

Autobiography and Scriptotherapy in Oluremi Obasanjo's *Bitter-Sweet* and Funso Adegbola's *He Gave Me Wings*

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Abstract: This study investigates how autobiographical narratives enhance wellness, and it pays a specific focus on Oluremi Obasanjo's *Bitter-Sweet: My Life with Obasanjo* and Funso Adegbola's *He gave Me Wings: Me and My Dad*. The writers are two prominent Nigerian women. Both of them wrote about how a man's influence significantly shaped their lives. While Oluremi Obasanjo presents her husband as a villain that almost maimed her, Funso Adegbola presents her dad as a hero that made her. Oluremi reveals how the syntax of her existence was only punctuated with momentary joys before her divorce, Funso unveils how her dad gave her wings to fly high above the common storms and limits of young women in a third world country. The study identifies the literary merits of the autobiographical narratives; it highlights the points of convergences and divergences between the two narratives understudied, as well as the inherent mental health benefits to the writers. The process of autobiographical writing is depicted as providing therapeutic authentication for the writers' grieves. Both authors gained audibility and visibility through the instrumentality of writing. The process of writing these autobiographies became a resilience building device for their authors as they were able to negotiate their traumatic experiences by expressing themselves through writing. While Oluremi creates a positive public image for herself against the domineering political stature of Obasanjo in *Bitter-Sweet: My Life with Obasanjo*, Funso re-enacts positive memories of her late father through writing to 'remember' him to their community from which death exited him in *He Gave Me Wings: Me and my Dad*.

Keywords: Scriptotherapy, Compassionate Community, Mental Health, Grief Enfranchisement, Therapeutic Scriptorium

1. Introduction

Autobiographies, unanimously recognized as the life stories of people written by themselves [3], have constituted a special genre of literature for intellectual inquiries [9, 22]. Over the years and across continents, studies have established that autobiography is a viable genre of literary studies [2]. Because autobiographies are considered as true past events in the writers' lives, they can therefore be seen as relics of facts. A statement of fact can be described as truth, reality, actuality, verity, accuracy, genuine, precision, exactness and veracity. Literature, which is regarded as fiction implies fantasy, invention, imagination, unrealism, fabrication, lie, untruth, or fib. It is therefore contradictory to purport that truth is fiction, as the works of the authors considered in this article demonstrate qualities of facts and fiction.

Literature has been noticed for its uniqueness in reflecting or recreating reality [4, 19]. It combines facts with fiction for its creations. Some writers have been noticed for writing themselves into their fictional texts, i.e., they use their real life, personal experiences as materials for their fictional texts. Frank Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915) is an example. The fact that autobiographies are objects of literary studies suggests that they contain elements of literature, which includes fiction. Since literature thrives on the creative ingenuity of authors, it suggests that autobiographies cannot be entirely factual. Going by the theory of Deconstructionism, autobiographies are bound to have some gaps and silences both deliberately and unintentionally.

It is important to take note of the persuading argument of Paul De Man (1984), a notable deconstructionist, regarding autobiography as literature. He purports that autobiography is a defacement, insisting that the theories of autobiography are

plagued with series of recurrent questions and approaches that are false and confining as they take for granted the assumptions of autobiographical discourse that are highly problematic. Amongst other concerns, he questioned the status of autobiography as a genre instead of being a mere reportage and the indecisive distinction between autobiography and fiction. Notwithstanding, despite the intelligent argument of De Man concerning autobiography as a genre, it has remained a fascinating object of intellectual inquiry in literary studies all over the continents of the world. It has been strongly established by the advent of the memoir boom of the 1990s and the dedication of special academic journals for its study [22].

Apart from profit motive, a number of reasons have warranted the writing of autobiographical narratives. For some people, it is to correct some public assumptions about their personality [21, 11]. Autobiographical narratives give autobiographers this opportunity. The media and other individuals might have propagated views about someone's character that the person deems incomplete or false. In writing an autobiography, these purportedly partial or wrong assumptions are complemented or corrected. The innate desire for immortality is another reason why people write their stories. Writing has the ability of inscribing the mark of permanence on its subjects. Bolten (2014) opines that some people can prefer to preserve certain memories about their lives' time and that, autobiographical narratives give them the opportunity to do so. The literary qualities of autobiography make it an art. The written product becomes an everlasting monument after the death of its writer. It preserves the name and legacies of the individual for posterity.

Autobiographies are pictures in words that can be everlastingly preserved by the innovations of the digital age. There are people that the society does not deem important enough to preserve in history. By writing about themselves, they make themselves visible in history. In other words, autobiography has the capacity to give visibility and audibility to the marginalized. The issue of audibility is very essential as it can help to ascertain originality, authenticity and dependability of facts presented in the document; a document that bears the voice of the 'I-witness' account of the subject- dead or alive, not someone else talking on their behalf. It is important to add that some people write autobiographies for monetary gains. Because this paper's concern is the wellness significance of autobiography, the health importance of autobiographies will be prioritised. Some people can tell their stories to reconcile the past so they can experience reliefs that are essential to enjoying peace and longevity.

