defined by class inequality and corruption which has left all citizens to fend for themselves in an environment where greed and corruption undermine qualification or capability (Dalley 20)

Scholarship on these two novels provide various viewpoints in relation to the overarching themes of each novel. With regards to *Coconut* (2007), Lynda Spencer (2009), Aretha Phiri (2013), Moopi and Makombe (2022) discuss the politics of representation in the novel, particularly as it pertains to the struggle to construct one's identity in post-apartheid South Africa. By cautiously dissecting and interrogating Fikile and Ofilwe's relationship with their blackness against a dominating white culture, these authors conclude that the complexities and contradictions of their identities are influenced by the racial hegemonies that affect their social, economic and political conditions. With regards to *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009), Cartwright (2023), Ribic (2019) and Cesare (2013) conclude that the rise in 419 scams is evident due to the social and economic climate of contemporary Nigeria and the rise of internet access in third world nations. Musila (2022) further asserts that Nwaubani made use of the 'trickster' figure to critique modernity and capitalism as it relates to the rise in anti-blackness across the diaspora. This study engaged with these scholarships in relation to particular thematic links such as identity politics, globalisation, historical imperialism and

existing hegemonies to discuss the extent to which these factors contributed to the reconfiguration of these coming-of-age narratives as counter-discourse literatures.

### 1.2 The classical bildungsroman

The classical bildungsroman is associated with the development of a character from early adolescence to young adulthood. During this period, the character works out questions of identity, career, marriage and their full formation and integration into society (Lebovits 3). The key terms related to the bildung are “formation”, “cultivation”, “education” and “development” as a means of full socialisation.

The term “bildungsroman” was coined by Karl Morgenstern in 1819 and was popularised in 1906 by Thomas Dilthey. For the 18th-century German classicists, the main aim of the bildung was the “well-roundedness” of a character expressed through the novel. The traditional journey of the character in the bildungsroman followed how a young man enters life in a happy state of naivete, finding friends and falling in love. He comes into conflict with the hard realities of the world, grows in maturity through diverse life experiences and finally attains certainty about his purpose in the world (Carkeet 9). This bildung journey thus results in a well-rounded, educated youth who has developed and now contributes to an enlightened and functioning society with other young adult men who are just like him. The bildung therefore belonged to the male hero and defined a culture that was associated with introspection, individualistic conscience and consideration for the careful tending, shaping and deepening of one’s own personality (Labovitz 3).

The characteristics of the bildungsroman narrative structure aligned with the personal, intellectual and spiritual development of the character, thus resulting in internal personal growth and external social integration. Labovitz (1989) summarises these characteristics as follows: at the beginning of a bildungsroman narrative structure, the *emotional loss for youth* of a child is portrayed through schooling as formal education which may come across as a frustrating element in the child’s life. In this time, new options for learning present themselves resulting in the *youth leaving home on a journey*, allowing the youth to reach out into the world around him. Typically, the family of the youth might appear hostile to his ambitions and especially to new ideas. As soon as he leaves home, the real education begins in a new setting. Here the protagonist e*ncounters many internal and external conflicts*, especially with educators within the pedagogic community in this new outside world. After painful soul searching and overcoming an array of obstacles, the protagonist makes a sort of accommodation to this new world and adapts to it. At this point he has left adolescence and

has fully *entered maturity*. The now mature young adult has *accepted the values of society* and, simultaneously, *society has accepted him* resulting in the protagonist *returning home with new knowledge that will benefit and contribute to society* (Labovitz 3)

The trajectory of the bildungsroman focuses on the development of a protagonist in a society that accepts him in the end. Suspicion arises when the development of a protagonist is dependent on a society that is inherently exclusionary, or a nation that is regarded as 'undeveloped'. The traditional bildungsroman thus presents itself as a symbolic expression of the individual subject who is in a state of becoming in relation to the philosophical ideas of Western modernity; but does not consider a society that has been subjected and repressed by imperialist structures. If the traditional bildungsroman focuses on the development of a Western individual who will naturally acclimatise to a Western society, then to what extent does the bildungsroman genre represent the development of a non-western individual in a society that is regarded as 'third world'?

The bildungsroman genre presents the belief that the current [Western] society is *normal* and needs to be maintained as the status quo through the socialisation of the protagonists. Through these ideal protagonists, the classical structure provides no room for its subversion. Furthermore, the classical bildungsroman does not take into account the diversity within a culture; rather, it focuses on maintaining uniformity and creating the need for the ordinary protagonist to maintain the culture's alleged uniformity (Maniscalco 20). The presented, uniformed society is driven and characterised by the notions of capitalism and bureaucracy which keep the society conservative, with a never-ending line of new bureaucratic jobs that the bildungsroman protagonist aims to attain and occupy, resulting in the completion of their socialisation into a polite society. These jobs that they aim for are well-respected and better paid compared to the occupations of less educated and non-administrative members of society and the former colonised (Maniscalco 16).

### 1.3 The anti-bildungsroman

Due to the societal exclusion that the traditional bildungsroman genre executes, Illmonen (2017) states that the problem of individuality within the frame of society lies at the very core of the bildung, making it prone to changing in the post-colonial reality (Illmonen 60). The post-colonial writer would be required to claim the bildungsroman as a political tool that would result in a literary expression for the constitution of their characters' distinctiveness that actively challenge dominant oppressive characterizations, with the goal of greater self-determination (Illmonen 61). The post-colonial adoption of the bildungsroman genre

would then be constituted as “talking back” to the bildungsroman and using it to address post-colonial themes. The trajectory of the post-colonial bildungsroman would thus focus on the development of the form in the service of portraying a protagonist that is not oblivious to the pressures of colonial, sexist and racist realities where the end is defined by a drifting towards fragmentations of identity or a neurotic self-image rather than wholeness. This then becomes what Illmonen (2017) describes as the narration of the “anti-bildungsroman” (Illmonen 62).

The characteristics of the anti-bildungsroman provide the opportunity for the expression of emancipatory movements and offer affirmative narrative formulas suitable for political struggles. It allows for the portrayal of personal development while simultaneously reflecting on how colonialism affected entire colonised communities. Further characterisations of the anti-bildungsroman may include the themes of repressive categorizations and various boundaries related to constraining identities. There can be further exploration of alienation, despair and even the madness of an individual coming from a formerly colonised society and “dislocated” culture. The anti-bildungsroman may additionally explore class and race in relation to post-colonial identity shifts (Illmonen 62). In contrast with the traditional bildungsroman, the anti-bildungsroman instead explores the idea of overcoming oppressive socialised obstacles in order for self-determination to be possible.

Protagonists from formerly colonised nations would essentially attempt to mimic the classical narrative trajectory and adopt the tropes of the western bildungsroman through the socialisation into a sovereign modernised nation that would eventually emancipate them from poverty and all social barriers that surround and inform their identity. This caused a lack of socialisation because former colonised nations who now found themselves in the era of decolonization did not fully meet the criteria for the same nationhood as their colonisers since a huge part of their history was their colonisation (Maniscalco 64)

For nations who were undergoing decolonization, an attempt to adopt the classical bildungsroman was faced with a lack of identity that came from being deprived of independence for generations, which affected the nations’ youth. The post-colonial reimagination of the bildungsroman allows for the exploration of the 20th-century efforts to decolonize. It further exposes the exploitative system embedded in the classical genre that persists as illustrated by the inaccessibility of successful coming of age and integration into society, for the postcolonial protagonist. Therefore, key tropes of the anti-bildungsroman include the social, political and economic limitations of imperialism for the post-colonial protagonist. Not only is the protagonist often impoverished or subjected to the violence which

inherently maintains imperial power, but also these protagonists can only progress socially, or economically at the behest of the colonisers (Maniscalco 66).

The anti-bildungsroman portrays the ambivalence between colonisation and decolonization; being a decolonial subject in a colonial and / or neo-colonial society. The genre describes the internal colonised experience of fragmented identities. Illmonen (2017) describes how the anti-bildungsroman is a medium for expressing the problematic issues related to colonised identity while simultaneously engaging in self-expression that is regulated by and connected to modern individualism (Illmonen 72). As a post-colonial author, it is important to take into consideration how colonisation stripped the status of humanity from the colonised. The anti-bildungsroman understands that directly mimicking the classical bildungsroman is an impossible task because it only offers emancipation on terms that are designated by the colonisers; terms which limit the post-colonial subject. Since the classical bildungsroman provides a sense of security for its protagonist in which they fully integrate into social spheres that accept them, the anti-bildungsroman may bring to focus the ending of the protagonist's journey in terms of what they did or did not achieve and what post-colonial socio-political or economic aspects influenced the denouement of their journeys. Finally, the anti-bildungsroman allows for the occupation of various spaces in order to signal different realities that have been codified by imperialism (Maniscalco 74). Through acknowledging the power dynamics and imperialist knowledge system embedded within the classical bildungsroman, the process of subversion and talking back, allows for the competing, ambivalent ideological factions that occupy the post-colonial world, which the anti-bildungsroman will bring to the foreground of the narrative.

### 1.4 Theoretical Framework

> The formal end of colonialism in Africa, Asia, South America and the Caribbean is one of the most significant events of contemporary history. This historical development and the literatures and theoretical perspectives devoted to exploring it have in crucial ways catalysed the current curricular reconsiderations and fundamental revisionings of the contents, objects and forms of ruling epistemologies in academia. This is of course, not to forget the other fact that this historical development continues to be circumscribed by institutional conditions and practices of knowledge and the reproduction of the social whose controls and switchboards are effectively speaking (Olaniyan 743)

Tejumola Olaniyan's (1993) sentiment above is preoccupied with the promise of postcolonial discourse and its counter-discursive strategies. Taking its cue from Olaniyan, this study poses similar questions with regards to counter-discourse as it relates to African literary studies. The study mobilises conceptual debates on counter-discourses in reading the two

authors' engagement with the bildungsroman form in their portrayals of African coming of age narratives. It further draws on Foucauldian debates on power and knowledge as foundational to the creation of particular epistemic systems.

According to the Foucauldian theory, counter-discourse can be described as a theoretical and practical space in which "the formerly voiceless might be able to articulate their desires - to counter the domination of prevailing authoritative discourses" (Moussa & Scapp 88). Counter-discourse allows for those who are usually spoken for and about by others and those who are usually in an 'inferior' socio-political position to begin speaking for themselves. Foucauldian theory further asserts that counter-discourse is not merely a theory but rather a practical engagement in political struggles, allowing the formerly voiceless to begin to speak a language of their own making - a counter discourse resulting in the resistance of power that has historically oppressed them through the production of dominating knowledge systems (Moussa & Scapp 89).

### 1.4.1 Knowledge and power

Due to the impact of colonialism and imperialism in the contemporary world, the daily realities of former colonised nations and people were generated by European discourses and epistemes. This resulted in the hybridization of post-colonial nations in which a dialectical relationship between European ontology and epistemology and the impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity was formed (Tiffin 17). The search for a local identity in the midst of imperial hegemonic social structures resulted in the process of decolonisation which aimed to "invoke an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them; between European or British discourses and their post-colonial dis/mantling" (Tiffin 17). The process of decolonisation particularly in literary discourses included tracing forms of colonial power embedded in colonial knowledge and interrogating these European discourses and discursive strategies from their privileged position. Furthermore, the interrogation also included investigating the means by which Europe imposed this knowledge and maintained its codes in colonial domination (Tiffin, 18).

From a Foucauldian standpoint as it pertains to the relationship between discourse / knowledge and power, the important question is what constitutes 'true' knowledge and who in society benefits from this discourse? Literature assists society to understand diverse cultural phenomena as it pertains to the notion of power (Miller 120). Schneck (1987) argues that all contemporary discourse reflects the realities of dominance and the repression existing in the current relations of power (Schneck 20). It is clear that the patterns of contemporary discourse and its constitution of knowledge reflect the common interest or desires of

hegemonic powers for domination and control through systematic objectification of experience. The desire for epistemic domination has resulted in biased knowledge generated by domineering social agents who have intermixed the constitution of knowledge within discourse. Thus, within modernity, there is a prevalent epistemological anomaly where the relations of power constrain the acts and processes of knowing (Schneck 20). This results in the generation of knowledge that distinctively defines hegemonic structures in which dominant modes of power and the knowledge that they produce is regarded as truth, which causes inferior-superior epistemes particularly in forms of literary production.

Taking into consideration the generation of knowledge in relation to power and the formation of hegemonic structures through this knowledge invites the question, "who does discourse serve?" and "who enables the truth through various epistemes in these hegemonic structures?" Schneck (1987) notes that from a Foucauldian point of view, each society has its own regime of truth and its own general politics of truth (Schneck 22). Thus, for power to function through discourse in a particular society, it requires those on the receiving end of power and those on the authoritative exercising of power. The former would be regarded as 'subjects' - those who are subject to something else and who experience their subjugation (Schneck 29). In order to dismantle this existing socio-political power that alienates and inferiorizes the subject notably known as 'The Other', one would need to recognize that all discourse is political. Thus, in its subversion, a counter-discourse would also be political in its dismantling. Just as only those who hold political power in various hegemonic social structures can meaningfully alienate and discriminate against forcefully stigmatised groups through an epistemic 'truth', so only those who have been oppressed through knowledge systems and discourse can form a counter-discourse in order to subvert or entirely dismantle those epistemic 'truths' (Moussa & Scapp 93).

### 1.4.2 Counter-discourse: Talking back

In "Talking Back" (1989), bell hooks seamlessly describes the process of talking back, which can be read as an example of counter-discourse especially in literary forms:

> For us [the oppressed / colonised], true speaking is not solely an expression of creative power, it is an act of resistance, a political gesture that challenges the politics of domination that would render us nameless and voiceless. As such, it is a courageous act; as such it represents a threat. To those who wield oppressive power, that which is threatening must necessarily be wiped out, annihilated, silenced. (126)

The act of talking back to forms of domination has become a practical and clear form of expression that is aimed at moving subordinated groups from object to subject which will in turn result in liberation (hooks 128). The concept of "writing back to the empire" is synonymous with bell hooks' "Talking Back" (1989). Edward Said contends that literature provides an opportunity to "write back" by undercutting the authoritative, compelling image of the empire which has overtaken many procedures of intellectual mastery that are central in modern culture (cited in Burney 106). Therefore, Said contends that oppositional practices or "secular impurities" such as mixed genres, various and unexpected combinations of tradition and novelty are relevant tools that can be developed and deployed by post-colonial writers and critics for "re-doing the narratives of empire" (cited in Burney 106). The act of writing back will result in a counter-hegemonic utterance that works against that "common sense" understanding of the world which is flawed because it is produced by hegemonic structures. Instead, it will be concerned with the meaning and understanding which has been historically excluded from human history and thought (Burney 107).

It is clear that in order to engage in practical counter-discourse within literature, there needs to be an acceptance that Western culture has infiltrated and continues to dominate various cultures and literary modes that define the daily realities of 'third world' people. This should then be followed by identifying and analysing these modes of cultural hegemony together with the institutions and practices that are used in the subjugation process (JanMohamed 281). The reclamation process should also follow suit, a process in which there is a sustained theoretical critique of dominant cultural structures and the recovery of marginalised work which then results in the showcasing and engagement of the full significance of the specific modes of resistance and the celebration of these various works (JanMohammed & Lloyd 8). It is therefore through the above conceptualisations of counter-discourse that this study explores how Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007) and Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009) engage with the core elements of the conventional bildungsroman and its shortfalls in making sense of post-colonial contexts of coming of age for their respective protagonists.

### 1.5 Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, close textual reading of the novels *Coconut* (2007) by Kopano Matlwa and *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009) by Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani. It analyses literary components to determine the extent to which these novels reconfigure the conventional elements of the bildungsroman. These literary components are: The theme of the novel; the narrative structure; the historical, socio-political, cultural and economic background of the novel; the setting of the novel; and the characterology of the novel.

### 1.5.1 Theme

The theme can be described as the central or overarching idea of the novel. The theme expresses a narrative's irreducible meaning. Through the theme, the author's ideas and aesthetic choices take shape. The theme assists readers to understand the central meaning of the novel (McKee 115). Through analysing the themes of each novel, this research determines what the authors were trying to convey through the protagonists and their coming-of-age journeys.

### 1.5.2 Narrative structure

The narrative structure of a novel can be described as a set of conventions that make up the trajectory of the story. The basis of the narrative includes a protagonist who initiates the action and an antagonist who resists it. A classical narrative structure emphasises dramatic unity, plausible motivations and coherence of its constituent parts. This research specifically looks into the classical bildungsroman narrative structure and its constituent parts that follows the trajectory of the coming of age story, namely: 1) emotional loss for youth, 2) youth leaves home on a journey 3) youth encounters many internal and external conflicts, 4) youth learns how to mature, 5) young adult accepts values of society and society accepts him and 6) adult returns home with new knowledge to benefit society. This research examines the extent to which Matlwa and Nwaubani's novels subvert, challenge or adopt the bildungsroman classical narrative structure in order to reimagine it and create an anti-bildungsroman narrative structure that portrays the post-colonial coming of age narrative.

### 1.5.3 Historical, socio-political, cultural and economic background

The historical, socio-political, cultural and economic backgrounds are all literary contexts that inform the world of the story and how it functions. The social background of a novel refers to the features of society and how these impact the meaning of the narrative. What kind of society do the characters live in and what kind of society was the novel produced in? Society speaks to and reflects on a group of people living together in a specific geographic setting and who interact with one another. The social context of the novel may speak to the social orders such as gender, class and race relations and education (Twomey).

The social culture of the society encompasses the traditions, institutions, art, myths and beliefs that are characteristic to the community or society. The cultural context may also include religion, marriage, food and clothing which may assist readers in fully understanding the narrative. The cultural contexts emphasise the specific values that are shared amongst specific characters, groups or other individuals written in the specific time frame that is set in

the novel. Therefore, cultural context can be summarised as the 'way of life' that the society functions in (Twomey).