In the context of expressive therapies, autobiographical narratives can be seen as the written version of talking cure. In other words, when considered for its therapeutic purposes, it becomes a kind of writing cure, also known as scriptotherapy [12, 15]. The pioneering study of Henke on scriptotherapy in 1998 is highly revealing. In fact, she is recognized for the use and coinage of 'scritotherapy' to describe the therapeutic strategy of writing out and writing

through traumatic experiences as a means of curative re-enactment. She examined the autobiographical narratives of six women writers who had life shattering trauma and employed their testimonies as means for survival and recovery. She opines that these women engaged in writing to heal their injuries of psychological trauma. Henke notes that narratives about trauma are the main issues in many autobiographical texts. She concludes that written autobiographical narratives are potent means of reliving distressing experiences.

Scriptotherapy has been further described as the therapeutic effect of the process or product of writing to writers or their reading audience [19]. Mayaki and Omobowale noted that bereaved people may tell their stories for the purpose of healing. They added that writing therapists aid their clients in working through their stories in journal or dairy form which are essential tools for mental relief. These journals and dairies become some kind of autobiographical narrative with therapeutic values. They examined how Malika Lueen Ndlovu was able to cope with the stillbirth experience she had three days to her expected date of delivery by writing about her traumatic experience. They conclude that poetry writing was instrumental to how Ndlovu was able to process her experience of grief and healing.

Collins (2005) observes that autobiographical narratives have the potential of helping the aged write about their lives in ways that can facilitate social and family networks and improve their self-esteem. He illustrates further that self-esteem is a very relevant factor to maintaining physical and mental well-being. Collins, therefore, observes that both the process and product of life writing can bring about great mental and emotional benefits. In the same vein, Birren and Cochran (2001) demonstrate that the writing and sharing processes of autobiographies can add meaning to the writers' lives by helping them better understand the past and present. Hilton (2015), while discussing how autobiographical narratives can serve self-care purposes, argues that writing about one traumatic feelings can be a very potent therapeutic tool for self-cure.

The narratives understudy, Oluremi Obasanjo's *Bitter Sweet: My Life with Obasanjo* (2009) and Funso Adegbola's *He Gave Me Wings: Me and My Dad* (2005), (which shall hereafter be referred to as *Bitter Sweet* and *He Gave Me Wings* respectively) are autobiographical narratives written by two Nigerian women. However, due to the politics of writing and other compelling and unmanageable factors, it is obvious that not all that happened in the life time of these women have been documented. Some parts must have been left out because of the limitation of human memory, that is, the inability to remember exact details with the passage of time. This might also be as a result of the deliberate avoidance of certain events in their lives, which they may not be proud about. The conscious carefulness of not wanting to reveal any event that will implicate other people they have encountered in their life time can also make them leave out some parts. An autobiographer can also employ this strategy to avoid being sued for libel. These possibilities authenticate

the belief that autobiographies have gaps and silences which make them convey incomplete facts.

Jacque Derrida's theory of Deconstructionism is proven true herein, asserting that there cannot be absolute truth. Deconstruction which is a form of philosophical and literary approach is generally seen as an addictive strategy to varying disciplines and theories. As an offshoot of post-structuralism, Deconstruction reflects some of its features. However, contrary to the assertion of structuralism that a text has a single meaning, deconstructionism favours the proliferation of meanings for a single text. Derrida challenges the claims of a single meaning or transcendental signified. According to him, a deconstructionist reading of a text aims "at certain relationship, unperceived by the writer" (158) [5]. It "attempts to make the not seen accessible to sight" (163) [5]. Other than that oppositional reading to unmask internal contradictions, the deconstructionists show that there can be multiple meanings in a particular text [10]. Dobie notes further that "deconstruction recognizes that any human utterance has a multitude of possibilities for meaning" (156) [5].

Considering the constraints on autobiographical narratives, the contents of these texts are therefore incomplete, and as such, are adjudged non-entirely factual. This notion of incompleteness because of the repressed parts and the likelihood of exaggerated facts suggest some kind of literary coloration or ornamentation. This is needed for flowery purposes. In fact, the formalist critics have insisted that these literary features that act as ornaments in literary works are the elements that foreground and establish the literariness of a text. If *Bitter-sweet* and *He Gave Me Wings* have some coloring and repressed parts (implying fiction), they are therefore, fictions, i.e., they are products of the combination of facts and fiction.

African autobiographical narratives have enjoyed critical patronage from being historical artifacts, political weapon or propaganda document [2]. The Global North has been exploring the health benefits of autobiographical narratives and expressive writings [14, 23, 25, 26, 27]. However, not enough attention has been given to the health significance of autobiographical narratives in African literary tradition and scholarship. Are the stories in Oluremi's *Bitter-Sweet* and Funso's *He Gave Me Wings* complete facts? Are there differences and similarities in these texts? Do the narratives have any health relevance? These are questions that this study attempts to answer.

Oluremi Obasanjo is an ex-wife of General Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, a former military president between 1976 and 1978 who also ruled the country as a civilian from 1999 to 2007. She was his first wife. She is the mother of his prominent children. Iyabo Obasanjo Bello, a former commissioner in Ogun State of Nigeria is one of them. Oluremi attended Abeokuta Girls Grammar School before going abroad for further studies. On the other hand, Funso Adegbola is the daughter of late Chief Bola Ige, a former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Nigeria who was cruelly murdered in 2003. It is interesting to note that these

texts dwell largely on the lives of others, namely Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and late Chief Bola Ige respectively because the authors have chosen to focus on how these characters have impacted their lives.

This study focuses on exploring the literary qualities and the therapeutic benefits of Oluremi Obasanjo's *Bitter-Sweet* and Funso Adegbola's *He gave Me Wings*. It shall expand the frontiers of research on African autobiographical narratives by considering it from a therapeutic perspective. Over the years, research on African literature have focused more on male writers and a few big names of female writers who have distinguished themselves internationally by their artistic prowess. This research shall enlarge the focus by enlisting and accommodating two African women writers (namely: Oluremi Obasanjo and Funso Adegbola) in this canon that do not earn their living by a career in literature.

2. Scriptotherapy in the Narratives

Scriptotherapy is a morphological realization of the combination of scripting and therapy which in turn gives rise to the semantic realization of writing-cure, a variant of talking therapy [19]. Studies have established that telling the story of a traumatic experience can be therapeutic to the victim [15, 20, 19, 23, 24]. Autobiographical writing can help in chronicling recollected painful memories which serve as foundations for resilience, growth, and empathy, without automatically provoking trauma or duress [17]. Oluremi recounts painful memories in her marriage to Obasanjo, not in an apologetic manner but with a tone of triumph. This illustrates the fact that she is no longer a victim of whatever harm the marriage caused her. A 'new her' has evolved overtime such that she can refer to these painful past without feeling hurt. For example, she references an encounter in which she interrupted Obasanjo's telephone conversation with one of his mistresses and how she was beaten for it. It is thus expressed in her voice:

I was eavesdropping on the phone downstairs while Obasanjo was in the bedroom. They had spoken for about 30 minutes when she then said she then said she was having a headache. I had to heard enough, so I cut in: "its that headache that will kill you, shameless married woman dating a younger man". On hearing my voice, Obasanjo charged downstairs to beat me and we had one of the many fights that had come to define our marriage. I latter obtained her phone number and phoned her whenever I thought her influence was making me unhappy (65) [21]. It is painful enough that her husband was flirting with another woman. It is however more painful that her husband had to beat her for interrupting. However, the recollections of these painful memories only helped foreground and celebrate her freedom from such humiliation. This is very therapeutic to the psyche of Oluremi.

Funso also recounts a painful memory about the dethronement, arrest and incarceration of her father with the psychological tortures these events subjected her family to. It is better captured in the excerpt bellow:

After one term at Bristol, my brother and I came home for the Christmas holidays as usual. And to our chagrin, we met the horrors of horrors; there was a military coup on 31 December 1983. Generals Buhari and Idiagbon had taken power. When we (the entire family) listened to the nationwide broadcast of the coup on 31 December 1983, we did not realize how much our lives would change in the next 30 months. After all, Dr Victor Olulonyo was the new governor of Oyo State, so ‘what did the coup have to do with Dad?’ There was a radio announcement of a dusk-to-dawn curfew. The next morning, Dad was asked to report to Eleiyele Police Headquarters. Tunde accompanied him, along with his driver, to the station. Then, he was placed under house arrest in Agodi, and later taken to Bonny Camp, Lagos. Between January 1984 and August 1986, he was transferred to various detention centres and prisons (20-21) [1].

These scribbled painful details have been eked out through the instrumentality of pen and paper for logical contemplations and retrospections which enhance self understanding that equips the victim with resilience essential to coping with life’s vicissitudes. This is the case of Oluremi who suffered abuse in her marriage and Funso who grieves over the death of her father.