The historical background refers to the history of the setting in the novel which influences the present of that society. It may also provide the current time period of the novel and its current events which informs the themes and mood of the era. The historical contexts also influence the setting and the tone of the writing and assist in understanding the society of the time. The historical background interweaves with the social and economic background as it further influences the class, gender and race relations which have become the historically specific norms and conventions that the society functions in (Twomey).

### 1.5.4 Setting

The setting can be described as the time and place or when and where the story takes place. The setting describes the environment of the story which is made up of the physical location, climate, weather or social and cultural surroundings. The setting of the story can change throughout the plot. The environment includes the geographical location which is influenced by the historical, political, social and cultural aspects (Hayward 326)

### 1.5.5 Characterology

Characterology looks at the way in which the character develops in conjunction with the development of the structural plot. Also referred to as the character arch, this describes the gradual change in the character: the phases and turning points of growth. As the structure of the narrative develops, there needs to be a gradual change in the character whether positive or negative in relation to the journey they are facing throughout the story. A character's development is influenced by the obstacles they face, socio-political and economic circumstances and the positive and negative decisions that they make throughout the story in order to reach their goal (Vogler 205)

## 1.6 Chapter outline

This research is divided into four chapters. The current introductory chapter has presented the background, aim, rationale, theoretical framework and the literature review of this research. Chapter two examines the protagonists in the two novels and the extent to which their narrative trajectories mirror or reconfigure the conventional nodes of the bildungsroman. Chapter three examines Matlwa and Nwaubani's portrayal of the respective post-independent nations and their divergence from the conventional nation imagined by the classical

bildungsroman. Lastly, chapter four focuses on Matlwa and Nwaubani's respective commentaries on the logics of capital in postcolonial Nigeria and Africa through the BEE nouveau riche and the 419 scam artists respectively, and the ways in which both novels reflect on the failures of neoliberal capital in post-independent Africa and the impossibility of the 'normalcy' promised by the classical bildungsroman.

## Chapter two: The bildungsroman and the goal of socialisation

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the conventional nodes of the bildungsroman in *Coconut* (2007) and *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009). By examining the plot points linked to the bildungsroman, this chapter explores the extent to which the two novels adapt or reconfigure these conventions to speak to the post-colonial protagonist's journey. The structural plot points examined include: emotional loss for youth; protagonist leaves home and embarks on a journey; protagonist experiences internal and external conflicts; protagonist learns and matures; protagonist accepts and values society and society accepts her/him and lastly; protagonist returns with new knowledge that will benefit society.

The two main tropes that characterise the bildungsroman are the ideals of self-determination in tandem with self-development and the strenuous demand of socialisation which is expected from the protagonist by the end of their narrative journey (Hoagland 220). In contrast with the traditional European bildungsroman, the anti-bildungsroman is placed within a culture that has been disrupted by colonial and neo-colonial structures, complicating socialisation. These disruptions include the decolonisation process, the brutality of civil war, disenfranchisement, fractured family politics and socio-political issues that have followed the aftermath of colonialism and present-day neo-liberalism (Hoagland 220).

Apart from the psychological and emotional development of the protagonist, the key aim of the bildungsroman narrative structure is for the protagonist to have developed well enough to be integrated into and contribute to their society. As Sarah Graham (2019) emphasises, the bildungsroman "concentrates on a protagonist striving to reconcile individual aspirations with the demands of social conformity" (1). Furthermore, with social integration situated at the core of the bildungsroman, the structure of the bildungsroman, which traces the internal and external journey of the characters, is mainly concerned with "what it means to be an individual and to participate in the life of a nation" (Graham 4). The final step of the narrative journey of the bildungsroman is to *return home with new knowledge and benefit society,* thus the goal of the protagonist and their social integration are taken to be at equilibrium within the structure of the bildungsroman. Tracing the central goal of the protagonist in the narrative would essentially include tracing their socialisation process which would assist in determining whether their goal and social integration was successful or not.

Peter M Blau (1960) discusses three major factors that make up the theory of social integration, namely: Social attraction, reactions to be impressed and demonstrating approachability (545). These three factors can fundamentally explain the socialisation process that protagonists would essentially navigate as they face their narrative bildung journeys. For one to be integrated into a social group [society], an individual would essentially be under pressure to impress other members that would make suitable and attractive associates but also compete with others for popularity to become fully chosen and integrated (Blau 545). As such, the protagonist would make efforts to impress and compete in order to become fully socialised.

Social attraction becomes the primary step in becoming integrated into a social group. The protagonist of the bildung may recognise a social group that they aim to be integrated into which becomes their main goal within the narrative alongside other tangible goals. Blau (1960) describes the bonds of social attraction as when a "distinguished group is recognised by an individual (in this case the protagonist)" (Blau 546). The protagonist recognises that members of the group are united into a more or less cohesive social structure and aims to join them. The protagonist would only be considered to be integrated into the social group if the other members of the group find him attractive and freely accept the individual fully as one of them (Blau 546).

The social groups that the protagonist aims to integrate into within the European bildungsroman were groups that were situated in and established within economic and social institutions that were built throughout their nations' ascendancy (Maniscalco 1). Thus, the European bildungsroman promoted socialisation in which protagonists were attracted to social groups that were already powerful in society. This dynamic promoted a structural national ideal that the protagonist would be attracted to and socialised towards. Due to the unfragmented socio-economic and political structures within the story world of the European bildungsroman, the protagonist would not be expected to change society, but instead use their learned skills and knowledge to contribute to society and fulfil the duty of keeping it the same (Maniscalco 3). Effectively, the European bildungsroman is dependent on the stability of its socio-political and economic structure.

Hoagland defines the central characteristic of the post-colonial bildungsroman as "the ongoing remediation of colonialism's traumatic legacy throughout the self-maturation process" (Hoagland 219). Compared to the European bildungsroman structure, the postcolonial (anti-bildungsroman( structure depicts a broken, tremulous or even impossible maturation process due to the unstable societal structures that the protagonists find

themselves in (Hoagland 219). Furthermore, the postcolonial anti-bildungsroman understands the ramifications of colonialism on former colonised nations and provides an ethical critique of the society that the protagonist seeks to enter into (Hoagland 219 - 220).

Postcolonial writers adapt the bildungsroman in order for their protagonists to follow the trajectory of the classical European bildungsroman in which the characters have the initial belief that if they follow the footsteps of the bildungsroman structural plot point and mimic the goal of socialisation of a sovereign modernised nation, then it would result in their emancipation from poverty and other social barriers surrounding their identity (Maniscalco 64). Due to the aftermath of colonialism in newly independent former colonies, the protagonists would essentially struggle to mimic the method of European socialisation because “newly decolonised nations did not fully meet the criteria for the same nationhood as their colonisers” (Maniscalco 64). These new nations lacked the resources and social stability that would allow for their protagonist to socialise smoothly into the society. As such, the aim of the bildungsroman to integrate into society becomes more tremulous for the post-colonial protagonist due to the existing socio-economic disparities that they have to navigate through, in contrast with their European counterparts. Hoagland (2019) details the development of the post-colonial protagonist as “interrupted, erratic and fractured” (Hoagland 226) in which the protagonist does not have the luxury of gradual development due to their displacement and alienation (Hoagland 226). Therefore, in comparing the traditional European bildungsroman and the post-colonial bildungsroman, Hoagland (2019) shows that “where the stakes for the European bildungsroman protagonist are relatively low, by comparison, the stakes in the postcolonial bildungsroman are often quite high” (Hoagland 226).

### 2.2 A ‘born free’ coconut

The term ‘born free’ in South Africa has been defined by various scholars. Robert Mattes (2012) defines it as “South Africa’s present electorate who are now too young to have any direct memory of race classification, passes, official segregation or the armed resistance and popular struggle against apartheid…those who have come of age since the advent of democracy” (Mattes 134 - 135). On his part, Stefan Norgaard (2015) describes this generation as “those who have no living memory of apartheid…this means all South Africans born after 1990 regardless of race, income or ethnicity” (Norgaard 47). Other descriptions include “a generation born into a free and decolonised South Africa" (Oyedemi 215), “young people born in the early 1990s, a time which the laws and structures of apartheid were being dismantled” (Howard 2), “South Africa’s first democratic generation [who] never lived under

or experienced the brutal oppression of the apartheid regime" (Kotze & Prevost 143) and "the hinge generation of post-memory who were birthed after a generation that has experienced severe trauma" (Ngwenya 32).

According to the descriptions of the 'born frees', this South African generation has been associated with freedom, post-apartheid, post-trauma, post-memory and the democratic generation; but over the years, questions regarding the extent of their freedom have been raised. Oyedemi (2021) asserts that due to the lingering of coloniality in South Africa, the born free generation are "victims of existing coloniality and the difficult process of decolonisation" in which they still continue to struggle for socio-economic liberation (Oyedemi 215). The questioning of the meaning of "freedom" across the born free generation has been confronted head-on as the call for decolonisation has spread across South Africa (Oyedemi 214).

South Africa's born free generation has been expected to integrate racially, socially and economically as a result of not directly experiencing the atrocities of apartheid, but the reality is that 30 years after democracy, South Africa is still one of the most unequal societies with a high income inequality rate, unequal land ownership, high levels of unemployment, lack of service delivery, crime, corruption and poverty (Oyedemi 220). Due to these socio-economic disparities, many young, black born free South Africans have been expected to "carry the baton" and come of age through these issues while simultaneously protesting against their ruling government in a manner similar to prior generations (Malila 128). The born free South African can be described as living in a state of contradictory 'double consciousness' as a postcolonial subject in which:

> [On one hand] the consciousness of a celebratory postcolonial black political power contrasts with mass poverty and inequality and [on the other hand] there is a growing affluence in the black middle class and a dominance of political power, [while] the masses remain in poverty, high unemployment and victims of high social inequality rates (Oyedemi 219).

Due to the contradiction of living as a born free, the term is not widely accepted by the South African youth because their "freedom" has not manifested in material change but instead they have come of age in a society characterised by a "conflict between the promises of democracy and the reality of South African society" (Ngwenya 7). Masetsi (2018) describes the grey area of this difference accordingly: "The term born-free does not describe a

generation free from racial discrimination and chronic inequality. Rather it seems to be more of an aspirational term which separates the 'struggle generation' from those born once the struggle had purportedly ended" (Masetsi 62). All these factors form part of the process of socialisation for the born-free generation in post-apartheid South Africa. Racial identity in post-apartheid South Africa directly affects the process of socialisation amongst born-free South Africans, while the black, middle class, born-free South African has been synonymous with the colloquial racial classification known as *coconut.* The term 'coconut' has been defined by Letshufi (2016) as

> A derogatory term colloquially used to refer to individuals that appear to be Black but are alleged to display 'white behaviour'. This term is essentialistic in nature as it assumes that there is one type of expression of Blackness as it is typically reserved for Black people who show a preference or ability to only speak English. This term is generally not endearing or embraced (Letshufi 13)

Letshufi (2016) further describes how the term 'coconut' is used by black communities to label black individuals who fall short of certain ideals of blackness such as the capabilities and proficiency of speaking an African language (Letshufi 13). Erasmus (2010) asserts that terms like 'coconut' are a result of a disconnection between the appearance and social habits of black individuals. This means that these perceived black individuals do not model typical 'black behaviour' from a cultural, food, lifestyle, linguistic, accent perspective which results in them being shunned by their black community (Ngwenya 87). Literature on the term deems it "a metaphor of hybridised identities…[and] to live in two worlds and belong to neither" (Moopi & Makombe 3); "to be black [on the] outside and white inside…suggesting a divided consciousness" (Goodman 109) and "a contemporary South African vernacular [which] insinuates racial duplicity on the part of black people" (Phiri 166).

In *Coconut* (2007), Kopano Matlwa uses the term to refer to the two main characters — Fikile and Ofilwe — who firstly exert the notion of either being too black in white spaces, or too white in black spaces and secondly, navigate their racial identities as they come of age in post-apartheid South Africa. Through these two characters, Matlwa dissects the post-apartheid, born-free, coconut socialisation process and captures the essence of the young, black, middle-class experience in post-apartheid South Africa. *Coconut* (2007) grapples with the challenges that born-frees are faced with and the ways in which they

negotiate and make space for themselves with the major aim of integration and socialisation in a society that promotes multiculturalism and multiracialism (Spencer 67).

### 2.3 Ofilwe: Stuck between two worlds, shunned by both

> You will find, Ofilwe, that the people you strive so hard to be like will one day reject you because as much as you may pretend, you are not one of their own. Then you will turn back, but there too you will find no acceptance, for those you once rejected will no longer recognise the thing you have become. So far, too far to return. So much, too much you have changed. Stuck between two worlds, shunned by both. (Matlwa 93)

The first half of *Coconut* (2007) introduces the protagonist Ofilwe Tlou with the trajectory of her narrative journey spanning from grade one to grade twelve in school. Ofilwe's narrative is structurally fragmented, oscillating between her first-person, present-day narration and episodic memories. The structural fragments of Ofilwe's narrative and her detailed episodic memories point towards a coming-of-age that mainly dealt with interracial cultural differences that complicated Ofilwe's childhood as well as her family in post-apartheid South Africa. John Tlou — Ofilwe's father — and his business have benefitted from the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy which was aimed at advancing the participation of black people and black businesses within the 'new' South African economy. This newfound financial advancement allowed the Tlous to move from the township of Mabopane in Pretoria to the affluent suburb of Little White Country Estate in Sandton, Johannesburg.

The Tlous' new economic status afforded them a privileged lifestyle such as a Model-C education for Ofilwe and Tshepo, a suburban mansion in an enclosed estate, luxury vehicles and much more. The Tlous inhabit a socio-economic space in which they are a part of South Africa's black upper echelons integrated into a previously white social and economic class. As such, they regularly have to manoeuvre through cultural and social practices that privilege the global values of whiteness because the shift from apartheid to post-apartheid resulted in the country's cultural capital remaining in the hands of the white minority (Spencer 69).

In this new cultural dynamic, Ofilwe speaks English as her 'home language', and embodies the coconut definition in which she "live(s) in two worlds and yet belongs to neither" (Moopi & Makombe 3). As she comes of age, Ofilwe finds herself oscillating between the dominating white cultural values which she admires but struggles to adopt the black cultural values that dominate in her family, especially within a society that remains hostile to black people (Moopi & Makombe 4). The oscillation between these two cultures requires a social engineering that would essentially result in a hybridised and fragmented identity - that of a 'coconut'. The fragmentation of Ofliwe's narrative structure is characterised by her goal to "belong". Her

childhood memories point to her effort to fit into the dominating white social culture and understand the necessity of still honing into her Sepedi (black) culture, which is mostly enforced by her parents. Ofilwe's goal to "belong" and "fit in" is first introduced when she is invited to a party by her popular classmate Tim Browning, but her mother says that she cannot go because they have to attend a funeral in Atteridgeville:

> That's when I blew. How could they forget the biggest event of the year? Or do they just not care? They are trying to destroy my life. I'm sure of it!...It's high time Mama knows how I feel. Doesn't she understand that this party is my chance? Tim Browning doesn't just invite anybody to his parties. He wants me there for a reason. He told me once that I was different. Tim said that I was not like the other black girls in our class. He said I was calmer, cuter and that I looked a little like Scary Spice (Matlwa 7-8)

The socialisation processes of attraction and acceptance are evident in Ofilwe's desperation to be recognised by Tim Browning who has distinguished her from the "other black girls". Although the plot point of emotional loss for youth within the classical bildungsroman occurs due to frustration within formal and educational settings and systems, Ofilwe's emotional loss of youth occurs due to feeling misunderstood by her parents and their attempts to "destroy her life" (8). Her attraction to Tim Browning, a young white, popular male of the upper class, forms her goal to be recognised and fit into that group, and her mother's black cultural commitment to be there at the funeral to show support for the bereaved relatives undermines this goal.

The adoption and acceptance of English traditional values and systems such as the Anglican church where Ofilwe feels like she "belongs" (Matlwa 9-10) and that the traditions of the church are her "own" (9-10), stems from Ofilwe's inability to integrate into her local black Sepedi culture, which goes against her goal of belonging. Ofilwe expresses her disconnection with her Sepedi culture in which there is an expected socialisation that she struggles to embody. Ofilwe and her brother Tshepo were raised to adopt white values and systems but they are simultaneously expected to adopt and practise their Sepedi culture and traditions:

> At nuptial and burial ceremonies, at thanksgiving days *ge re phasa Badimo*, I stand in reverence, out of everybody's way, silently taking it all in, feeling most inadequate amongst a group of people who all seem to know exactly what roles they play in

> the age-old Pedi rituals. As the only female grandchild, I fear that day when my turn comes to run these sacred occasions. (Matlwa 8)

Ofilwe's anxieties about not knowing what to do when it comes to her cultural rituals stems from her inability to integrate due to the lack of knowledge of her Sepedi culture. Her fear of not knowing makes her detach from the rituals (8). Her lack of knowledge also prevents her from fully integrating into her black culture, hindering her goal to fully belong.

Compared to the classical bildungsroman in which Ofilwe would be expected to leave home on a journey, Ofilwe's emotional loss for youth is prolonged. Instead of physically leaving her home to go on a journey to reach her goal, she journeys back and forth between two clashing cultures as she comes of age, resulting in internal and external conflicts owing to her *difference* as a young, black girl growing up in a predominantly white world. She is made aware of this difference through various intentional and inadvertent microaggressions. These make her question her identity as she continuously attempts to socialise and fit in. When Ofilwe writes a love letter to one of the few other black students in her class, Junior. P Mokoena, he responds by stating that he "'only dates white girls'" (Matlwa 24).