The chronicling of these stories by Oluremi and Funso has helped them to foster a compassionate community for the validation of their grieves to enhance therapeutic reliefs. They were able to attract social supports as their pains are enfranchised by the validation of family and friends through sympathy, words of encouragement and other forms of emotional supports. The writers crafted their stories in ways that vividly highlight their pains for therapeutic enfranchisement. Bellow is an illustrative excerpt from Oluremi:

I became a stockfish dealer. I was making money from it, exclusive of my job with Ibru but the booming stockfish market was to end dramatically. My husband entered our store at Ikoyi during one of his spare times and saw bundles of stockfish. He asked for their owner and I said they were mine. He praised my business initiative. However, that was bait. Anytime he had visitors, he would go into the store to take some stockfish and give to them as presents. He did not discuss price or pay for them although he always promised to settle the matter later. The stockfish was being depleted as gifts at a fast rate, so I decided to act quickly to save myself from bankruptcy. I sold everything and stopped distributing the commodity (61) [21]. Whoever reads this will necessarily want to express empathy for her unfortunate marriage situation, seeing how she is being manipulated by her husband.

Funso also references how her family benefitted from social support while narrating the story of how her brother passed away in his sleep. It is thus expressed:

On Thursday, 22 April 1993, the unimaginable happened; my brother, Tunde, passed away in his sleep. This was the first in a series of tragic events. It caused great suffering and pain to us all, especially to my parents. I had seen Mum and Dad go through difficult times, but nothing could really

describe this loss – they were both devastated. I saw my dad pull clumps of hair from his scalp. The shock of the news aged them. Nothing can prepare you for the death of your child. But through it all, we felt the presence of God: He sent his angels – through friends and family (38-39) [1]. It is clear that the comforts her family received from family and friends went a long way in helping them to overcome this trauma.

Obasanjo is a hero to thousands of admirals. If he had a marriage that did not work, it is likely to be blamed on his partner. Through *Bitter-Sweet*, Oluremi has been afforded the opportunity to give her version of the story. She has been able to shift a lot of blames on Obasanjo to better her public image which will in turn reconfigure how the public perceives her. She has been able to present a narrative that proved that Obasanjo is the cause of the collapse of their marriage for his multiple womanizing antics. This excerpt further buttresses it:

My husband’s womanizing knows no bounds. When we were in Ibadan, we attended the Baptist Church in Salvation Army area of the town. Opposite the church was the house of a popular shoe maker, Mr Akinsanya. We always called on him after service. I did not know that my husband was dating one of his daughters. [...] on another occasion, Mrs. Sodeinde during one of her visits from Kaduna had mentioned to me in confidence that my husband was having many affairs, including relationships with married officers’ wives. Because I was still blinded by love, I simply narrated the story to my husband. He turned it into a joke, assuaging my fears. [...] the first time Obasanjo beat me was because of a woman. It was late in October 1968, barely one month to the arrival of our second child, Busola (66-67) [21].

A positive public perception is important to possessing a healthy psyche. This autobiographical narrative became the amplifier of her voice in a world of patriarchal dominance and the voicelessness of the female gender. It gives her the assurance of being heard by a wider audience which is able to galvanize a compassionate community for her as it is sure that there will be people who will prefer to hold Obasanjo accountable for whatever went wrong in that marriage. This view is foregrounded by Professor Adigun Abgaje, a former deputy vice chancellor of the University of Ibadan, in her foreword to the story. She titled it “The Truth this Time” (viii) [21]. She avers that the chronicling of the story is essential to balancing the truth around the on the collapse of Oluremi’s marriage to Obasanjo for historical purposes. It is better captured in her voice thusly:

My encounter with *Bitter-Sweet: My Life with Obasanjo*, written by Mrs. Oluremi Obasanjo, strengthens my conviction that, slowly but surely, the table is being turned against the triumph of one-sided history of which I have written in my opening paragraphs. The voices of the long-silenced, and widely misquoted; the women who toil day and night to build Nigeria, to build careers of successful husbands and children who, like colossus, go on to bestride our world and direct our affairs, the drawers of water and hewers of wood, are now being heard. And that is the way it should be (ix) [21].

The writing of this autobiography becomes a tool that helps to cleanse her mind from the potential negative views people might conceive about her in relation to her failed marriage to Obasanjo, knowing that this autobiography already presents a counter opinion from her perspective.

Funso is also able to assert her individual identity despite the death of her father. This is good for her psyche. It shows that she has been able to gather the pieces of her life together and moved on after her father's death. From the chronicling of the story, it will appear like her father was all in all to her; as if without him, she will be nothing; but the autobiography foregrounds her individuality and affirms her significant continuity despite the demise of her father. On the Fathers' Day of 2014, she had this to say:

I woke up and wished Gbenro (her husband), 'Happy Fathers' Day'. I offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God for him [...] I also said a silent prayer for my Dad. [...] Dad injected in us early in life with self-esteem, ensuring that we ended up as self-assured confident adults (70-71) [1]. At this point, it is clear that she has been able to move on, not that she was able to find a replacement for her dad but she was able to adjust to her new normal. This substantiates her individuality for therapeutic purposes. This therapeutic visibility is crucial to her mental wellness.

The process of writing the autobiographies are therapeutic ripple of loss exercises to both Oluremi and Funso. According to the Creative Grief Studio (2016), this exercise is aimed at enabling those grieving to unpack their experiences of loss so that they can see it all with their grief coach who offers them the non-judgmental and compassionate witnessing that will in turn enable them to develop shame resilience. This exercise requires that the grieving client is provided with a pen and a paper with a large circle containing other smaller ones in which s/he writes his/her major loss in the innermost circle while the direct loss(es) incurred due to the major is/are written in the circles that follow. The loss(es) suffered as a result of those of the second innermost circle are recorded in the third innermost circle. In the case of Oluremi and Funso, they chose to unpack their burdens of grief through writing the stories of their lives. Writing about their experiences has helped to validate their pains and enfranchised their grief. They were able to paint their losses in words for therapeutic validations.

3. Elements of Fiction in the Narratives

3.1. Their Titles

Oluremi's *Bitter-Sweet* and Funso's *He Gave Me Wings* are figurative expressions whose logical meanings are only enhanced when considered from the perspective of the secondary semiotic use of language. "Bitter-Sweet" is an oxymoronic expression that describes the experience of Oluremi's love and marital life with Obasanjo. It connotes the fact that her experiences are often being punctuated with either momentary bitterness or sweetness. In the same vein,

Funso does not suggest that her dad gave her literal wings but a literary one. It is a metaphor that describes how her dad's support and assistance have been able to help her climb to the pinnacle of success. The two titles are examples of a flowery use of language which is a distinguishing quality of literature, and in this case, the genre of prose fiction. This adoption portrays these works as fiction.

3.2. The Silent Parts of the Stories

An autobiography does not necessarily restrict its content to the life of the writer. It also relates his/her encounters with other people, and as such, would necessitate talking about them. The level of the sensitivity of these encounters is going to determine how much would be revealed. There may be some controversial issues that these writers might have decided to leave out. This "leaving out" is a form of fabrication or reconstruction. These writers might have also left out some parts so as not to be sued for libel. Also, there may be aspects of their lives they are not very proud of that would definitely be left out. This is a literary distortion or coloration of the supposed facts that should have constituted an autobiographical narrative.

Funso tells us many good things about her father. She presents him as a saint and a caring and loving father. She presents her home as a happy one devoid of rancor, disputes nor clamoring. The fact is how true is this picture? Is there really a home where a man and his wife never had disagreement or quarrels? Funso Adegbola expresses it thus:

I was born on the 22 December 1960. On that day when I breathed my first at the University College Hospital (UCH), Ibadan, my father was admitted into the University College Hospital, London: he had an appendectomy. He often joked that he and mum had such strong telepathy that he was hospitalized and empathizing during my mother's labour pains prior to my birth – even though he was over 6000 miles across the ocean! I was a much wanted child (indeed we all were!). My parents got married on 17th April 1960 and I came along at the end of that year. Dad told me that he had prayed that I would be a girl, because his own parents had a daughter, Comfort Folorunso, as their first child. God heard his prayers and I came along (3-4) [1].

It is clear that in the excerpt above, Funso is silent about negative projections and impressions about her parents pre-marriage and marriage relationship and her relationship with them. Generally, Africans take greater pride in male children but Funso reports that her dad preferred to have a girl as his first born. This presents him as an African man who is not gender biased. She portrays him as a pious person who has a relationship with God which made him pray for a female child and had his prayers answered.

Oluremi also says much about the bad sides of Obasanjo. She does not tell us about some things she might have done that could have provoked her husband's actions. In the excerpt below, she tell us how she discovered another mistress of Obasanjo during a church service.

It was during a thanksgiving service in Port Harcourt after the war that I noticed a woman walk up to Obasanjo in the

church to peck him. I later learnt she was Gold Oruh, a reporter with the Nigerian Television Authority, who later had children for my husband (56) [21]. The question that comes to mind here is, why didn't she record how she reacted to this incident, either to the woman or her husband? She was silent on this in her narration of this autobiography.