Although Ofilwe tries her best to perform 'whiteness', she is still hindered by the reality that she will always fall short because of her black skin. She will continuously have to negotiate her way in and out of this world (Spencer 73). Ofilwe's internal and external conflict results from exclusion in both her black, Pedi world as well as the white suburban world. She feels excluded from the traditional ceremonies such as burials and weddings in the township because "the township practices do not form part of her frame of reference: she does not understand the nuances that underpin most of the customs" (Spencer 74). On one hand, Ofilwe's process of self-evaluation "makes her question her position in the township and her inability to relate to Pedi customs"; on the other hand, she realises that while she may understand the rituals of the suburbs, "it is a space that will almost always reject her" (Spencer 74).

Having to come to terms with her 'difference' in which she's subjected to rejection in both the black and white world, Ofilwe is then forced into the state of entering maturity, but compared to the classical bildungsroman where the subject accepts the values of the society and society accepts her, she questions her difference and remains in a state of liminality where she struggles to accept the values of society. In questioning the value of her difference as a young black girl, Ofilwe "feels the weight of [her] melanin" and realises that many of the

assertions that she had adopted regarding “the subjective attitude of the white man is unreal”, to borrow Fanon’s phrasing (128). She is forced to begin her real apprenticeship in an unaccepting society which proves to be extremely difficult. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) Fanon describes how the “disalienation of the black man implies a brutal awareness of the social and economic realities” which in turn results in an inferiority complex (Fanon x). Experiencing her ‘being’ through a dominant white lens, and an imposed white civilisation and culture, results in what Fanon terms “existential deviation” (Fanon xiv). Ofilwe verbalises this existentialism in relation to her black skin:

> I do not like what you do to yourself, little black girl. I do not like to see you sell your soul for a silver skin. Why do you pull at your button nose? Do you not see that it is beautiful that way? I do not know how to fix you, little black girl so I will shut my eyes as tight as I can…Oh sometimes I want to cut my toes, just one and then another…Then everybody would say “sit down poor little black girl”...That would be OK too: I do not know where I am going anyway (Matlwa 61-62)

Ofilwe’s existentialism is a culmination of awareness of her undervalued black skin as well as self-rejection for her inability to fully integrate into society. Society’s inability to accept Ofilwe hinders her ability to accept society and contribute to it. Instead, Ofilwe’s structural narrative ends in liminality and dissonance in which she refuses to make sense of it all. Through Ofilwe’s liminal dissonance, Matlwa explores and provokes the complex process of “existential liminality” (Phiri 171). Phiri explains how “in spite of Ofilwe’s disdain at a superficial blackness, a substantial, referential blackness is not provided in the novel; blackness exists performatively” (Phiri 171). Due to the oppressive nature of whiteness and the self-policing of blackness, there exists a self-enslavement of black people within the post-apartheid society which is psychologically destructive (Phiri 168). Ofilwe highlights her sense of un-belonging by reflecting on black people and their place within the post-apartheid society: “Poor us, poor, poor pathetic us. It is pitiful. What are we doing here? Why did we come? We do not belong” (Matlwa 31). Ofilwe and her family represent the emergent black upper middle class South Africans in a post-apartheid society who are psychologically and spiritually impoverished despite their material securities.

Therefore, Ofilwe does not achieve her goal of integrating into society as is expected within the classical bildungsroman. Instead, she is left with more questions than answers. Her psychological impoverishment makes it difficult for her to understand what is going on.

Eventually Ofilwe accepts the society that she finds herself in, stating that “it is what it is”, accepting that she is shunned by both worlds and that she will continue to engage with the “tasks and obligations” of each new day that comes her way. Ofilwe’s narrative demonstrates how the liminal space that she inhabits is “not a subversive space of possibility, but a painful and potentially damaging one” (Spencer 74).

### 2.4 Fikile: Black skin, white mask

> We understand now why the black man cannot take pleasure in his insularity. For him there is only one way out, and it leads to the white world. Hence his constant preoccupation with attracting the white world, his concern with being as powerful as the white man, and his determination to acquire the properties of a coating…As we said earlier, the black man will endeavour to seek admittance to the white sanctuary from within. His attitude takes us back to his intention.
> (Fanon 33-34)

The second half of *Coconut (2007)* introduces protagonist Fikile “Fiks” Twala. Similar to Ofilwe’s narrative, Fikile’s narrative structure chronicles a single day in her life. Fikile lives in the township of Mphe Batho; a life marked by poverty, crime and violence. When Fikile was very young, her mother committed suicide by slitting her wrists in Fikile’s presence. Her grandmother could not take her in due to her work constraints of taking care of “her own white children'' (114), and she never knew her father because he ran off before she was born. Fikile was taken in by her uncle who works as a security guard. Fikile and her uncle stay in a one-bedroom rented hovel that lacks basic sanitation amenities; and they are forced to share a bed. The spatiality of South African townships is a remnant of colonial policies such as the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts which forcefully removed the majority of black South Africans to the outskirts of the outer city, eventually becoming townships. Spencer (2009) suggests that South African townships demonstrate how the demise of apartheid has not translated beyond their political freedom and can be regarded as a failed revolution (69).

As Fikile comes of age, her main goal is to achieve “Project Infinity”: being rich, famous and turning her life around (Matlwa 109). Fikile was introduced to the term ‘infinity’ by her teacher Mrs Zodwa, who defined it as “a number larger than any number that could be imagined” (Matlwa171). The concept of infinity sparked Fikile’s goal to achieve unlimited wealth that would decisively change her circumstances. According to Moopi & Makombe (2022), Project Infinity embodies Fikile’s aspirational identity and appetite for a Euro-American personality and livelihood (10). For Fikile, Project Infinity is associated with leaving a life of “blackness” and embarking on “something larger than large and greater than great, something immeasurable and everlasting” (Matlwa 171). In her words,

> Infinity. It came to represent all I strove for in life. It became my word, a charm I hung around the neck of my soul, the key to something limitless. I knew that someday I would achieve Project Infinity. It did not matter that I was not exactly sure what Project Infinity was, because I knew it would be infinitely better than where I was then (Matlwa 171)

Project Infinity exemplifies Fikile's strong desire to get out of Mphe Batho Township at any cost (Moopi & Makombe 10). Throughout her narrative, she describes what achieving Project Infinity would look like: Project Infinity looked like sipping frozen Martinis (109), owning a king-sized bed with lots of soft and cosy blankets (116), having lots of money and leaving Mphe Batho for good, never to return (116). Finally, Project Infinity represents exactly what Fikile wants to be and does not want to be. Fikile does not want to be *"black*, dirty and poor" (Matlwa 118); she wants to be "*white*, rich and happy" (Matlwa 118). Fikile is aware of the cultural values of whiteness as an identity. It is associated with economic mobility, cultural capital that is constantly portrayed as aspirational, as well as a hegemonic privileged identity that is associated with certain spaces and markers (Spencer 68). Therefore, Fikile's goal necessitates adoption of these white cultural values.

To become socially attractive to the white cultural standard and its values, Fikile psychologically and physically sets herself apart from black culture and her black community which she associates with social and economic lack. Her transformation comes to fruition through her contact with the white Euro-Americanised standard. This contact with the white world results in a psychological sensitising that Fanon describes as a "psychic structure [that] is fragile, resulting in a collapsed ego" (132). Fanon further notes that "the black man stops behaving as an *actional* person. His actions are destined for 'the Other'' (in the guise of a white man), since only 'the Other' can enhance his status and give him self-esteem at the ethical level" (Fanon 132). The *actional* person in this case refers to the colonised being who continuously through his or her agency fights against the status quo of oppression and being 'othered' - this is what Fikile and Ofilwe lack. Thus Fikile is dependent on the acceptance of white cultural values in order to enhance her status and achieve Project Infinity. As she comes of age, Fikile's determination results in her forcefully associating with rich white people and shunning those who live the life that she despises (Moopi & Makombe 10). Similar to Fifi, Ofilwe's self-social engineering into the white world requires the formation of a new identity. As a result, Ofilwe inhabits a space of "in-betweenness" where she is forced to adopt the (white) colonial languages and cultural values which she hopes will give her a deep sense of belonging in that world in order to achieve success (Goodman 110). Furthermore,

this navigation between the reality of her world and the aspirations of the white world results in the psychologically unstable hybridisation of "being neither here nor there, neither this or that" (Goodman 110). The 'Coconut' in Ofilwe's narrative is characterised by the universal experience of emotional diaspora or being divided against oneself and the restlessness of mind caused by it (Goodman 110). In this in-between displacement, Fikile has inherently and explicitly antagonised her black being and existence in order to integrate into white social standards of living.

Fikile's emotional loss for youth is scattered as she came of age living with her grandmother and eventually her uncle in Mphe Batho. In her coming of age, Fikile became aware of the social disparities that flooded her own home and her community. This is where Fikile's ultimate disdain for blackness developed. The pinnacle of Fikile's disdain came from living with her uncle. At just fifteen years old, Fikile became responsible for comforting her uncle who would constantly complain about his economic, financial and social shortcomings. Fikile's emotional loss for youth was spearheaded by having to not only take care of herself but to also take care of her uncle who always felt sorry for himself: *"Why me? He would cry. And I would cry out the same in my head. Why me? Why do I have to listen to Uncle blubber and snivel and sob out garbage every day of my life"* (Matlwa 100). Fikile's impatience with her uncle stemmed from her belief that her uncle was not smart enough to make use of opportunities given to him by white people in order to better his life. Fikile describes her uncle as "just another hungry black man, hungry for a piece of pie, just like the rest of us" (Matlwa 108). Fikile's frustration with her uncle is heightened when she reveals that the 'comfort' she brought to him was of a sexual nature, shedding light on her uncle's sexual abuse:

> Our bedroom would be quiet when I crept in but as soon as I huddled into the corner of the bed I would hear his pathetic sniffling followed by the sorry sigh…Uncle would then take my little hand and gently slip it into his loose tracksuit pants he wore at night…It was always hot and rubbery and would sometimes stick to the palm of my hand as Uncle moved my hand up and down it (Matlwa 113)

Together with Fikile's domestic background and sexual abuse by her uncle, Matlwa invokes sympathy from readers towards Fikile's conditions and circumstances in her interior world (Spencer 71). Matlwa showcases the entanglement of social and cultural forces in South African township life at the most intimate level of people's lives (Goodman 113). The significant point of Fikile's emotional loss for youth was at the age of 13 when the "Childline

Ousies" came to her school to speak about sexual abuse. It was here that Fikile learned about rape and registered that what her uncle was subjecting her to was sexual abuse. That night, Fikile's emotional loss for youth was sealed by her decision to no longer share a bed with her uncle: "I was suddenly overtaken by the notion to sleep on the floor and not get into the bed where Uncle was waiting for me to comfort him" (Matlwa 115).

The action of removing herself from the bed was Fikile's start to leaving home on a journey to pursue Project Infinity. Fikile decides to drop out of school at the age of sixteen and gets herself a job at Silver Spoon, an up-market restaurant located in the affluent parts of Johannesburg. Leaving home typically allows the protagonist within the classical bildungsroman to reach out into the world that they're unfamiliar with in which their 'real' education begins in a new setting. Fikile follows this trajectory with determination that working at Silver Spoon will be her catalyst into achieving Project Infinity. Silver Spoon is described as "top notch" (120), an establishment with a reputation and a loyal clientele of people who are respectable, dignified and accomplished (Matlwa 120). Fikile assimilates to the 'high class' culture of Silver Spoon. There, she oscillates between performing whiteness and being black, which is the hybridised tension articulated in the concept of being a coconut (Phiri 170). The performance of whiteness occurs when Fikile sets herself apart from her black counterparts and classifies herself as belonging to the upper echelons, compared to those in her own community. By reinventing herself to the closest form of whiteness through lightened skin, blonder hair, blue eye contacts and changing her accent, she attempts to construct herself into the white image that she associates with modernity, class and the cosmopolitan woman that explicitly references whiteness (Spencer 75). After mimicking and engaging in this performative whiteness, she begins to explicitly reject her impoverished black life in her township. This is evident in her train ride to work, where she showcases her disdain towards blackness:

> [The women] bore me with their questions about how I manage to keep my figure so slim or their stories about their harsh white bosses at work…The men disgust me. All of them are a bunch of criminals. A bunch of uneducated criminals. They look at me like they want to rape me and I know they would do it if there weren't so many people around (Matlwa 129).

Spencer (2009) asserts that Fikile's obsession with whiteness and abhorrence of blackness can be examined in relation to her subject position, which is associated with poverty, poor service delivery and sub-standard education within the township. By associating whiteness with success and blackness with inferiority, Fiks thus declares that she is not one of them - black:

> *I am not one of you*, I want to tell them. Someday you will see me drive past here in a sleek air-conditioned car, and I will roll up my windows if you try to come near me, because *I am not one of you.* You are poor and black and I am rich and brown (Matlwa 140).

Through Fikile's rejection of blackness, Matlwa critiques and distances herself from Fikile's negative responses and stereotypes of black township life and her idealisation of whiteness (Spencer 71). The Silver Spoon is representative of the economic power and status that Fikile aspires to. Fikile's excessive determination makes her obsessed with her white customers at Silver Spoon. She sees herself as more than just a waitress, she becomes their therapist, confidant, friend and lives vicariously through the lives of her white customers as a means to prepare for her life of Project Infinity (141).

Although she works hard to set herself apart from her other (black) colleagues, Fikile is still reminded of her blackness at Silver Spoon, catalysing her internal and external conflict. Moopi & Makombe (2007) suggest that Fikile is naive to believe that the life she attempts to imitate from the magazines she consumes can be attained by "her kind" (Moopi & Makombe 11). Fikile's major flaw is that she thinks she will have access to the economic advantages and privileges of whiteness if she adopts white culture and white values. She fails to understand that her blackness is an external impediment in a modern, colonial, capitalist, patriarchal world system that functions to keep her blackness on the receiving end of social inequality (Moopi & Makombe 11). Fikile adopts the values of racism such as prioritising white customers over the Tlous at Silver Spoon (164-165), accusing a black man on the train of stealing an expensive briefcase (132 - 133) or assuming that all black people are thieves and are destructive (134 - 135). She internalises these racist values in order to integrate into the white minority. Unfortunately, as a black woman, Fikile is also on the receiving end of these discriminatory and racist values and is not exempt from them while working at Silver Spoon. This is particularly evident when she is yelled at by her employer's daughter and blamed for the bread shortage due to strikes. Alongside her other black colleagues, she is addressed as "you people" (144) and forced to bake bread in the kitchen. Fikile's internal conflict arises

because her overzealous determination to set herself apart from her other co-workers does not exempt her from racial ill-treatment. Similar to Ofilwe, Fikile's performative whiteness does nothing to integrate her within the white social group. Instead, after being unfairly treated by a white customer, Fikile is dismissed by her employer and told to go home early due to her frequent mistakes. She expresses her exhaustion in her countless attempts to assimilate into white culture and achieve Project Infinity. This expression exemplifies Fikile's internal conflicts that are not positively rewarded in the end:

> I am tired of waiting, waiting for the day when it will all be different, when it will be my turn, my story, my rose…I am tired of the fear, the anxiety, the endless debates within my head, the empty feeling in my chest and the knot inside my stomach…I am tired of looking around in the mirror, at my legs and my hands, wondering when they will be different…I am tired. I have tried, I am always trying, but now I am tired. I want it now (Matlwa 181)

Fikile is unable to contribute to society. Although she physically and psychologically attempted to adopt white culture, values and looks, her blackness hindered any opportunity to become fully integrated into white society. According to Moopi and Makombe (2007), the coloniality of being "instituted and enforced wretchedness as an identity" within the formerly colonised (6). It is evident that Fikile blames her social and economic disparities on her blackness instead of the discriminatory racial systems that continue to exist and function as a blockade for blacks in post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, to an extent, Fikile has accepted the white values of society by internalising their ways of being but unfortunately, the same society does not accept her, which makes it impossible to achieve the classical bildungsroman goal to be accepted by society and to fully integrate and contribute to society. Fikile's narrative essentially ends in a 'no-man's land' where she has disregarded her own blackness while simultaneously being aware of it. The feeling of disregard leaves Fikile stranded in a state of ontological limbo. This state of limbo arises because Fikile's existence is "called into being in relation to an otherness" (Phiri 172). The process of being othered forced Fikile to physically and ontologically deconstruct and reconstruct her sense of self in order to achieve 'Project Infinity' which is immeasurable and everlasting because it is dependent on Fikile having to prove her existence to a world that has considered her as 'Other'.

## 2.5 Being the Opara

Opara:
West African (Nigeria) from the Igbo personal name
meaning : *First-born son* (Oxford)

The term 'Opara' is regularly mentioned across Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's novel *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009). The term is mostly used by the protagonist Kingsley who continuously declares himself as the Opara. His declaration justifies certain duties that he must perform throughout the novel and subjects him to certain expectations from his family. The term *Opara* directly translates to the role of being the first-born son, mostly stemming from Igbo culture in Nigeria. Okoli, Ujumadu, Nkwopara et al (2021) describe how the first-born son is highly recognised and respected by his family; furthermore, the Opara also wields power and plays a major role in the family's decision-making (2021). Within Igbo culture, the first-born son is the family's hope for continuity. He provides proof of his father's strength and symbolises hope for the continuation of the family (Okoli, Ujumadu, Nkwopara et al, 2021). Compared to female children who will end up taking on a new name through marriage, the Igbo male child will maintain the family's lineage (Okoli, Ujumadu, Nkwopara et al, 2021).

In *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009), Nwaubani explores the duties of the Opara through the protagonist, Kingsley, in which his goal in the narrative is connected to the expected duties that he has to perform as the Opara of his family. Nwaubani explores the socio-economic hurdles that Kinglsey is forced to navigate as he comes of age and attempts to solidify his role as the Opara. There is an expected route and socialisation particularly through education and a stable job that Kinglsey is expected to achieve according to his parents, compared to the social reality afforded to him due to the social, economic and political society that Kinglsey has to manoeuvre through within modern day, post-independent Nigeria.

## 2.6 Kingsley: 'I am the Opara'

*I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009) (*By Chance* from here onwards) follows 25-year-old protagonist Kingsley Ibe who narrates his journey. The novel immediately introduces Kingsley who has recently graduated with his chemical engineering degree and is frustrated because he is struggling to secure a stable job at an oil company in the Niger Delta. Kingsley's emotional loss for youth is immediately evident in his struggle to attain employment which results in his inability to support his family financially. Kingsley depends

on his education to secure a stable job. As Kingsley came of age, it was decided by his father what the trajectory of his career would be. Kingsley shares how it was his father that decided he should study chemical engineering, it was his father that decided that he should attend the Federal University of Technology and it was his father that decided that he must not take the exams more than once (Nwaubani 15). Kingsley's academic pressure was instilled by his father who proclaimed that "any child of mine who decides to be useless and not go to university has his own self to blame for however his life turns out" (Nwaubani 15). Kingsley's parents Augustina and Paulinus believed that education was "everything" and was "the recipe for wealth, the pass to respectability [and] the ticket to eternal life" (Nwaubani 16). Without an education, Kingsley was convinced by his parents that he would end up selling peppers and tomatoes in the Nkwoegwu Market (16). As he came of age, Kingsley was socialised to believe that education was the epitome to all forms of financial, social and economic success. Kingsley's goal was to open the doors of endless possibilities by getting a stable job through his degree, contributing to the well-being of his family and fulfilling his responsibilities as the *Opara* (26).

Unfortunately, Kingsley finds himself coming of age in a post-independent Nigeria that is plagued by corruption and economic disparity. Cartwright (2023) describes how contemporary Nigeria is characterised by unemployed young people who have higher education backgrounds (Cartwright 662). Crimes such as 419 internet scamming are dependent on a lack of official employment opportunities, weak and corrupt law enforcement and the pursuit of instant wealth to alleviate poverty (Cartwright 662). Due to these economic and social characteristics, Nigerian youths such as Kingsley are unfortunately hindered from following a trajectory of job stability and marriage because these classic bildungsroman goals are undermined by state corruption which makes them more desperate to turn to "informal" ways of survival (Cartwright 662). *By Chance* (2009) highlights the tension of education in which young people struggle to locate themselves in the turbulence of contemporary Nigeria and look to education, formal or informal, as a way of securing their chances (Cesare 84). Furthermore, *By Chance* (2009) showcases the disparities in global wealth and living standards which allows for 'informal' means of employment as the main mode of production to allow the likes of Kingsley to flourish, especially after witnessing the failure of their educated parents (Cartwright 665).

Kingsley's emotional loss for youth is characterised by witnessing the failure of his educated parents, particularly his father who was well educated with a Master's degree from the UK and served as a civil servant in Nigeria upon his return. Kingsley describes how "it was such a pity that all the things he knew were not able to put money in his pocket" (Nwaubani 19).

Kingsley describes the extent of his family's poverty through their meals that tasted like "sawdust" (19) in which the realisation of his family's social disparities came to light. As the Opara, Kingsley was clear on his goal and his duties that would alleviate his family's deprivation:

> As first son, as soon as I started earning an income, I would automatically inherit the responsibility of training my younger ones and ensuring that my parents spent the rest of their retirement years in financial peace. My family were looking up to me. I was their light, their messiah, their only hope. (Nwaubani 28)

Together with taking care of his family, Kingsley also aims to provide for his long-time girlfriend Ola who he planned on marrying and settling down with. Kingsley's goals are disrupted after he receives a rejection letter for a potential job. Upon receiving numerous rejection letters for jobs, Kingsley's emotional loss for youth reaches its climax when he decides that it will be better for him to leave his home in Umuahia, and look for better opportunities in the big bustling city of Lagos (56). Motivated by his duties of being the Opara and his inability to get employment even as a graduate, Kingsley became aware that his academic background will not take him far. Instead, his academic background became much more of a frustration and blockage in achieving his goal, especially upon observing how his father's life turned out. Kingsley feels as if he had been "too carried away with academic achievements" (Nwaubani 42-43). He further notes: "after all, my father, with all his brilliance, was wallowing in poverty. I shuddered at the thought of ending up like him - full brain, empty pocket" (Nwaubani 43).

Apart from Ola no longer wanting to see Kingsley due to his financial lack, the main catalyst that stirred Kingsley to leave home was his father falling ill. Unable to afford healthcare for his father, Kingsley is forced to get assistance from his Uncle Boniface, also known as Cash Daddy. Compared to his father who was ethical, Cash Daddy is introduced as "foul-smelling rich" (51). Cash Daddy is "living large off funds he scammed from unsuspecting foreigners who believed the yarns he spun through emails and faxes" (Nwaubani 51). Although Paulinus detests Uncle Boniface and the modes in which he made a living, it is Uncle Boniface who assists Kingsley and his family in paying for his father's medical bills. Uncle Boniface offers Kingsley a job, working for him in his 419 scamming company, which Kingsley initially declines, still lingering on the goal to get a stable job through his qualification. Uncle Boniface mocks him:

> ‘So, after all this, your education - the one you’ve done so far - what have you gained from it? With all the big big calculations you did with your calculator in school, has it made you to calculate those same amounts of money in your pocket? Or in your own bank account? Or in different currencies?’ (Nwaubani 127)

Kingsley is torn between the ethical modes of living that his father represents and the unethical modes of living that contemporary Nigeria has forced the likes of Cash Daddy to succumb to in order to survive. Due to the quality of the state, Kingsley's goal to live ethically has immediate consequences on himself and his family and their social capabilities to survive (Dalley 20). It is clear to Kingsely that the social decline that he and his family are situated in is real and “the misery of those at the bottom of the class hierarchy is enough to make even the most idealistic question how much they will pay for their principles” (Dalley 20). Kingsley thus manoeuvres through his two paternal figures, his father Paulinus and Uncle Boniface, experiencing an expectancy and socialisation from these two figures who both implore him to choose a certain trajectory in order to become successful. Kingsley’s decision to finally leave home on a journey comes into fruition when his father passes away. His journey begins when he declares his role as the Opara and his duty to honour his father and protect his mother (146). He is further enlightened upon his father’s death, and the magnitude of his duty as the Opara ensuring that he will do whatever it takes to achieve his goal and fulfil his role:

> Right there and then, a switch flipped inside my head. Indeed, my father was no more. And it was my responsibility to start caring for the people who were still here. There was nothing stopping me now (Nwaubani 47)

Part two of the novel introduces Kingsley who is now working for Cash Daddy in his 419 company. With his first pay, Kingsley is fascinated by the two thousand dollars with which he is able to buy his mother a jar of cooking gas, some wrappers and a bag of rice (156). Although one of his goals was to buy his mother a brand-new car, this was a start. For once, Kingsley felt that he was giving and not taking, and that in turn made him feel like a *real* Opara (Nwaubani 156). With his new financial freedom, Kingsley could now ensure that his mother “could finally stop picking pennies from her shop and start enjoying the rest of her life. [His] brothers and sisters could focus completely on their studies without worrying about fees” (Nwaubani 159). Kingsley’s goal of fulfilling his duties as the Opara was underway.

Similar to the classical bildungsroman, Kingsley's newfound journey into the world of 419 scamming is met with disapproval from his mother whom he continuously tries to sway with his new gifts. Kingsley's mother rejects his gifts such as a brand-new car (170), a brand-new television and house accessories (191) as well as refusing assistance from Kingsley to pay her medical bill for her ailing eyes (286). Throughout the novel, Kingsley's mother is hostile towards his ambitions. As Ribic (2019) explains, it is not just his mother's disapproval of Kingsley's new occupation, she still wishes for him to find a "proper job". For Augustina, Kingsley's descent into the informal labour of 419 is literally unspeakable; she cannot utter the words to describe his daily occupation (Ribic 433):

> My mother was a person who could provide a euphemism for every embarrassing word that existed…But when it came to 419, this ability had completely failed her. She never had a name for exactly what it was that she wanted me to stop. (Nwaubani 191 - 192)

His mother's rejection of his new lifestyle aside, Kingsley together with his siblings enjoy the newfound financial and material freedoms. Kingsley affords to buy himself a plethora of luxury vehicles, a luxury home, his own attendant as well as paying for his own sexual pleasures. Together with these luxuries, Kingsley has developed his skills as a 419ner with his ability to construct convincing emails to foreign "mugu's", attending meetings overseas and being a key member of the Central Intelligence Agency, the headquarters of Cash Daddy's 419 company. It is through this that Kingsley has admired Cash Daddy for rescuing him from his former lower class social status. Although he is not following the trajectory of his late father's expectations, Kingsley has chosen to adapt to the social norms of contemporary Nigeria that Cash Daddy represents. Dalley (2013) explains how Kingsley's circumstances have compelled him to renounce his loyalty to his father's ideals and accept Cash Daddy's help (Dalley 21). It is Cash Daddy who "personifies the social and economic forces shaping contemporary Nigeria" (Dalley 21). If Kingsley's father Paulinus was the embodiment of the dreams of independence, then Cash Daddy is his generational successor, "the representative hero of the new dispensation" (Dalley 21). It is because of this that Kingsley has accepted and follows a fractured bildungsroman trajectory that is representative of a post-colonial nation.

Upon leaving home, Kingsley experiences a series of internal and external conflicts such as when one of his colleagues, Azuka, never comes back from one of his international trips. The

brutal consequences of 419 scamming stun Kingsley: “this 419 thing was like a game to me - hooking mugus, making hits, returning to the scene of the crime and making more hits. For the first time, I was seeing a chill wind in our game” (Nwaubani 309). The dangers of 419 that his mother was continuously warning him about had finally become a reality. Soon after, Kingsley’s internal and external conflict reaches its climax firstly when he is judged by his girlfriend Merit, who breaks up with him after discovering his profession as a 419 scammer. This break up leads to Kingsley’s confusion in which he justifies his 419 occupation: “After all, 419ner or no, was I still not Kingsley?...Was I not the man who had come to my family’s rescue after my father had failed? Was I not the man setting aside his own dreams for the sake of my mother and my siblings?” (Nwaubani 320). This internalised conflict forces Kingsley to question his goals and motives as he feels as if his sacrifices have gone unnoticed and unappreciated, especially as the Opara. Kingsley’s conflict is further externalised, when his younger brother Godfrey announces that he is dropping out of school. Kingsley vehemently objects, but Godfrey responds by pointing out his biggest insecurity:

> Kings, you’re the last person I’d expect to be making such a fuss. Look at you. After all your education, you’re not even doing anything with your degree. What was the point? Do you think I don’t want to make my own money for myself? You’re just being hypocritical (Nwaubani 322)

Kingsley violently responds by grabbing and slapping Godfrey, declaring “I am the *Opara*! I did it for you people" (Nwaubani 322). The denouement of Kingsley’s internal and external conflict is settled when Cash Daddy’s death is announced. It was in this moment that Kingsley realises the extent of his uncle’s influence in his life as a paternal figure:

> How could Cash Daddy be dead? The man who had taken me under his wing. The man who had given me a new life. The man who had given me an opportunity to prove myself when everybody else kept turning me down. I had not just lost an uncle and a boss, I had lost a father (Nwaubani 332)

With the two paternal figures in his life gone, Kingsley could finally become the “master of his destiny” (335); and he does so by declining the option to take on Cash Daddy’s flourishing 419 business. The epilogue in *By Chance* (2009) introduces a now older and mature Kingsley. The epilogue showcases how Nwaubani scams the realist bildungsroman plot in which Kingsely is able to produce the illusion of legible maturation without submitting to the genre’s rigid social demands (Ribic 433). In the epilogue, Kingsley uses his capital from 419

scamming to buy his way into the formal sector by purchasing and running his own chain of internet cafes called 'Kings Cafes'. Kingsley's mother Augustina proudly visits him and admires his maturation from scammer to CEO. Augustina finally accepts Kingsley as he now portrays her version of the Opara. According to Ribic (2019), the epilogue produces a "paradoxical double effect" (433) in which on one hand, Kingsley is seemingly embracing a career that is in line with his father's idealism and post-independent dream which is at the level of participating in Nigeria's formal economy with honesty and integrity. And on the other hand, Kingsley reinscribes 419 scamming within the "grammar of entrepreneurial success" in which his criminality is undetectable (Ribic 433). The latter paradox is when Kingsley picks up a call from a longtime Mugu Mr Winterbottom, which signals that Kingsley has not entirely left the world of 419 scamming. This means that Kingsley has accepted the values of both the formal and informal economy and society and simultaneously contributes to both, which allow him to continue his duties as the Opara.

### 2.7 Conclusion

Hoagland (2019) observes that the African bildungsroman always results in two outcomes: either the protagonist triumphs over the crises sown by colonialism's influence or the protagonist is left even more disenfranchised and disillusioned (Hoagland 228). *Coconut* (2007) and *By Chance* (2009) demonstrate Hoagland's observations. Representing the latter, Ofilwe and Fikile, within their separate journeys, presents an unsatisfactory ending in which both protagonists do not achieve their goals of belonging (Ofilwe) and Project Infinity (Fikile). Instead, both protagonists are left not only questioning their identities in their respective circumstances in post-apartheid South Africa. They simultaneously remain in a state of internalised conflict unsure of what the next step of their trajectory would be. *Coconut's* (2007) fragmented novel structure - oscillating between past and present, and the physical dividing of Fikile and Ofilwe's story worlds highlights their fractured identities within post-apartheid South Africa. The fragmentation throughout the novel further emphasises the non-linearity of coming of age within a post-colonial setting compared to the traditional linear bildungsroman. The use of two protagonists in *Coconut* (2007) who stem from polar opposite story worlds exemplifies how both Fikile and Ofilwe negotiate their hybridised identities by navigating between their expected indigenous cultures and the cultures that have been imposed upon them. An example of this navigation and cultural negotiation is the shortening of their names, Fiks and Fifi - this becomes a tool to essentially conform to their imposed cultures and integrate.

Representing the former, Kingsley is forced to learn the tricks of the trade in order navigate the corrupted state of the Nigerian workforce so that he could achieve his goal as the Opara. By adapting to both the informal and formal sector, Kingsley triumphs and is able to successfully socialise beyond the confines of colonialism's influence in Nigeria.

## Chapter three: The bildungsroman and the nation

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how Matlwa and Nwaubani represent South Africa and Nigeria in *Coconut* (2007) and *By Chance* (2009) as post-independent nations respectively and how they diverge from the national essentialism represented and imagined by the German (Western) bildungsroman. The chapter further outlines how these two post-independent nations follow their own anti-bildungsroman trajectory as postcolonial nations in transition and how their development as former colonies coincides with the bildung of the protagonists presented in each novel. Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) defines the bildungsroman as "an image of a man growing in a national-historical time" (25). Karl Morgenstern's description of the bildungsroman was aimed at presenting the ideals of German nationalism and how the hero comes of age in the *ideal* German society. Thomas Mann (1916) describes these ideals as legitimate German nationalism "intimately connected with the German concept of humanity" (Mann 702). These definitions of the German bildungsroman exemplify what Boes (2012) refers to as "national essentialism" which references a coming-of-age narrative that expresses German ideology and German ways of interpreting the world (19).

Nations that were not fortunate enough to develop *idealistic* nation logics due to historical and ongoing forms of imperialism found that attaining the trajectory of the 'ideal nation' was merely impossible. Jed Esty (2007) argues that post-colonial literary works invoke and break the bildungsroman's genetic code of progressive temporality, because they exemplify the standard political and economic fact of imperial time, which is: "colonies do not - in a strict sense cannot - come of age under the rule of empire" (Esty 407). As former colonies, South Africa and Nigeria have been linked to terms such as "third world" and "developing" due to their process of post-colonial transitioning after becoming independent nations (Decker 792). Nigeria and South Africa emerged from colonial and apartheid rule respectively - where Nigeria attained liberation in the 1960s and South Africa in the early 1990s. Decker (2010) expands on how, although the liberation of these two countries occurred in different time periods, colonialism and apartheid were similar in that they both represented forms of political and economic domination based on racial hierarchies, which favoured white minorities over the black majority (Decker 792). Imperial hegemonies present within post-colonial nations contrast the classical bildungsroman's aim to establish a coming of age and a nationhood that is characterised by historical stabillty and which aids in achieving a final form amidst the vast changes of industrialisation (Esty 413). The 19th-century Western bildungsroman explores the process of becoming through the education of the bourgeoisie

subject and the development of the people into this historically meaningful form of the nation (Esty 413). Taking into account the anti-black violence in the black diaspora and the Euro-American destruction of African lives through slavery, colonialism, the Cold War and neoliberal capital, the development of the post-colonial subject and the full formation of the post-colonial national bildung thus becomes unachievable (Musila 19).

### 3.2 Post-colonial bildungsroman: South African nation

1994 marked the historic event of the end of apartheid and the beginning of South Africa's new democracy and its bildung process at a national level. Although 1994 was characterised by a period of novelty and reconciliation, the ramifications of apartheid seeped into the new nation, resulting in the continuous detrimental economic and social issues that affected the mostly black majority in the country. Not only was South Africa's new democracy stained by the terrors of apartheid, but apartheid itself was a direct descendent of broader colonial traditions which indirectly ruled over the new, developing nation (Decker 805). The Union of South Africa was dominant between 1910-1948 in which white settlers (English and Afrikaners) ruled. This period was characterised by segregational acts such as the 1911 Mines and Workers Act, and the 1913 Native Land Act which was the most severe. This act legalised the preservation of large amounts of land for the exclusive use of the white minority, forcing the majority of black South Africans off their ancestral grounds. Access to land and resources was thus dependent on racial classifications in which the black majority received the lesser end of these resources (South African History Online). The legalisation of Land dispossession during this period and prior marked the heart of South African history and the heritage of inequality (South African History Online).