3.3. Characterization

Both authors have carefully assigned roles to their characters in a way that will very much suit their purposes. Funso embarks on recounting a tale that will show the world that her father was a perfect father and husband. Her choice of words must have been carefully guarded to only include praise worthy terms that would paint a positive quality of her dad. This view is re-butressed in the fact that she dedicated the story to the "beautiful memories" of her brother and friend, Babatude; her dad and hero, Chief Bola Ige; and her mum and mentor, Atinuke Ige (ii) [1]. It is logical to expect that ugly pasts will be shielded off such narrative. It seems to be a document that is meant to defend and valorize the ideals of her family legacy. Oluremi has also been able to paint Obasanjo as a mortal man imbued with both likeable and detestable attributes, whereas, Obasanjo has a towering image of a leader in African and global politics. Consider the excerpt below:

There had been a woman, older than my husband, who was pestering me. She was Mowo Sofowora. The woman became a terror to her husband, threatening he could be liquidated if he objected to her illicit relationship with Obasanjo. Any time she was in Lagos, my husband never slept at home. they usually had their rendezvous at Ikoyi Hotel. My driver first gave me an inkling of who she was. [...] I was eavesdropping on the phone downstairs while Obasanjo was in the bedroom. They had spoken for about 30 minutes when she then said she was having a headache. I had heard enough, so I cut in: "It is that headache that will kill you, shameless married woman dating a younger man" (64, 65) [21].

Oluremi appears to have successfully presented an entirely different aspect of Obasanjo's character, especially from the home front. This deliberate choice about what to reveal and emphasize about a character demonstrates some elements of fiction.

Funso has presented Chief Bola Ige as a hero, an example of the ideal father, a public figure that is worthy of emulation. She tells us how caring he has been to his children and wife. He supports them morally and sends them to school abroad. He values education so much that he does not care how much he spends on them. He encourages them to pursue their dream and does not impose his choice on them. He also treats his wife courteously. This is expressed in Funso's voice thusly:

Dad was very interested in each of his children, and from an early age, he would sit down with us and discuss our dreams and aspirations; he would offer alternatives when we seemed confused or uncertain! For example, when I received admission offers in 1969 from St. Anne's, Queen's School and St. Teresa's (all in Ibadan), we sat down together and,

with pen and paper, we listed the pros and cons of the three options. Thus, he taught me to reason independently, and made me feel confident with my choices. In the end, St. Anne's was the favorite option (9) [1]. What a hero!

Contrariwise, Oluremi has presented Obasanjo as an anti-hero as he latter becomes graceless and does things that makes her unhappy. He stopped her from studying her desired course and persuades her to study institutional management; he cheats on her and betrays her love for him. According to her, he commits wife battery. He extends this callous attitude to his children. He is more outside than at home, he also spends more time with his mistresses. At a point Oluremi highlights her innocence against Obasanjo's manipulative callousness thus:

In football parlance, they call them strikers. In some other social circles, they call them Casanovas. I did not know my husband to be a flirt before our marriage. Perhaps, he was a master of decoy to have made me ignorant of that part of his life. Mark you; I was in my early teens when we met, just about to begin my secondary education. ... for seven years, we courted before marriage. I was a school leaver of barely six months when we married. He is the only man I have known all my life. I had not the luxury of mixing or experimenting like some other women before I married. He manipulated me at his, knowing my experience in the world was limited to him. He [...] dictated the course I studied; [...] he took control of my life. [...] So when I found out his philandering exploits, I regarded it as the unkindest cut for his breaking the sacred vow we took at the London Registry (64) [21].

Oluremi appears to have successfully painted Obasanjo as an anti-hero by depicting how he does things that are opposite to the traditional qualities of the heroes of our world.

3.4. Bildungsroman

This is a type of novel that follows the development of a major character from childhood or adolescent stage to adulthood. This character goes through a troubled quest for identity. This character development might also be a gradual progressive transition from innocence to experience by encountering situations that have to necessitate this growth [3]. The two texts can be viewed in this light. Both Oluremi and Funso go through pruning purgatorial experiences that made them metamorphose into the world of experience. Oluremi gets emotionally involved with Obasanjo at age nineteen. She marries and submits to him totally. She sees and treats him like a god. She greatly admires him and feels proud to identify him as her husband before her parents. But after the civil war, she gradually started seeing another side of her husband. She intercepts his love letters with strange women. She begins to work towards being financially independent by starting a business to preparing for when she will not need to depend on Obasanjo anymore. After their separation, she is able to carry on with life without his support.

Funso's story begins with her childhood. She talks about

her life in primary school, secondary school and her eventual travel for further studies in the United Kingdom. All the while, she lived under the protecting hands of her father. She started seeing the other side of life when the military took over the Nigerian government in 1983 and her father gets imprisoned after being accused of enriching himself with party funds. She needed to support mother during this period. Again, the sudden death of her beloved brother, Babatunde, affected her greatly. She gets to understand that life is not all about enjoyment and that money is not all. There are situations that riches cannot rescue. Her father eventually gets assassinated in 2001. After a short while, her mother dies too. She is left to face life's challenges without the shielding arms of her parents. She goes through a period of both physical and emotional transition that led to growth, maturity and understanding.