1948 marked the period when the National Party government legalised apartheid and imposed further segregationist policies. The principles of apartheid and its policies did not differ from those under the Union of South Africa. Many laws such as the Population Registration Act 1950, the Group Areas Act 1950 and the Bantu Education Act 1953 were a few of the many examples of how segregationist laws resulted in racial discrimination and separation on all social, economic and political fronts (South African History Online). The period of apartheid portrayed an Afrikaner nationalism and bildung that, similar to the German bildungsroman, was the *ideal* Afrikaner nation that promoted the Afrikaner ideology, the Afrikaner language and the Afrikaner way of interpreting the world. This discriminatory and exclusionary nationalism was enforced into the larger South African society through policies and violence against majority black South Africans.

The African National Congress (ANC) and other political organisations struggled against the apartheid regime during the decades of apartheid. In 1955, the Freedom Charter was signed which was a clear declaration by the ANC on the future of South Africa and the vision that they had for a multiracial South Africa (Decker 806). The 1960s was a time of opposition for the ANC when key members such as Nelson Mandela were imprisoned. In the 1970s and 1980s, the apartheid government experienced economic decline as trade unions became influential in the fight against apartheid. The 1990s was characterised by extreme police violence, black on black violence, and the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. The 'road to democracy' was underway with the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) negotiations leading up to the 1994 elections. The decades of white settlers (1910 - 1948) to apartheid (1948 - 1994) exemplify a fractured history in which the bildung of the nation carries the burdens of inequality and stratification in a society rather than empowerment, unity and structure (Decker 808).

### 3.3 The fractured Rainbow Nation in *Coconut* (2007)

Matlwa portrays South Africa's fractured nation by commenting on the 'myth' of the rainbow nation. Through Fikile and Ofilwe's narratives, Matlwa explores how the notions of multiculturalism and multiracialism that were promoted by the new ruling party fell short. Tikam Liese Sall (2018) explains how although the rainbow nation proclaimed unity and diversity, racialisation and identity politics resulted in continuous contradictions that were observed through debates surrounding land expropriation, racial inequalities and lack of basic services (Sall 1). Following the ideals of the 1955 Freedom Charter, the main aim of the ANC and South Africa's liberation movements was to build a non-racial society based on equality and justice (Sall 1). These ideals became the founding principles of many post-apartheid political programmes as well as the South African constitution. The South African constitution has been regarded as one of the 'finest' in the world because it stood against forms of retribution and instead promoted justice, human dignity and peace. After the 1994 democratic elections, Archbishop Desmond Tutu coined the term 'Rainbow Nation' to describe South Africa as a new nation that symbolises hope and unity (Sall 2). The aim of the rainbow nation project was to rebuild and reconcile the South African population regardless of their physical, cultural or religious differences. One of the advancements made to celebrate the notion of diversity was the acknowledgement and formalisation of the eleven official languages (Sall 2). Although the constitution promoted a new and progressive nation - a renewed coming of age nation —, Johnston (2014) states that the constitution "has not been able to impact the structural remnants of apartheid" and the sources of lingering inequalities are "deeply rooted in historical injustices" (cited from Sall 2). Furthermore, Sall (2018) also claims that the

rainbow nation has become an idealistic symbol that is yet to take into consideration the entrenched social, racial and economic disparities constructed under apartheid (2).

One of the failures of the rainbow nation that is addressed in *Coconut* (2007) are the discriminatory characteristics linked to South African townships. As exemplified by Ofilwe and her Model-C classmates, the suburban and township spatialities presented in the novel provide a clear indication of how racialized these particular spaces are. In one of Ofilwe's memories, she is mocked by one of her classmates after being asked where she was born by her teacher:

> "Where were you born, Fifi?"
> "In Johannesburg, Mrs Wiliamson"
> "Don't lie, Ofilwe, you were born in a stinky shack!'
> "No I wasn't, Zama! Shut up."
> "Stop being nasty, Zama. Fifi was not born in any sort of shack, were you, Fifi?"
> "No, Mrs Williamson" (Matlwa 14)

Another instance is when Ofilwe questions who she would be and where she would be if her mother and father never met: "Would I have turned out to be nothing if Mama had not married Daddy? Would I not be the same Ofilwe I am now if Mama had never made it out of the *dreaded* location? What if Mama had chosen love? Where would I be now? What would I be now? Nothing?" (Matlwa 13). It is clear, from Ofilwe's perspective, that to come from and live in the township background is to be "nothing". Even when being mocked for where she was born, Ofilwe is forced to ensure that her classmates know that she was not born in a "stinky shack" because of the social traits that are linked to South African townships. During apartheid, South African townships were intentionally designed to segregate and marginalise predominantly black South Africans by the apartheid government. Due to a high population influx and lack of basic services such as sanitation, housing, electricity etc, South African townships were thus linked with poverty. Many of the discriminatory characteristics linked with the township included poor infrastructure, overcrowding, lack of economic opportunities, crime and overall social dysfunction. Therefore, for Ofilwe to be associated with these characteristics, would be a stain on her perceived embodiment of whiteness and upper-class standards. This memory further exemplifies the failure of the ANC to address these social issues occurring in township areas resulting in the regression of the promised rainbow nation, particularly for black South Africans who are mostly affected.

In relation to the notion of multiracialism and class, Phiri (2013) claims that the novel presents a fresh approach to the concept of whiteness within the context of a post-apartheid and post-modern society (Phiri 163). The novel, she argues, showcases the complexities of attempting to imagine blackness without whiteness, and how within the post-apartheid social realm, race and culture are both significant and problematic because of how "whiteness is established as an inevitable mirror on and of blackness (Phiri 163). In the process of trying to construct their identity as they come of age, both Ofilwe and Fikile adopt the post-racial ideas of whiteness alongside their blackness, resulting in a hybridised identity formation. These hybridised formations showcase the shortcomings of promoting multiracialism due to the varying levels of race presented in the novel. Here whiteness is placed at a superior level, for example when Ofilwe's mother was excited that her *white* friends were coming over to their home for a sleepover (53) or when Ofilwe's father was trying to convince Ofilwe to continue a friendship with one of her old friends, Belinda because "white people…know how to utilise their money" and because they are "the kind of white people we need in our country" (68).

Matlwa further explores the shortcomings of the notion of multiculturalism in *Coconut* (2007). With the aim to recognise, celebrate and promote South Africa's diverse cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds, *Coconut* (2007) highlights the existing cultural hegemonies in post-apartheid South Africa, where dominant cultures and their values are embedded within social and economic systems. This results in the policing and discrimination towards cultures that are regarded as inferior. The Tlous reside in The Little Valley Country Estate which has rules that every resident needs to observe. When the Tlou family hosts and performs a traditional ceremony, they are prohibited by these rules and are fined. Moopi & Makombe (2022) suggest that these rules and constrictions serve as a reminder of the "peripheralization and decimation of African cultures and traditions" (Moopi & Makombe 5). The Tlous being fined for performing their traditional rituals in their own backyard is what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) defines as "epistemicide" which is designed to delegitimize African knowledge systems and the ways black cultures and identities relate to the globalised world (Moopi & Makombe 5). The rules that the Tlous were subjected to and broke in relation to them performing the traditional ceremony were the following:

> 12.3 Residents of Little Valley Country Estate may not keep any wild animals, livestock, poultry, reptiles or aviaries or any other animal of the sort on the Estate grounds

> 15.1 Residents of Little Valley Country Estate must avoid installing visible laundry lines, Wendy houses, tool sheds, pet accommodation and the like in areas that are visible from the public view and must ensure that the above are screened from neighbouring properties (Matlwa 74)

These rules alienate the Tlous from their cultural practices and traditions. Due to this alienation, the Tlous are deemed as unsuitable for the white middle-class world in the Little Valley Country Estate. Furthermore, although the Tlous have made it to the Little Valley Country Estate, they still tread the line of being 'the Other', where the world that they "come from" and the traditions that they practise are regarded as inferior compared to the 'ruling' white minority and their standards of modernity.

The social and economic fractures that are evident in *Coconut* (2007) are exemplified by the working-class characters who voice the harsh realities of their working environments. After an altercation between Fikile's co-worker, Ayanda and a white customer, where Ayanda was racially dehumanised with terms like "you people" and "if it wasn't for us you wouldn't be able to read" (Matlwa 150), Ayanda angrily lashes out in a monologue addressing the current social and economic issues that are a result of historical discriminatory racial laws:

> They feel nothing. They see nothing, absolutely nothing wrong with the great paradox in this country. Ten percent of them still living on ninety percent of the land, ninety percent of us living on ten percent of the land…there is a gross contradiction in this country (Matlwa 152)

Ayanda goes on to explain how there is little consideration for the "indigenous people of the land" (152) and how they "see no wrong in building their schools on our beloved soil, over our ancient trees…so they can teach their children how to use us like parasites" (152-153). Lastly Ayanda summarises the concerns of white South Africans who admittedly threatened to leave South Africa because they were against the ushering in of a new democracy:

> How many of them do you hear saying that they want to leave the country?...Thousands of them want to leave. 'Oh the poverty! No place to bring up a family'. So why don't they leave? Why the hell did they come here in the first place? If they want to leave, I say the sooner the better (Matlwa 153)

*Coconut* (2007) exemplifies the gap between the aspirations of the rainbow nation and the reality of the failed rainbow nation due the historically influenced socio-economic dysfunctions (Decker 810). The post-colonial transition is defined by having to overcome a race-based social order. The progression of the rainbow nation presented in *Coconut* (2007) exemplifies the disappointments of South Africans, especially black South Africans, who bear the brunt of the socio-economic shortcomings under the new democracy. Fani Du Toit (2017) explains that these disappointments stemmed from the socio-economic inequalities, persistent racialisation, and the increased levels of corruption. These issues also contributed to the failures of establishing a national identity because of the existing racial and cultural hierarchies. *Coconut* (2007) further foregrounds the 'myth' of the rainbow nation by showcasing how various cultures, races, languages and classes are undermined, which goes against its aim of equality. Finally, Sall (2018) concludes that the rainbow nation had become a symbolic identity that failed to reflect the socio-economic realities of South Africa, meaning, the bildung of the nation would essentially struggle to progress positively to reach an ideal nation due to the existing socio-economic and political conditions.

### 3.4 Post-colonial bildungsroman: Nigeria

October 1st, 1960, marked the historical and momentous occasion of Nigeria gaining independence from colonial British rule. Following Nigeria's independence, various social, political and economic events occurred which contributed to the struggle to build a Nigerian nation. The First Republic (1960 – 1966) introduced a parliamentary government system in which Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa served as the first official Prime Minister. This period was marked by political instability due to the escalation of ethnic and regional tensions. 1966 was defined by a military coup led by Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu and his army. Between 1967 - 1970 was the Nigerian Civil War also known as the Biafran war. The post-civil war period under General Gowon was defined by reunification, post-war reconstruction and reconciliation. In the 1970s, Nigeria enjoyed economic prosperity due to the oil boom. The discovery and export of oil contributed to Nigeria's economic growth but alongside this prosperity was an escalation of corruption and socio-economic inequality. In 1975, another coup was led by General Murtala Ramat Muhammed. Murtala began plans to transition Nigeria back to civil rule. 1979 marks Nigeria's second republic which was defined by the return of civilian rule under President Shehu Shagari. Other contemporary events that unfolded included the Sharia crisis in 2000, the Boko Haram religious uprising in 2009 and the ethno-religious crises in Jos Plateau state in 2009 (Adebanwi & Obadare 380 - 393).

In discussing the challenges of building Nigeria's nation, Babalola & Okafor (2024) state that one of the major hurdles that many Nigerian leaders faced was bringing together people of various tribes, religions, and ethnicities to inhabit the geographic space of Nigeria as a united nation (24). Like many other African nations, Nigeria was a product of colonialism and a victim of two "protectorates" - the northern and the southern protectorates. Thus the 1960 independence of Nigeria sought the unification of people from diverse linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds. (Babalola & Okafor 24). Various beliefs and viewpoints from leaders showed how there was a lack of consensus on how to build a Nigerian nation that was united and it also showed how Nigerian leaders since independence were more interested in building and supporting their own nations or regions (Babalola & Okafor 24). Musila (2022) comments on the aforementioned sentiments by stating that the devaluation of African lives has often been assumed to be caused by African leaders' failures of governance, and their inability to solve ethnic related conflicts (21). By not correlating ethnic violence throughout the continent to white supremacy, an injustice occurs because this misrecognition obscures the role of Euro-American imperialism and racial capitalism in sowing ethnic friction (Musila 21).

Together with the ramification of Euro-American imperialism, the struggle to unite a diverse group of people and the high volume of corruption from leaders created a leak in the Nigerian economy. Political elites devoted their powers to achieving their own interests at the expense of the greater economy (Babalola 74). Since Nigeria's independence, not only did corruption and power permeate all levels of government and hinder the economic development of the country, but it also hindered and fractured the country's genuine potential for a positive bildung of the Nigerian nation (Babalola & Okafor 27).

### 3.5 The fractured Nigerian nation in *I Do not Come to You by Chance* (2009)

Nwaubani portrays Nigeria's fractured nation by showcasing how Euro-American interference and corruption contributed to the destabilisation of the Nigerian economy. This forced many Nigerian youths to join the informal sector in order to make a living through the likes of 419 scams. The bildung of Nigeria's nation is exemplified by Paulinus and Augustina's narrative trajectories that is outlined within the prologue of the novel. Musila (2022) explains how just like the nation, Paulinus and Augustina's narrative trajectory started off positively with the promises associated with independence in the 1960s and how that all came crashing down in the 1980s by the end of the prologue (Musila 23). Therefore, the narrative trajectory portrayed in *By Chance* (2009), closely resembles Nigeria's economic and political history. The 1950s laid the groundwork for Nigeria's independence in 1960. The 1950s was mainly characterised by the emergence of nationalism in which demands for self-governance by

nationalist movements were up and coming. The promise of independence and autonomy was voiced out by Paulinus upon his engagement to Augustina:

> …our children are going to be great. They're going to have the best education. They're going to be engineers and doctors and lawyers and scientists. They're going to have English names and they're going to speak English like the queen (Nwaubani 10)

The ending of the prologue is contrasted with the first chapter of the novel, now in the 1990s, which has seen the decline of the Nigerian economy after the civil war, numerous coups and ruthless military rulers. This economic decline is now voiced by protagonist, Kingsley, who describes his family's financial state and home as a "pitiful presentation" (13). He further states that "life was hard. Times were bad. Things haven't always been like this" (13). This is in reference to Paulinus and Augustina who both travelled to the United Kingdom to pursue their Master's degrees. Upon their return to Nigeria, Paulinus worked a government civil service post in the Ministry of Works and Transport and Augustina started her own clothing business. Unfortunately, Paulinus and Augustina's background as educated Nigerians who received their Master's degrees from the United Kingdom could not support them against the "years of rising inflation without any corresponding increase in civil servant wages" which eventually rendered their degrees and earnings insignificant (Nwaubani 13). Musila (2022) describes how Paulinus and Augustina's vision for success and excellence in the early 1960s was "overdetermined by the contradictions of post-independent Nigeria" (23) and where Paulinus and Augustina's self-determination was up against the "deeply embedded, racialised social and economic system that shaped neo-colonial relations with Euro-America" (Musila 23). By the 1990s when Kingsley was coming of age, he describes how Nigeria's society functioned:

> But the way things worked in our society these days, besides paper qualifications, and a high intelligence quotient, you usually needed to have 'long-leg'. You needed to know someone, or someone who knew someone, before you could access the most basic things. (Matlwa 28)

Survival in post-independent Nigeria was defined by 'who knows who', classism and government corruption. Nwaubani (2009) represents the post-independent state of the economy through various facets. In one instance, when Kinglsey goes to church to seek divine intervention for his current circumstance of being unemployed, one of the points the pastor prays about is corruption and the state of violence (Nwaubani 48). Another instance

was the 9 o' clock news which reported various cases of fraud by government officials: first is the illegitimacy of one of the senators in government who falsified his educational qualifications and second is the Nigerian government starting a global campaign to recover parts of the "three billion pounds embezzled by the late General Abi Sani Abacha administration…700$ million were discovered in Swiss Bank accounts and were frozen" (Nwaubani 36).

Kingsley comes of age in the ruins of post-independent Nigeria's failed dreams, where although he is an engineering graduate, he struggles to find employment 'ethically'. Musila (2022) notes that due to the varying spheres of corruption such as the oil companies that Kingsley applies to only hiring on the basis of personal connection, the collusion of political elites and multinational companies in order to privatise oil proceeds while poverty increases and the imposition of structural adjustment programmes by The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF); this has resulted in the average working class person not having access to basic services such as health care (23). This social state that Kingsley comes of age in is what Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell (1994) term "Jungle Law". This is the social mode produced by the neo-liberal erosion of social welfare institutions and the product of a harshly competitive global environment (321). Furthermore, Jungle Law is a consequence of resource scarcity in which instead of the availability of productive possibilities for individuals, there is a mode of survival and not development (Cartwright 666). The contemporary Nigerian society that Kingsley is situated in is thus defined by the notion of "adapt or die" and the "survival of the fittest"

These notions of survival and "every man for themselves" for the sake of being able to make a basic living renders the bildung of Nigeria's nation unprogressive and un-accommodating to Kingsley's coming of age journey. The present dysfunction in Nigeria's socio-economic and political sphere coupled with Euro-Americanised influence and subversion resulted in the gap between the dreams promised as Nigeria came into independence and the realities of its present day socio-economic and political status.

### 3.6 Conclusion

Martin Simpson (1994) suggests that the reason why so many Third World states and leaders are weak in sustaining a process of economic development in their territories or struggle to develop depoliticised rational bureaucratic administrative political structures is due to their inability to build nations out of ethnically diverse societies that they inherited at their independence (Simpson 463). Simpson (1994) further points out that Euro-America's ability

to build nations stemmed from their uncontested population which had a prolonged period of time to constitute a nation that collectively shared a common history, language, culture and attachment to a specific territory. Examples include nation-states like Germany where their populations were already ethnically homogenous and undisrupted by the ramifications of colonialism. This easily facilitated the process of nation building compared to many post-independent states in Africa that were granted statehood at the time of their independence without having time to constitute nations (Simpson 465 - 466). Bhakti Shringarpure (2019) further highlights how the Cold War (1947-1991) impacted the shaping of the post-colonial world where there was a bridge between European colonialism and the decades long period of intellectual, ideological, and geopolitical rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union (Shringarpure 2). The Cold War period was parallel to the periods of emerging nationalism, independence and socio-economic decay within the continent of Africa. There is a link between the emergence of Western ideologies throughout the Cold War and the residues of European Colonialism throughout the third world during the Cold War period (2). As Shringarpure (2019) notes, the Cold War resulted in a literal and symbolic split causing further binaries between capitalism vs socialism, and democracy vs communism throughout the African continent, resulting in political and violent confrontations throughout the continent which inherently affected their social, political and economic landscapes (2). Finally, Shringarpure (2019) notes how the Cold War is a site to observe and delve into in order to note the afterlife of European colonialism, and how new systems of power alignments, implementations of violence and technological innovations were brought into being (3). This chapter takes into consideration how the various forms of imperialism presented themselves and influenced the instability of nation-building throughout the continent and how in particular, neo-colonial practices contributed to the lack of an effective bildung at a national level for post-colonial nations in transition. Therefore, *Coconut* (2007) and *By Chance* (2009) expose the failure of nation building due to the consequences of colonialism, neo-colonialism, the inability of leaders to unite diverse societies and the economic downfalls resulting from excessive corruption from power hungry, elitist leaders.

## Chapter Four: The bildungsroman, neoliberalism & Africa

### 4.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is Matlwa and Nwaubani's respective commentaries on the logics of capital in postcolonial South Africa and Nigeria through the BEE nouveau riche and the 419 scam artists respectively; and the ways in which both novels reflect on the failures of neoliberal capital in post-independent Africa resulting in the impossibility of 'normalcy' promised by the classical bildungsroman. Neo-liberalism is a doctrine and liberal idea that is associated with self-regulation and globalism. Stemming from the free market school of economies, the ideal of neoliberalism is to remove state intervention from the economy (Ekanade 4). Graham Harrison (2005) defines neoliberalism as "a project that expands and universalises free-market social relations'' (Harrison 1306). Rooted in classical liberal ideas, neoliberalism views the market as a self-regulating mechanism which aims towards an equilibrium of supply and demand resulting in an efficient allocation of resources (Ekande 4). Saige Narsiah (2002) describes neoliberalism as a disparaging term for the phenomenon of globalisation (Narsiah 29). Furthermore, through neoliberalism, the concept of globalisation masks the major class basis of an essentially capitalist system (Narsiah 29). The concept of neoliberalism is characterised by deregulation, privatisation, the withdrawal or shrinking of state and a transfer of economic responsibility to the private sector. Finally, state responsibility is subsumed under a capitalist mode of production (Narsiah 29). According to Harrison (2005), neoliberalism exists not only as an ideology, but as a "science of economic management, a form of social engineering, a legitimation of state action and a disposition of power between states and international organisations'' (Harrison 1306). The main aim of neoliberalism is to shape the economy, the state and society (Harrison 1306).

The concept of neoliberalism, which promotes the ideal society and freedom, provides support to the aim of the classical bildungsroman which is to portray an individual that is born into an ideal society in which they grow, learn and are moulded in this society where they must learn to live and contribute (Bristow-Smith 8-9). The neoliberal ideology produced the foundation for global capitalism that is especially dominant with Anglo-American societies. The ideology shaped government policies, political institutions, the day-to-day decision making of individuals and popular culture (Bristow-Smith 9). The neoliberal ideology together with institutionalised forms of capitalism serve as the basis of "common-sense" understanding of how the world works (Bristow-Smith 9). Although the classical bildungsroman has its central focus on society and the individual, the non-western bildungsroman explores the complex experience of growing and living in a society that

portrays the tortuous reality of neoliberal capitalist practices particularly across non-western societies.

The ideals of neoliberalism came to Africa through World Bank and International Monetary Fund sponsored structural adjustment programmes (SAPS). By 1984, a range of 84 structural adjustment loans had been introduced and agreed upon between the Word Bank and African states (Harrison 1308). These various structural programmes contained neoliberal agendas at their core and were set with conditions that were monopolised across the continent. Furthermore, the continent's debt to the IMF and World Bank grew (Harrison 1308). Harrison (2019) summarises the implications of these structural programmes which were designed and distributed across the African continent ostensibly to alleviate pressure on the “debt distressed African countries”. In return these countries had to adopt various policies which pushed the neoliberalization of development strategies (Harrison 278). These policies and their conditions included “central bank independence, the removal of exchange rate controls, the introduction of technologies to promote fiscal discipline and the reduction of budget deficits, the abolition of quotas and lowering tariffs on international trade, the opening up of economies to foreign direct investment, the elimination of price controls, the elimination of state-owned trading agencies and the privatisation of state-owned enterprises'' (Harrison 278).

The neoliberal crisis first occurred in Africa and was characterised by a range of social and economic issues. These issues included the free fall of currencies, low rates, spiked commodity prices, which impacted disposable income levels, and the instability of people’s livelihoods (Mkandawire & Olukoshi 1995). Furthermore, across the continent there were food riots, police violence, policy measures, the centralised finance and presidential ministries, the growth and enrichment of new factionalized elites which rendered local governments as partial, incoherent, unpredictable and unreliable. The consequences of neoliberal policies and agendas particularly within the African continent resulted in centralised and undemocratic state practices that resembled authoritarianism. This generated large amounts of social harm, inequality and instability across the social sphere of the continent (Harisson 278).

South Africa and Nigeria form part of the biggest economies within the African continent. In South Africa, the assumption of ruling power of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994 marked a shift from a liberation movement that had a largely socialist agenda to a neoliberal position. Narsiah (2002) goes on to explain how the influence of the World Bank emerged in the ANC between 1992 and 1993 (30). The relationship between the ANC and the World

Bank resulted in the emergence of policy networking initiatives in which the World Bank paid the ANC dividends when they assumed power in 1994. Confidence was gained in which the World Bank had access to key policy, academic and NGO constituencies from South Africa (30). Narsiah (2002) suggests that the ANC incurred major budget deficits that their socialist programs would not be able to maintain resulting in economic decline and isolation, thus they had no choice but to establish relationships with the World Bank and the IMF (Narisah 30). South Africa officially became subsumed into a neoliberal, free-market paradigm in 1996 when they adopted and introduced the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) program. This resulted in specific policy positions that promoted fiscal austerity, export-oriented development and privatisation throughout the South African economy (Narisah 31). The result of South Africa's assumption of a neoliberal paradigm was a neoliberal spatial fix in which the poorest communities and households which were made up of the black majority were impacted the most. In understanding Harvey's (2000) sentiment that "neoliberalism is capitalism operating on a global scale," it becomes clear how the effects of neoliberalism in South Africa would be a divide between rich and poor in which, on one hand, would be a growing pole of the rich minority, and, on the other hand, a poor majority (Narsiah 37). South Africa's neoliberal paradigm embodied the general law of capitalist accumulation due to the growth of social and economic issues including increased unemployment, the oppression of the working class in the sphere of owning the means of production, the lack of basic services within poor communities and households. Although apartheid policies played a major role in the social disparities of the black majority, the ascension of the neoliberal paradigm in post-apartheid South Africa resulted in unchanging social dynamics that subsumed the black South African majority into a working-class capitalist dynamic where they did not socially and economically benefit (Narsiah 37).

Similarly, in Nigeria, which gained independence prior in 1960 from British colonial rule, the transition into independence was defined by optimism and confidence by new independent leaders and citizens (Mackintosh 331). Nigeria, which is a major oil-producing nation enjoyed a period of revenue in the 1970s. Although short-lived, the oil boom in Nigeria during the 1970's resulted in economic growth, infrastructure development and urbanisation . Ekanade (2014) explains how this period was characterised by government domestic investments and concentrated social and economic provisions such as transport systems, road works, public buildings and health infrastructure (6). There was a further increase in employment rates, subsidies on food, transport, health and education (6). Structural adjustment programmes were introduced in 1986 which resulted in the removal of subsidies, reduction of public expenditures, privatisation and the devaluation of the domestic currency (Ekanade 7). One of the main reasons why structural reforms were implemented was due to the economic

decline that started in the 1980s. The financial position of Nigeria's economy deteriorated due to the oil markets during that period. To manage their financial collapse, the IMF insisted on specific conditions such as privatisation, a curb on government spending, trade liberalisation and the introduction of sales tax (Ekanade 8). Ekandade (2014) further explains how the neoliberal paradigm in Nigeria was imposed by the various democratic regimes without consent of Nigerian citizens (23). These regimes privatised the state and substituted public goods as private goods. Local governments neglected the fact that they had a duty to citizens to provide protection of life, human dignity and social welfare. Instead, the neglect of social welfare for citizens resulted in a development crisis (23). The neoliberal paradigm in Nigeria encouraged capital flight, authoritarianism, corruption, the mushrooming of the informal sector and the unprecedented casualisation of labour (Ekanade 24). Furthermore, capital and wealth was distributed upwards towards a group of elites while poverty and crime in Nigeria became worse. This essentially undermined the democratic state and their task to uphold social rights (Ekanade 24).

### 4.2 The Black Diamonds & BEE in *Coconut*

> The struggle against racism in our country must include the objective of *creating a black bourgeoisie*…I would like to urge, very strongly, that we abandon our embarrassment about the possibility of the emergence of successful and therefore prosperous black owners of productive property…The government must come to aid of those among the black people who might require aid in order to become entrepreneurs.
> President Thabo Mbeki, (1999)

In addition to fostering a neoliberal paradigm within the South African economy by introducing various policies and programs that implemented tight monetary regulation, privatisation and the promotion of international investment and trade to take the country out of poverty, the ANC government had a clear mandate to redress the inequalities of the past politically, socially and economically. This mandate resulted in a comprehensive program that would provide a legislative framework to transform South Africa's economy. The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) strategy was introduced in 2003. The main objective of the B-BBEE was to achieve economic transformation by enhancing the economic participation of black people within the South African economy.

Through Black Economic Empowerment, the ANC government aimed to foster a black capitalist class / black elite also known as black diamonds, as a non-racial nation building strategy (Iheduru 1). This strategy aimed for an entrepreneurial black middle class or "entrepreneurial bourgeoisie" that would become the vanguard of black South Africa's

economic mainstream (Iheduru 2). The aim for former president Thabo Mbeki and the ANC was to consolidate a dominant black elite. The purpose of these elites would be to occupy the boundaries between the management ranks in the private sector, the established bureaucracy and politicians (Freund 663). Furthermore, the dominance of a black elite within the economy would be the product of a common socialisation process through educational formation, common social interaction and participation in particular institutions (Freund 663). Lastly, these new black South African elites would be required to navigate corporate South Africa and also be loyal to the ANC by tying themselves to its political and hegemonic control of the country (Freund 664). The ANC desperately aimed to establish a black capitalist class to ensure that black people would equally benefit off the country's wealth alongside the older white capitalist class which had misused the wealth to the racial detriment of the country through apartheid. The ANC believed that the sooner black empowerment through the establishment of a black bourgeois was created, the sooner the war on poverty amongst black South Africans would be victorious (Iheduru 2). Therefore through the inception of policies like BEE, a multiracial middle class which included black capitalists became a reality.

BEE policies were not short of economic and moral loopholes. The anti-democratic nature of BEE related policies and businesses included the paradoxical re-racialisation of capitalism, the small number of 'empowered' black capitalists, corruption, black faces being used as the fronts for white capital and the lack of state capacity to monitor compliance with its BEE programs (Iheduru 26). These issues are highlighted in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut,* showcasing the failures of neoliberal policies within post-independent nations, particularly how black elites were forced to replicate white capital and lifestyles in order to fully socialise within post-apartheid South Africa and how lower class black workers were used to enhance white capital as fronts for white-owned companies. These issues together with the many others linked to neoliberalism and neoliberal policies showcase the difficulty of attaining a sense of normalcy within the post-colonial bildungsroman due to racialized inequality and historical racist policies.

### 4.2 1 John Tlou

*Coconut* (2007) introduces John Tlou, Ofilwe's father as a beneficiary of Black Economic Empowerment Policy (BEE) in which his IT company is awarded a tender to provide services to the Post Office. John Tlou's business deal rewarded him and his family with the opportunity to upgrade their lifestyle into the black middle-class group that afforded them a livelihood similar to white suburbanites. John Tlou is described according to the attributes of what Irikdzayi Manase (2016) terms the "black diamond". The black diamond is defined as the "recently wealthy blacks; mostly an urban phenomenon, known for their obsession with

the ostentatious expression of wealth [and the suburban lifestyle]" (Manase 87). According to Nuttall (2009), Mbembe (2008) and Fincham (2011), black diamonds express aspirations and dwell in the practices and performance of excess. Phiri (2013) further describes the Tlous and their opulent lifestyle as a "population of (upper) middle-class 'black diamonds' as well as black political and celebrity figures with a fondness for opulence and a taste for croissants with blue cheese" (Phiri 164). Factors that characterise the South African black diamonds include the lingering presence of apartheid and its social and spatial divisions made up of old mining wealth, the flight of white businesses and residents from central business districts to exclusive and secured residential spaces within the northern suburbs and the influx of previously excluded African and non-white South Africans into inner city spaces and former middle class white suburbs (Manase 89). These factors play a role in the social, political and economic effects of post-apartheid transformation that the new ruling party garnered for. The main goal for many black diamonds included upward social mobility, travelling in expensive cars, spending their wealth ostentatiously, and modifying their identities (Manase 90). One of the major signifiers of the black diamond is the social and spatial movement from the townships that were designated for blacks during apartheid (Manase 92). The movement from the township to the city / suburban area was a signifier of upward social mobility that was not only limited to black people. John Tlou's lifestyle change is reminiscent of the black diamonds' characteristics. Ofilwe describes her father and his social changes accordingly:

> When daddy's company, IT instantly, won the Post Office tender in which daddy had invested numerous golf balls, a thousand glasses of JC, endless swipes on the Diner's Club and a professionally gift-wrapped ten diamonds and steel limited-edition Mitchell bracelet. (Matlwa 71)

The Tlou family resembles contemporary South African blackness under the guise of BEE where they drive luxury cars, live in a model suburban home on a country estate as well as shopping overseas (Phiri 166). The Tlou family signifies recently acquired money and black pretensions at whiteness (Phiri 166). Various accounts throughout the novel describe the opulence that the Tlou family is subsumed in which resembles the black elite that BEE aimed to establish. The various forms of consumption and social behaviour that the Tlou family indulges in include: enjoying traditional English breakfast every Sunday at Silver Spoon (20), living in Little Valley Country Estate which was described as "your rustic escape from the rat race" (74) and had the most captivating horse riding trails and Tuscan architectural style (75). Mr Tlou is described as having "acquired a taste of money that has led to his desire for all things that insinuate wealth and stability" (64) and Gemina Tlou, Ofilwe's mother, was

capable of transforming herself from “unassuming mother of two and grateful housewife to cosmopolitan woman-on-the-move” (65). The Tlou family further indulged in Eurocentric culture such as Ofilwe’s grandmother taking a week off from work in order to mourn the sudden passing of Princess Diana (17) and John Tlou actively listening to classical music (64). The main signifier of the Tlous that resembled the life of black diamonds was the move from Mabopane, a township in Pretoria, to an exclusive estate in Sandon.

Although the Tlou family immersed themselves into the suburban ways of living, the family was still subsumed in a cultural hybridisation that encompassed their black culture. Despite the fact that they were living in a suburban mansion that was “incomparable to any other” (75), Ofilwe describes how the inside of her home did not “smell of sauteed prawns and ricotta stuffed pasta with mushroom sauce that wafts into the garden, but rather the sharp smell of *mala le mogodu*” (75). Language in the Tlou family also became a point of reference for social and cultural hybridization. Kamwangamalu (2003) describes the concept of “language economics'' in relation to the globalisation of language by stating that language, language varieties, utterances and accents are seen as goods or commodities in which they are assigned market value similar to any market: some goods have more value than others (71). The value of indigenous languages is therefore determined against other languages within the globalised economy, which explains why indigenous languages particularly, as described in *Coconut* (2007), have a low market value compared to the English language (Gerrish 14). There are further nuances such as utterances and accents that contribute to the commodification of the English language compared to indigenous languages. For Ofilwe and her family, the English language contributes to their ascension as black diamonds living in a predominantly white suburb. Speaking the English language with the correct accent and pronunciation contributes to their linguistic capital as black diamonds (Gerrish 15). An example of this is when Belinda, Ofilwe’s friend, attempts to correct her accent and utterances:

> “Say ‘uh-vin’ Fifi. You bake a cake in an ‘uh-vin’, not ‘oh-vin’, ‘uh-vin’.”
> “This is boring, Belinda, let’s see who can climb the highest up that tree.”
> “No, Fifi! You have to learn how to speak properly.”
> “I can speak properly.”
> “No you can’t Fifi. Do you want to be laughed at again? Come now. Say ‘uh-vin’.”
> “Uuh-vin.”

> "Good. Now say 'b-ird.' Not 'b-erd', but 'b-ird'." (Matlwa 49)

This example showcases how Ofilwe and her family are forced to convert to the ethos of whiteness in which their blackness needs to be modified or erased in order for them to exist (Phiri 168). The concept of language as a commodity for South African black diamonds is a factor that stems from the post-apartheid education system which continues to elevate colonial languages while downgrading African indigenous languages and placing them on the sidelines (Moopi & Rodwell 9). Attending a Model-C school would require Ofilwe to have the ability to communicate and learn in English in order to prove that she is intelligent and sophisticated enough (Moopi & Rodwell 9). Therefore, Belinda's goal is not only to save Ofilwe from being laughed at again for the way in which she communicates, her goal is to also improve Ofilwe's English proficiency in order to fully transform her into an English-speaking woman (Moopi & Rodwell 9).