3.5. The "Eye/I-witness" Narrative Technique

This is the point of views in these stories. Both authors have employed the "eye/I-witness" technique which is a way of foregrounding the self-acclaimed facts of the narratives. The term "eye/I-witness" is used to indicate the fact that the writers "saw and experienced what they reported and that they didn't just create them through imagination. This also, is an element of fiction. It is employed to achieve some form of authenticity. However, it is logical to infer that these authors have possibly taken a point of view that is convenient for their writing intent. This is a vital element of fiction for the purpose of achieving some form of verisimilitude.

4. Points of Convergence and Divergence Between the Narratives

The two autobiographies exhibit some similarities, which are worthy of note. Interestingly, the two writers are women. African literary history, for some decades, has been dominated by male-authored texts. Names like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, Peter Abrahams, Alex La Guma and others have dominated the scene of African prose narratives. However, female prose writers like Buchi Emecheta, Grace Ogot, Flora Nwapa, and Mariama Ba emerged from the 1980s. In the twenty-first century African prose narrative, many more female writers are emerging. One of such promising African female prose writers is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who has been recognised and sometimes referred to as the new Nigerian Achebe [29]. In the same vein, it is praise-worthy to find one or two African women, such as Oluremi Obasanjo and Funso Adegbola, putting the "story of their lives" into writing. More so, the two autobiographies revolve around key political figures in Nigeria— former president Olusegun Obasanjo and late Chief Bola Ige. They give answers to some questions that have been raised by the public as regard the place and role of each of these notable figures in the lives of the individual authors. Both works also attempt to shed some lights on the family lives of these towering political leaders.

These autobiographical narratives are similar in that both authors narrate how their personal lives have been conditioned by the presence of a man in their lives. In other words, the authors do not just focus on themselves; rather, they tell about themselves in the light of the key people in their lives. This style of autobiographical narrative brings to mind other similar autobiographies, such as Ken Wiwa's *In the Shadow of a Saint* (2001). In which the author make readers know about him by talking about his father, the late Ken Saro-Wiwa. For instance, Oluremi Obasanjo narrates how her life and future have been orchestrated by her husband Olusegun Obasanjo. She says:

During the first term break, Yomi went to visit Obasanjo, his friend, at Ibadan. They slept on the floor with mats. There was no bed, no chair. Obasanjo was investing his money in tuition from correspondence colleges abroad to sit for a higher examination. I was moved to pity and marveled at his educational ambition. Since I had started to make money right from primary school through the sale of kerosene and other petty things, I had enough to buy sheets, sew some bedding that Yomi later sent to him. Besides, my father sent me more money than I needed at AGGS because of my plaintive approach (17) [21].

In the bid to tell her audience how she cared for Obasanjo at the early stage of their relationship, she says much about his poor background, struggle for survival, poverty and hardship.

In the same vein, Funso Adegbola narrates how her life is shaped through the relentless efforts of her father, as reflected in the title of her work: *He gave Me Wings: Me and My Dad*. She refers to her father as her hero. In fact, she desired to be and eventually becomes a lawyer just like her father. In narrating the story of her life, she tells us about the invaluable contributions her father made to her development. It then appeared like the narrative's focus shifted to her father rather being on her. This is also case Oluremi Obasanjo's narrative.

However, the two autobiographies are dissimilar in their different descriptions of the personalities of the great men in their lives. Oluremi's presentation of Olusegun Obasanjo is that of a great military general indeed that is morally weak. This idea is suggested in the excerpt below:

He manipulated me at his will, knowing my experience in the world was limited to him. He raised me, so to speak; gave me the books I should read; dictated the course I studied; sent me to England, paid my fees at school there; hire a flat for me, paid my way back. In short, he took control of my life and molded me. So when I found out his philandering exploits, I regarded it as the unkindest cut for his breaking the sacred vow we took at the London Registry. [...] My husband's womanizing knows no bounds. When we were in Ibadan, we attended the Baptist Church in the Salvation Army area of the town. Opposite the church was the house of a popular shoemaker, Mr. Akinsanya. We always called on him after service. I did not know that my husband was dating one of the daughters. Many suitors proposed to the woman but she stuck to a married Obasanjo. Beauty fades with time.

The woman is no more the beauty she was. She has been dumped (64, 66) [21].

On the other hand, Funso Adegbola presents Bola Ige as a great and caring man: an ideal father. She presents him as a flawless man both in charisma and in character. Consider the excerpt below:

My day at Westonbirt was emotion laden: Dad and I were inseparable; tears streaming down our faces. Mum mocked us, saying “why did you choose Westonbirt in England, when you knew you couldn’t leave one another?” My father stayed at the Hare and Hounds, a hotel opposite the school, during my first week at Westonbirt. He called me every morning and came around every evening to learn how my day had gone. The school authorities gave that concession because my cousin, Morenike Morohundiya, and I were the only Nigerian girls in the school. So they wanted to ensure that we settled down well and were happy. [...] Dad met with all my teachers and built a warm relationship with them, especially those who taught my new subjects (Spanish) and Mrs Walford, who taught me elocution and public speaking (10-11) [1].