Another example of cultural hybridization is exemplified through Ofilwe's older brother Tshepo, who although he grew up in privilege, still opted to get a job at Instant Fried Chicken in order to experience the world outside of white suburbia. After experiencing ill-treatment from customers, Tshepo struggles to comprehend why he is not receiving equal treatment:

> I am enraged. I want to call them all to order. Telling them that they have no right treating people the way they do. I want them to hear my voice. I want them to listen to the manner in which I speak. I want to slap their stuffed faces with my private school articulation. (Matlwa 29)

After attempting to convince his colleagues to assist him in raising the matter with their employer, Tshepo is ridiculed when one of his colleagues states that "these Model-C children know nothing of the real world. They are shocked by the ways of Umlungu" (Matlwa 29). Tshepo embodies what Spencer (2009) calls a "romanticised African Identity" where he attempts to detach himself from the white suburban world that he grew up in and attempts to reclaim his blackness by situating himself in spaces that he considers black. Commenting on Tshepo's romanticised African identity, Phiri (2013) argues that Tshepo's notion of blackness is superficial from the way he physically dresses, wearing his mother's Kaftans which resemble the "West African shirts they sell at the flea markets" (Matlwa 82) and working at an instant food restaurant (Phiri 169). Phiri (2013) notes that the aforementioned is performative and filtered through a particularly white lens. In his attempt to establish himself as a black person, he can only envisage doing so in/on white terms in which his sense of

black self is “dialectically responsive to and apparently inseparable from an opposing whiteness” (Phiri 169). Contrasting to Tshepo, although Ayanda revels in the material privileges of whiteness, his blackness is not performative but instead claims allegiance to black cultural ideology (Phiri 170).

### 4.2.2 Uncle - Silas Nyoni

Contrasting to John Tlou as a beneficiary of BEE is Fikile’s uncle who experiences the exploitative end of what the BEE policy aimed for. Fikile’s uncle works as a security guard at a communications company. Unfortunately, Fikile’s uncle is subject to “BEE fronting” or “fronting practice” which is described as “any action within a company that undermines or frustrates the objectives of the BEE act or its implementation” (Ochse 2023). Examples of BEE fronting include when a black employee is given a title such as director or shareholder but does not act in the capacity of that title or receive benefits in accordance with the title.

Fikile’s uncle becomes a front for his white-owned company in which he is asked to attend a meeting and is introduced as “Silas Nyoni”, a BEE partner and newly appointed Operations Manager of Lentso communication (Matlwa 106). Fikile’s uncle describes in detail how he was taken to the “Hyde Park offices of Borman-Nkosinathi [which had] tall buildings and glass doors”; he was then “dressed up in a brown suit with yellow lines”, and was made to sit “in the front seat” on their way there (104). Upon arriving at Borman-Nkosinathi, Fikile’s uncle is told that it would be better if he did not speak. After meeting with the CEO of Borman-Nkosinathi, Fikile’s uncle is rushed and sent back home where he has moved from the front seat of the car to the back seat, and is forced to change his clothes. Moopi & Makombe (2022) describe how the relationship between Fikile’s uncle and his employers showcases “the continuation of asymmetrical power relations between whites and blacks in South Africa” (6). The relationship between Fikile’s uncle and his employers speaks to how white business owners managed to find a loophole in an act that was meant to increase black participation in the economy and abuse it to enrich themselves. This thus speaks to the re-racialistion and frustrations of neo-liberal policies that continue to uphold the objectification and dehumanisation of the majority of black subjects in post-apartheid South Africa. Fikile’s uncle explains his objectification and dehumanisation accordingly:

> And to think sometimes that maybe if I spoke up, said something profound or gave an insightful suggestion, then maybe they’d see that there’s more to the security officer than black skin…Maybe they’d see that I belong in that brown suit with yellow stripes (Matlwa 107)

Within neo-liberal post-apartheid South Africa, policies such as the BEE have proven to open up a space for black business owners to participate in the South African economy. Unfortunately, these policies did not fully bridge the gap between black exploitation and the continued social and economic issues faced by many black South Africans who were not capable of meeting the requirements of these policies in order for them to participate in the economy. Although Ofilwe and her family benefited from the upward social mobility that the BEE policy had to offer, it did not hinder them from still being subject to racial Othering and alienation within the white middle-class world - although they were financially secure, they were still deprived from fully embracing their black cultural identities. Fikile and her uncle were not beneficiaries of BEE and were instead subject to exploitation and the ill-social ramifications of this exploitation.

Matlwa (2007) encapsulates the contrasting dichotomy between black lives living in the same South Africa, with different experiences, occurring in post-apartheid South Africa. The distinction between the Tlous and the Twalas sheds light on the inconsistencies experienced in narratives that trace the post-colonial coming of age experience. As an anti-bildungsroman narrative, *Coconut* (2007) highlights the alienating effects of neoliberal policies and the advancement of capital on black South Africans, resulting in the widening gap of inequality and the strengthening of elitism. The distinction between the Twalas and the Tlous also showcases hegemonies amongst homogenous groups according to access to capital and class without providing equal means of access to all. Lastly, as an anti-bildungs narrative, Matlwa comments on the faux notion of equality and access by noting how previously disadvantaged groups still remain inferior compared to their white counterparts.

### 4.3 Quick wealth & the 419 scam in *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009)

419 scams form part of the greater informal trading sector that makes up the Nigerian economy. Cartwright (2023) explains how the “discursive landscape” of the internet is deeply connected to globalisation (661). The local use of internet technologies foregrounds its global dimensions in which it allows for a transnational outreach. Further local use of the internet has allowed for the narrowing of the globe and has enhanced access between various social and economic dichotomies. 419 scamming is also known as advance fee fraud, ‘Obtaining by Trick’ and ‘Yahoo Yahoo’. 419 is in a section of the Nigerian Criminal Code and is defined as “Obtaining property by false pretences; cheating” (Lawal 279). Increased access to internet technologies over the decades have enhanced and transformed scamming efforts into “globe-girdling blizzard of instantaneous importuning” (Glickman 473). The two key characteristics of 419 scamming are firstly, “the entanglement of the victim with the fate of an

unknown figure" (Smith 28). This refers to when a wealthy victim is asked to assist in a current matter in which they will receive an exchange of generous remuneration for their help. Secondly, "the necessity of keeping the proposed scheme a secret" (Smith 28). This means that the secrecy is secured between the two parties. Andrew Smith (2009) further explains how 419 scamming works: The mugu is contacted by someone who claims to have access to a [large] sum of money which requires secrecy if it is not to be recovered by authorities; in return for providing an overseas bank account into which these funds can be moved, the recipient is offered a generous cut - usually amounting to millions of dollars; once the relationship is established, some obstacles intercede; lastly, the mugu is required to meet with the sender of the email, in which they continue to meet until they are 'cleaned out' or until they realise that the millions they were promised will never materialise (Smith 28)

Similar to the BEE black elites in South Africa, 419ers in Nigeria occupy a particular social space that is characterised by excessive wealth and upward mobility. Apart from Kingsley's journey, Cash Daddy represents a social, economic and political trajectory that represents Nigeria's nouveau riche. Upon introducing Cash Daddy, Kingsley's Aunt, Aunty Dimma describes Cash Daddy's social status and wealth accordingly:

> Point of correction…his money is not small at all. The cost of his cars alone can pay off all of Nigeria's international debts. You can go on calling him big names like "nouveau riche". You own the big grammar, he owns the big money (Nwaubani 86).

419ers are usually portrayed as skilful entrepreneurs who are admired and envied for their wealth. They also represent the various symbols of success in Nigerian society, having access to material luxuries such as cars, phones and expensive linen clothes (Jordan-Smith 808 - 809). In order to achieve these luxuries, 419ers are widely known for bribing officials such as the police, politicians, traditional leaders, journalists and military members in order to get away with their fraudulent activities (Jordan-Smith 809). One of the methods that Nwaubani (2009) uses to present 419ers and their wealth is through the exaggerated names of characters throughout the novel, examples include "Cash Daddy", "Mr World Bank" and "Long John Daddy" (Nwaubani 2009). These names bluntly showcase the social statuses of these characters within Nigerian society as well as the social aspirations of characters like Kingsley. Although the likes of Cash Daddy achieve their success through fraudulent means, their names indicate the importance of wealth and social status within Nigerian society and the extent to which 419ers are willing to go to achieve this wealth.

In *By Chance* (2009), Nwaubani describes the 419er lifestyle and how they are described locally by their communities. A local newspaper, *This Day*, blames the "proliferation of bleached skin amongst young ladies on the average 419er preference for yellow women"; An editorial written by a Roman Catholic priest blames 419ers and their "promiscuous lifestyles on the recent rise in materialism among young girls and their tendency to dress in 'Babylonian apparel'; another writer blames 419ers for "importing the AIDS virus to Nigeria" (Nwaubani 226). Although these are the representations of 419ers, Kingsley defends them, asserting that there are two sides to every coin. Kingsley describes the generosity of 419ers and their wealth in the community by sharing examples of Cash Daddy's philanthropy in his local community. These include being responsible for the upkeep of an Orphanage housing 221 girls, the tarring of roads in his mother's community, digging boreholes, installing streetlights and building a primary health care centre (Nwaubani 226). Thus Kingsley is convinced that 419ers are not the villains that they are portrayed to be. *By Chance* (2009) presents the relationship between 419ers and their victims - mainly "Mugu's" – and how internet technologies, greed and imperial knowledge all contribute to the success of 419 scams.

### 4.3.1 Mugu

> That Oyinbo people greedy, I say them greedy / I don't see them tire / That's why when they fall into my trap o! / I dey show them fire
> Nkem Owoh, *I Go Chop Your Dollar* (2008)

The term "mugu" is a Nigerian slang term that refers to a "fool" (Okoh). In *By Chance* (2009), the term is used continuously to describe the victims of Cash Daddy and Kinglsey who are very gullible and are easily conned, which in turn contributes to their success. Smith (2000) describes how one of the main reasons why 419 scamming is successful is due to the "greed of the Oyinbo people" (Oyinbo refers to a person of European descent) (29) as well as the "sanctioned ignorance" of Euro-Americans (Smith 32). Within Nigerian popular culture, the explanation of the 'tireless greed' of the Oyinbo people is connected to their "ongoing imperialism" which has been one of the main conditions why scamming them has become so effortless (Smith 29). Karl Marx describes this phenomenon as a "historical retribution" in which the act of rebellion towards colonists is an instrument forged "not by the offended, but by the offender himself" (Marx 172). Smith (2009) asserts that one of the rhetorical bases and contributing factors of these scams is the European representation of Africa - this is the ideological instrument forged by the offender (Smith 29). An example of this in *By Chance (2009)* occurs when one of Kingsley's colleagues Wizard befriends an American man online. Wizard adopts the persona of a young Woman 'Suzie' who is a makeup artist and had a

business trip to Nigeria where she offered to “transform girls strutting down the catwalk for an AIDS charity in Lagos' ' (162). Suzie ran into some trouble when her passport was stolen in a taxi in Lagos. Through this narrative, Wizard has successfully baited his American victim by employing common stereotypes related to Nigeria and the African continent in order to extract money from him. Wizard has also successfully mimicked the speech patterns of American society that he observed through commodified images of America through popular media (Dalley 22). This in turn results in the victim expressing derogatory attitudes towards Nigerians:

> By the way babe, you gotta take good care of yourself and watch out, OK? Maybe I should’ve warned you when you said you were going. I saw on CNN sometime that the folks in Nigeria are real dangerous…By the way hun, while you’re out there, you’d better watch out for diseases, especially HIV. I hear almost all of them over there have got it (Nwaubani 163 - 164)

It is stereotypes like these from Oyinbo people that waters down the sympathy towards them from 419ers and validates their continued defrauding. Smith (2009) suggests that the stereotypes mentioned by the American victim reveals “the knowledge towards post-colonial economies and the ambiguous forms of worldly awareness which contemporary mass media facilitates” (Smith).

The greed of the Oyinbo people is explained by Jordan-Smith (2001) stating that they are so greedy and are so easily manipulated because they are selfish and do not question how the major profits that they are promised might be obtained; it is because of this that it's easier to con the wealthy than the poor (808 - 809). Furthermore, the offers contained in the emails that the Oyinbos fall for are not only implausible but laughable, thus Smith (2009) questions how these exaggerated offers that are ‘too good to be true’ are received and treated by recipients as both good and true? (Smith 30). The answer lies in what Gayatri Spivak (1999) refers to as a ‘sanctioned ignorance’ where “stories you might have heard about Africa ''come into play and are essentially manipulated by 419ers. The sanctioned ignorance occurs when the globally powerful take on the duty of speaking for a particular constituency, group or nation in which there is a claim to representative power on the part of the one who does the speaking” (Spivak 164). In relation to the “stories you might have heard about Africa'', this plays out through major contemporary media coverage of the continent such as from CNN in the example given above that describes the continent as going through economic and political disarray, looting, corruption, and desperate attempts to avoid poverty. This form of

knowledge distribution is what Edward Said (1978/2003) describes as imperial knowledge (32). Thus 419ers use this to their advantage by extrapolating from high profile news stories about the continent in order to construct narratives that would attract gullible victims who claim to be knowledgeable about the continent. Nwaubani (2009) utilises this 419er strategy throughout her novel. The different emails and embodiments throughout the novel reference Third World geo-politics that could have potentially seeped through Western media. Examples include: posing as Mariam Abacha, the widow of late former Nigerian President Sani Abacha:

> FOLLOWING THE SUDDEN DEATH OF MY HUSBAND, GENERAL SANI ABACHA…I HAVE BEEN THROWN INTO A STATE OF UTTER CONFUSION, FRUSTRATION AND HOPELESSNESS BY THE CURRENT CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION…THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT HAS GONE AFTER MY FAMILY'S WEALTH. YOU MUST HAVE HEARD REPORTS OVER THE MEDIA AND ON THE INTERNET ABOUT THE RECOVERY OF VARIOUS HUGE SUMS OF MONEY DEPOSITED BY MY HUSBAND IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES ABROAD (Nwaubani 152; original capitals)

In a scenario with a Mugu named Winterbottom, Nwaubani (2009) portrays the extent to which 419ers go in order to achieve their scamming goals. Kingsley, Cash Daddy and Protocol Officer plan a trip to London to meet with a high profile businessman and investor, Mr Winterbottom. Cash Daddy describes Winterbottom as the man "whose money is going to feed your children and your children's children and your children's children's children" (Nwaubani 181). Upon arriving in London and meeting Mr Winterbottom, Cash Daddy takes on the persona of Alhaji Mahmud, the Minister of Aviation of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In an over-dramatised performance, Cash Daddy, Kingsley and Protocol Officer manage to convince Mr Winterbottom to invest millions in the "Akanu Ibiam International Airport Project" (Nwaubani 199-200). Cartwright (2023) explains how these various distinctive emails and meet-ups with victims showcase how Nwaubani pays attention to the 419ers' reproduction of the discourse and orthography of "bureaucratese" (Cartwright 663). With regards to physically meeting mugus, Cesare (2013) describes how the entire exchange is a "419 email converted to a monologue, with the same strategies and manoeuvres in play" (Cesare 91). The exchanging of sympathetic stories, the exaggerated sums of money involved, and the globalised hierarchies involved between Nigeria and Euro-America contribute to the success of the scam with Winterbottom.

The success in the emails and physical meeting with mugus represent the charms of capital. With regards to capital, Marx points out that there is no difference between “authentic and fraudulent” when it comes to the generation of capital within a capitalist society (Marx 839). The increase in the capital era results in the dissolution of values (Smith 40). The response to these fraudulent emails from the elite is astounding due to the fact that these emails are distributed in numbers without being detected by state authorities worldwide and are organised across networks that are not detected by the conventional mechanisms of state jurisdiction (Smith 40). Musila (2022) notes how 419ers “weaponise the Euro-American conceit of knowledge” in order to scam successfully. The success of these scams showcases the continued existence of racist stereotypes in Euro-American imaginaries. As soon as ‘victims’ to these scams become aware that they have been swindled, they are faced with the reality of their ignorance about the state of the world based on their perceived imperial knowledge (25-26).

### 4.4 Conclusion

Matlwa exposes how policies such as BEE were not fully monitored to avoid the misuse and ill-treatment of black people and how policies that were meant to advance black elites did not protect the black middle class from being racially excluded. For both Fikile and Ofilwe, coming of age within a neo-liberal post-apartheid South Africa that focused on the generation of capital and global inclusivity as a developing country proved to be difficult due the social, racial and cultural inequalities that were still prevalent and affected their daily lives. Due to the constant need and generation of capital globally, Nwaubani (2009) not only exposes the incomplete control of state authority over the flows of values and capital globally, but also exposes the blurred lines between legal and illegal and the lack of questioning by authority figures as to how wealth comes about within neoliberal societies. Through capitalism, Marx asserts that “one capitalist may admittedly defraud another and hence draw from circulation more value than he threw in" (Marx 25).

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to determine the extent to which the post-millennial / post-colonial African novels *Coconut* (2007) by Kopano Matlwa and *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009) by Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani reconfigure the traditional bildungsroman format to constitute an African counter discourse. The study further examined the extent to which these two coming-of-age novels exposed, addressed or dismantled European narratives of Africa and how the two authors "wrote back to the empire" by adapting the bildungsroman format to their respective narrative contexts. Lastly, this study also examined the extent to which these two novels could be considered as anti-bildungsroman novels due to their protagonists coming of age in non-European nations that have been stained by the effects of colonialism.

Taking into consideration the initial description and characteristics associated with the traditional bildungsroman as an inherently European genre that is set in a particular historical, geographical and political moment, and prioritises the white, European, middle class, male protagonist; the study concludes that the novels *Coconut* (2007) and *I Do Not Come to You By Chance* (2009) successfully portray an anti-bildungsroman mode in the capacity of their themes, the trajectory of their narrative structures - particularly the endings of each narrative; the setting of each novel in post-independent African nations, and their historical, socio-political and cultural backgrounds of those nations; and lastly the character developments of each protagonist which showcased a development that went against what would be considered an ethical and social "happy ending".