Oluremi Obasanjo’s *Bitter-Sweet* portrays a mixture of sadness and happiness. The text narrates clearly how inconsistent marital life could be. Today, a couple could be on the mountain top in their share of love and happiness; at another time, they could be deep down in the valley of rift and despondency. Oluremi dreams of a blissful life with her darling husband but she gets both gains and pains in the relationship. The military duties of her husband deprive her of getting the needed attention from him. Their frequent movements from one part of the country to another as a result of the civil war and her husband’s military duties did not afford them the time to have a settled family life. Her husband’s amoral relationship with other women, who are even some of her friends, has been the greatest shock of her life. This mixture of joy and sadness is a common reality in human life.

He gave Me Wings also demonstrates this paradox of life. While Funso’s family basks in the euphoria of some a promotion or an exciting event, a sad thing would suddenly occur. Funso’s happiness is punctuated with thorns of gloominess and sadness whenever she remembers what her family went through during the incarceration of her father, the shock they receive when the first son of the family Babatunde Ige, dies suddenly, and most shockingly and unforgettable, the sudden assassination of her dad the greatest person in her life, which thereafter led to the death of her mother. Though in different ways, life has been a mixture of good and bad for both autobiographers. They have both relayed notable and unforgettable experiences. These texts are also uniquely connected in that they both discuss the great influence of male characters on their lives of the female authors. While the hero in Oluremi’s life is Olusegun Obasanjo, Bola Ige is the hero in Funso’s life. They both discuss these two men as great individuals whose personalities and contributions to the growth and development of Nigeria have been enormous.

Looking at the picture conveyed in these texts, it will not illogical to argue that both authors have, perhaps in one way or the other gone to the extreme in the supposed facts they present. For someone like General Olusegun Obasanjo, an average Nigerian cannot but abhor hatred in his/her heart against the man because of the “so many hidden truths” about his family and private life that are being unraveled. Although the author might have attempted to tell the whole truth, but for a public figure like Obasanjo, the wife might have gone too far in narrating her family issues to the public. Africans believe that you don’t wash your dirty linen in the public. No matter how tough one’s family life could be, African tradition expects husbands and wives to always settle their fracas between each other or within the family setting and not in eyes of the public.

In the case of ‘Funso Adegbola’s narrative, she seems to know, literally, everything about her father. She operates like an omniscient narrator. She paints a picture that presents him like a faultless angel. This is a near impossibility for a man that meddled into Nigerian politics, an institution that signifies corruption. In fact, like the case of the later discovery of the sexual weakness of Obasanjo as presented by the wife, who did not know much about her husband until those amoral traits of his starts to twinkle. So, how can Funso know everything about father, no matter how close they had been? Human nature is deeper than any well of water and higher than any sky. You cannot truly reach a definite conclusion about the character of any human. No other person can know a man more than the man knows himself. Furthermore, no mortal can boast of his virtues as it can be fraught by unpredictable encounters. This is one of the things that disqualify autobiographies from being pure non-fiction – as no one can say the “whole truth” about himself or about some other individuals.

However, both narratives have interesting features. They have tried to be as natural as possible in their presentations. They illustrate a commendable degree of been detailed. In fact, much more than the use of dates, names of real places and events, the two authors made use of photographs to make their narratives more appealing to the readers. The clarity of their narratives is also praise-worthy. The language of both works is very simple and easy to access. *Bitter-Sweet* however, seems to be more elaborate and artistic than *He gave Me Wings*. But on a general note, these autobiographies are giant strides in the making of autobiographical writing by Nigerian female writers.

5. Conclusion

The analyses of Oluremi’s *Bitter-Sweet* and Funso’s *He Gave Me Wings* have shown that the act of autobiography writing is a form of scriptotherapy, writing cure or expressive writing. The processes of writing these autobiographical narratives are depicted as providing therapeutic authentication for their writers. The narratives have served as audibility, visibility and awareness creation crafts for these women, as well as expressive and reflective platforms for

self-understanding after being through their individual harrowing experiences.

The biographical narratives have served purgatives purposes for the cleansing of negative emotions to enhance cathartic feelings. These texts have been employed as instruments of validating and appreciating emotional pains for health-related enfranchisement. Similarly, they have acted as resilience building-devices to their writers. These autobiographies have proven to be therapeutic scriptorium for Oluremi and Funso.

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