As post-colonial coming-of-age stories, the themes of each novel were tied to each protagonist's social background which influenced their environments and social conditions; and this in turn shaped their daily experiences. One of the key themes of *Coconut* (2007) was the exploration of identity as born free individuals growing up in a post-apartheid South Africa that is transitioning into a post-racial and multicultural society. As young black women, Fikile and Ofilwe's identities contribute to their coming-of-age journeys as they have to negotiate their way through a society that considers them inferior due to their blackness. Fikile and Ofilwe's daily experiences include them having to constantly be aware of their blackness and identify *when* and *where* their blackness would be either beneficial or a hindrance to their daily experience. The key theme of *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009) is the complexities surrounding quick wealth through illegal schemes and the moral dilemmas experienced in the pursuit of financial liberation, particularly in a society that has adopted corruption as the only means of survival and socio-economic comfortability. The

protagonist, Kingsley, is forced to negotiate his way through ethically finding a stable job which is rendered impossible due to the state of the Nigerian economy.

The narrative structure and characterology of each novel were discussed in chapter two which examined how each major plot point that makes up the structure of the bildungsroman was either reconfigured or adopted by the authors. The main similarity between *Coconut* (2007) and *By Chance* (2009) was the ending of each novel and how they were antithetical to the classical bildungsroman. *Coconut* (2007) ends in a state of ambiguity for both Fikile and Ofilwe in which they come to terms with the negative weight of their blackness and are unable to reach their goals of 'belonging' for Ofilwe and to get out of the township for Fikile due to the constraints associated with their identities. This ending contrasts the classical 'happy ever after' ending that the classical bildung promotes. Instead Matlwa expresses through these two characters how the implications of racism and othering plays a role in blocking the success of a protagonist coming of age in a post-colonial nation, compared to a protagonist whose race does not subject them to certain 'lower' standards and conditions of living.

In *By Chance* (2009) Kingsley's narrative presents the traditional steps of the bildungsroman with tensions highlighting Kingsley's ethical internal conflicts that he struggles with from the moment he is introduced to 419 scamming. Kingsley is forced to decide to "adapt or die;" and he chooses to adapt. By the end of the novel, Kingsley gives off the impression that he left the life of scamming only to find that he had never stopped. Nwaubani showcases the inability for post-colonial protagonists to structurally come of age in societies that are ruled by the laws of "survival of the fittest." Thus it can be argued that Nwaubani subtly mocks the bildungsroman trajectory by deceiving readers into believing in the possibility of normalcy. Chapter two concluded that the process of socialisation for Fikile and Ofilwe proved to be difficult due to issues of identity in a racialized world. But Kingsley, as though playing a chess game, manages to adapt to his social environment and integrate into the formal and informal social spaces that contribute to his financial success. With regards to the ending of *By Chance* (2009), Musila (2022) highlights the trickster tools that Nwaubani implemented by prolonging Winterbottom's narrative presence in the novel. The presence of Winterbottom in the end when he calls Kingsley speaks to the prolonged historical harm of racial capitalism that lingers in post-independent Nigeria (27). Thus, Kinglsey's 'talking back' can be received with a pinch of scepticism in which his relationship with Winterbottom promotes the ideology that Winterbottom as a Westerner still remains the author of Kingsley's fate (27).

Chapters three and four focused on aspects of the setting in each novel and their historical, socio-political and cultural backgrounds. Chapter three focuses on the post-independent African countries presented in the novels, mainly South Africa and Nigeria, and how these two countries struggled with the process of nation-building due to the inability of leaders to unite diverse groups, ethnicities and races as well as the implications of imperialism. Chapter three also considered how compared to European nations that did not experience colonial disruptions, former colonised nations did not have the advantage to homogenise their societies. The rainbow nation and the post-independent Nigerian nation presented are representative of how forms of difference and division such as race and class contributed to the obstacles that the protagonists had to endure and overcome. Chapter four examined how the ideology of neo-liberalism and its effects within the continent of Africa contributed to major economic and political upheavals in which wide social and economic gaps were created through structural adjustment programmes that were introduced into the continent when countries gained their independence. It is important to note the link between the traditional bildungsroman and the ridgid European socio-economic framework presented in the narrative versus the anti-bildungsroman and the volatile social-economies of post-colonial countries. Coming of age in a traditional European bildungsroman aids the protagonist as they are set in a political and social landscape characterised by clear social opportunities for all who follow the bildungsroman trajectory, class distinctions, established social hierarchies and upward social mobility.Thus chapter three and four conclude that compared to European nations and economies, colonial disruptions and neo-liberal programmes resulted in economic and social structures that were characterised by corruption, inequality, poverty and many other heightened social issues that hinder the post-colonial protagonist from easily integrating and contributing to their societies.

Through this research analysis, it is clear that *Coconut* (2007) and *I Do Not Come to You By Chance* (2009) have spoken back to the empire by reconfiguring the bildungsroman to express the post-colonial coming of age condition. The adoption and adaptation of the classical European format showcase how Matlwa and Nwaubani reject the ideological premise of the genre which is tied to European bourgeois subjectivity and instead portray a social realism that is a dynamic and flexible mode of African, post-colonial representation. Both *Coconut* (2007) and *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* (2009) successfully ‘talk back’ and embody the nodes of an anti-bildungsroman that asserts its own power and knowledge and is representative of post-colonial counter-discourse literature.

## 6. References


Adebanwi, Wale and Obadare, Ebenezer. “Introducing Nigeria at fifty: The nation in narration”. Journal of Contemporary African studies, Vol.28, No. 4, 2010, pp. 379-405

Austen, Ralph A. “Struggling with the African Bildungsroman”. *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 46, No. 3, 2015, pp. 214-231

Babalola, Dele. *The Political economy of federalism in Nigeria*. Palgave: Macmillian, 2019

Babalola, Dele and Chukwuemeka, Okafor. “The Challenges of Nation-Building in Nigeria and the State Building Alternative''. *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2024, pp. 20-33

Bakhtin, Mikhail M. “The Bildungsroman and its Significance in the History of Realism: Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel”. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin: University of Texas, 1986

Blau, Peter. M. “The Theory of Social Integration”. American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 65, No. 6, 1960

Boes, Tobias. *Formative Fictions: Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Bildungsroman*. Cornell University Press, 2012

Burney, Shehla. “Resistance and Counter-Discourse: Writing Back to the Empire''. Pedagogy of the Other: Edward Said, Postcolonial Theory and Strategies for Critique, Vol. 417, 2012, pp. 105-116

Carkeet, Margaret. *The Discomfort of Civilisation: The Bildungsroman in Colonial Culture*. Brandeis University, 2015

Cartwright, Penny Bicol. “Yahoo-yahoos and Twitter kweens”: Internet Technologies in contemporary Nigerian fiction”. *Journal of Postcolonial writing*, Vol. 59, No. 5, 2023, pp 660-673

Cesare, Nicole. “Strange Encounters: I Do Not Come to You by Chance and the Rhetoric of 419”. Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies, Vol.1, No.1, 2013, pp 82-98

Christie, Pam and Mckinney, Carolyn. “Decoloniality and Model-C Schools: Ethos, Language and the protest of 2016”. Vol. 21, No. 3, 2017, pp. 1-21

Dalley, Hamish. “Third Generation Nigerian Literature: Conceptualising Historical Change and Territorial Affiliation in the Contemporary Nigerian Novel”. *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 2013, pp.15-34

Decker, Stephanie. “Postcolonial Transitions in Africa: Decolonization in West Africa and Present Day South Africa”. Journal of Management Studies, 47:5, 2010, pp. 791-813

Du Toit, Fanie. “A broken promise? Evaluating South Africa’s reconciliation process twenty years on”. *International Political Science Review*, Vol 38, No. 2, 2017, pp. 169-184

Ekanade, Olumide Victor. “The Dynamics of Forced Neoliberalism in Nigeria Since the 1980’s”. *Journal of Retracing Africa*, Vol.1, No.1, 2014, pp 1-24

Erasmus, Zimitri. “Confronting the categories: Equitable admissions without apartheid race classification”. SAJHE, Vol. 2, 2010, pp 244-257

Esty, Jed. “The Colonial Bildungsroman: “The Story of an African Farm” and the Ghost of Goethe”. *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 3, 2007, pp. 407-430

Fanon, Frantz. Black Skin, White Masks. United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 1952

Fincham, Gail. *Dance of Life: The novels of Zakes Mda in post-apartheid South Africa*. Claremount: UCT Press, 2011

Freund, Bill. “South Africa: The end of Apartheid & the Emergence of the ‘BEE Elite’”. *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 34, No. 114, 2007, pp 661-678

Gerrish, Heather. A Writer for a Shrinking World: Cultural Identity Formation and Globalization in the Novels of Kopano Matlwa. Eastern Illinois University, 2012

Goodman, Ralph. “Kopano Matlwa’s *Coconut*: Identity Issues in Our Faces”. *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2012, 109-119

Graham, Sarah. A History of the Bildungsroman. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2019

Harlow, Barbra. *Resistance Literature*. London : Methuen. 1987

Harrison, Graham. “Economic Faith, Social Project and a Misreading of African Society: The Travails of Neoliberalism in Africa”. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 8, 2005, pp 1303-1320

Harrison, Graham. “Authoritarian neoliberalism and capitalist transformation in Africa: all pain, no gain”. *Globalizations*, Vol 16, No 3, 2019, pp 274-288

Harvey, David. *Spaces of hope*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000

Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*. London & New York: Routledge, 2013.

Hoagland, Ericka. *A History of the Bildungsroman, by Sarah Graham*. Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp 217 - 238

hooks, bell. “Talking Back”*. Discourse: She, The Inappropriate/d Other*. Wayne State University Press. Vol 8. 1989 : pp 123 - 128

Howard, Kim. “Born Free Narratives: Life Stories and identity construction of South African Township youth”. A thesis Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of the Witwatersrand, 2016

Iheduru, Okechukwu, C. “Black Economic Power and Nation-Building in Post-Apartheid South Africa”. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2004, pp 1-30

Ilmonen, Kaisa. “Talking Back to the Bildungsroman”. *Journal of West Indian Literature*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2017, pp 60-76

Irele, Abiola. “Dimensions of African Discourse”. *Teaching Postcolonial and Commonwealth Literatures*, Vol. 19/20, No. 3/1, 1992/1993, pp 45-59

JanMohamed, Abdul. R. “Humanism and Minority Literature: Toward a Definition of Counter-Hegemonic Discourse”. *On Humanism and the University I: The Discourse of Humanism*, Vol. 12/13, No. 3/1, 1984, pp. 281-299

JanMohamed, Abdul and Lloyd, David. “Introductio: Toward a Theory of Minority Discourse”. Cultural Critique: The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse, No. 6, 1987, pp. 5-12

Johnston, Alexander. *South Africa, Inventing the Nation*. Bloomsbury: Academic, 2014

Jordan-Smith, Daniel. “Ritual Killing, 419, and Fast Wealth: Inequality and the Popular Imagination in Southeastern Nigeria”. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 2001, pp 803-826

Kamwangamalu, Nkonko. “Globalisation of English, and Language Maintenance and Shift in South Africa”. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, pp 65-81

Kotze, Joleen Steyn and Prevost, Gary. “Born Free - an assessment of political identity formation and party support of South Africans first Post-Apartheid Generation”. *African Institute of South Africa*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 2015

Labovitz, Esther. K. *The Female Bildungsroman in the Twentieth Century : A Comparative Study : Dorothy Richardson, Simone de Beauvoir, Doris Lessing, Chrisa Wolf.* New York University, 1982

Lawal, Abdullahi. “The Exploration of Internet Scam in Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani’s *I Do Not Come to You by Chance*”. *Journal of English and Communications in Africa*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2018, pp. 273-291

Letshufi, Bonolo. “Coconuts: Self-identification and Experiences of Black people proficient in English”. A Research Report submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for Masters by coursework and Research Report. University of the Witwatersrand, 2016

Malila, Vanessa. “Being a Born Free - The misunderstandings and missed opportunities facing young South Africans”. *RJR*, 2015, pp 128-135

Manase, Irikidzayi. “Black diamonds and excess in the fictional and lived South African city of the early 2000s. *English Academy Review: A Journal of English Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2016, pp 87-96

Maniscalco, Jonathan. *The Classical Bildungsroman : A Failed Framework for an Empire in the 20th Century in Dangarembga's Zimbabwe and Mishima's Japan*. Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, 2021

Marx, Karl. Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1857-1858/1973

Matlwa, Kopano. *Coconut.* Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2007

Mattes, Robert. "The Born Frees: The prospect for generational change in Post-apartheid South Africa", *Australian Journal of Political Science*", Vol 47, No 1, 2012, pp. 133-153

Masetsi, Thandokazi. "The University is not your home: Lived experience of a Black woman in academia. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 2018, pp 1-8

Mbeki, Thabo. "Challenge of the formation of a black capitalist class, a black bourgeoisie". Speech at the annual National Conference of the Black Management Forum, Kempton Park, 1999 [online] http:www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/1999/tm1120.html

Mbembe, Achille and Nutshell, Sarah. *Introduction: In Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008

Miller, Seumas. Foucault on Discourse and Power. *Theoria* : A Journal of Social and Political Theory. No 76. 1990 : pp 115 - 125

Mkandawire, Thandika and Olukoshi, Adebayo. "Between Liberalisation and Oppression: The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa". *CODESRIA* Books, 1995, pp 430

Moopi, Peter and Makombe, Rodwell. "Coloniality and identity in Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut (2007)*. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, Vol. 63, No.1, 2022, pp 2-13

Moussa, Mario and Scapp, Ron. "The Practical Theorising of Michel Foucault: Politics and Counter Discourse". *Cultural Critique*, No. 33, 1996, 87-112

Musila, Grace. A. "The Legacies of Empire in Nwaubani's I Do Not Come to You by Chance and Mengestu's All Our Names". *Novel: A Forum on Fiction,* Vol. 55, No. 1, 2022, pp. 19-37

Narsiah, Saige. “Neoliberalism and privatisation in South Africa”. *Geojournal*, Vol. 57, No. ½, 2002, pp 29-38

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo. J. Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization. Routledge, 2013

Nutshell, Sarah. *Entanglement: Literary and cultural reflections on post-apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009

Nwaubani, Adaobi Tricia. *I Do Not Come to You by Chance*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2009

Okoh, Lize. “Untranslatable Nigeria slang words we need in English: Mugu Defined”. 2023 [online] https://theculturetrip.com/africa/nigeria/articles/11-untranslatable-nigerian-slang-words-we-need-in-english#:~:text=Maga%2FMugu,you're%20a%20fool'.

Okoli, Anayo; Umjumadu, Vincent; Nkwopara, Chidi; et al. “Why first son is accorded high respect in Igboland - Monarch, Igbo leader”. 2021 [online] https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/02/why-first-son-is-accorded-high-respect-in-igboland-monarchs/

Olaniyan, Tejumola. “On Post-Colonial Discourse: An Introduction”. *Callaloo,* Vol. 16, No. 4, 1993, pp. 743-749

Oyedemi, Toks Dele. “Postcolonial casualties: ‘Born-frees’ and decolonisation in South Africa”. *Journal of Contemporary Africa Studies*, Vol, 39, No. 2, 2021, pp. 214-229

Peck, Jamie and Tickell, Adam. “Jungle Law Breaks out: Neoliberalism and Global-Local Disorder”. *The Royal Geography Society*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 1994, pp. 317-326

Phiri, Aretha. “Kopano Matlwa’s Coconut and the Dialectics of Race in South Africa: Interrogating Images of Whiteness and Blackness in Black Literature and Culture. *The Journal of South African and American Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2013, pp 161-174

Ribic, Peter. “The Nigerian email scam novel”. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Vol 55, No. 3, 2019, pp 424-436

Mackintosh, John. P. “Nigeria Since Independence”. The World Today, Vol. 20, No. 8, 1964, pp 328-337

McKee, Robert. *Story : Substance, Structure, Style and The Principles of Screenwriting*. New York : HarperCollins, 1997

Ngwenya, Nomagugu. “Everyday Narratives: Exploring ‘born-free’ experiences of racial identity in post-apartheid South Africa. A Research Report Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters by coursework and Research Report, University of the Witwatersrand, 2018

Norgaard, Stefan. “Born Free? Names, Identity and Identity-formation”. *Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, Vol. 69, No. 2, 2015

Sall, Tikam Liese. “The Rainbow Myth: Dreaming of a Post-racial South African Society”. *Institute for Global Dialogue*, 2018, pp. 1-9

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin, 1978/2003

Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, 1993

Schneck, Stephen Frederick. “Michael Foucault on Power/Discourse, Theory and Practice”. *Human Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1987, pp 15-33

Shringarpure, Bhakti. *Cold War Assemblages: Decolonization to Digital*. New York: Routledge, 2020

Simpson, Mark. “The experience of nation-building: Some lessons for South Africa”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1994, pp 463-474

Smith, Andrew. “Nigerian Scam E-mails and the Charms of Capital”. *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2009, pp 27-47

South African History Online. “The Union of South Africa 1910”. [online] https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/union-south-africa-1910

Spencer, Lynda. “Young, black and female in post-apartheid South Africa: Identity politics in Kopano Matlwa’s *Coconut*”. *Scrutiny2 Issues in English Studies in Southern Africa*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2009, pp 66-78

Spivak, Gayatri. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing present.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999

Tate, Lee. The Bildungsroman. [online] Received from https://slideplayer.com/slide/6267494/ , 2015

Tiffin, Helen. “Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourse”. *Kunapipi*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1987, pp 17-34

Twomey, E. Literature : The Importance of Context in Literature. [online] Received from https://www.vcestudyguides.com/blog/the-importance-of-context-in-literature , 2016

Volger, Christopher. *The Writer’s Journey : Mythic Structure For Writers, Third Edition*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions, 2007