

**CHILDREN'S LITERATURE FOR CULTURAL INTEGRATION IN
NIGERIA:
AN APPRAISAL OF SOME SELECTED WORKS OF FATIMA AKILU**

BY

**MOHAMMED, HAJARA
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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am responsible for the final outcome of this dissertation and it is a record of my own research work. It has not been presented in any previous application for M.A. dissertation. All quotations indicated and sources of information are specifically acknowledged by means of reference.

CERTIFICATION.

This thesis titled *Children's Literature for Cultural Integration in Nigeria: An Appraisal of Some Selected Works of Fatima Akilu*, by Mohammed, Hajara, meets the regulations governing the award of Master of Art Degree in Literature in English in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and Literary presentation.

Prof. E. S. Akuso
Chairman, Supervisory Committee

Signature/ Date

Dr. Edward Abah
Member, Supervisory Committee

Signature/ Date

Prof. T. Y. Shurakat
Head of Department

Signature/ Date

Prof. KabirBala
Dean, Post Graduate School

Signature/ Date

DEDICATION

To my family

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ABSTRACT

In the Nigerian state lies the problem of unity ever since its existence. Overtime, the literary artists alongside other sectors have joined their voices in the search for an answer. The NYSC Scheme, the Unity Schools, the Federal Character Principle and State Creations are examples of some policies intended to achieve national unity. In addition to these measures, the research proposed the option of Children's literature because of its inherent integrating potentials. To this extent, the research employed textual analysis to examine scholarly potentials on cultural integration and Children's literature. In the process it specifically focuses on four of Fatima Akilu's Millennium Development Goals series: *Timi's Dream Comes True*, *Preye and the Sea of Plastics*, *The Red Transistor Radio* and *Aliyyah Learns a New Dance*. The stories are foregrounded in Nigeria's vision 2020 project and help in advocating these governmental policies in a new aesthetic dimension through the child character. In addition, the books provide a lens through which ethnic and racial superiority can be interrogated thereby enhancing cultural integration in Nigeria which is the bedrock for unity. The research used the New Historicism theory in its analysis of the primary texts. New historicism investigates how social structures, in this case, political and cultural, are represented in literature. The theory also shows how the texts reflect the time and society within which they are produced by narrating the historical, socio-economic and other aspects of life within the society they emanate from and the multiple viewpoints embedded within the texts. However, some aspects of Reader Response criticism is deployed in the analysis to complement the short comings of the New Historicism theory. The research concludes that a major cure for ethnicity and tribalism in a heterogeneous society like Nigeria is a medication of cultural integration injected in Children's literature.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Some rulers in Africa have built their nations, managed their economies and expanded their territories independent of the western world. Despite the aforementioned, when the western world came in contact with what is called 'Africa' in trying to define the colour of the black man's skin, Europeans assumed superiority and view Africans as 'primitive', 'savage' and a 'backward' race. Taiwo(1976) had traced African contact with the West towards the end of the 15th century when the Portuguese explorer Vasco Da Gama called into a few harbors along the West African coast. However, it was the subsequent slave trade which started on a large scale about a century later that was the first great phenomenon which shook Africa out of centuries of quietude and isolation and began a period of many wars and conflicts. According to Barkindo, Omolewa, & Maduakor(1992), from the second half of the first century, Africans had been sold as slaves to work on large plantations in America and the West Indies. The trade brought fortune and wealth to many European buyers. Their African sellers were also beneficiaries who had acquired money, intoxicant drinks, clothing materials, guns and other worthless glittering gifts from the proceeds of the trade.

However, the industrial revolution which began in the 18th century taking place in far away Western Europe became the prime mover of the trend of events in Africa and shaped the destiny of many African states, further asserts Barkindo, Omolewa & Maduakor(1992). For it was largely responsible for bringing to an end the trans Atlantic slave trade and also the introduction of the so called legitimate trade with its attendant competition and rivalry among European trading companies (the

scramble). In order to avoid a possible military confrontation, the rivalry culminated in the partition of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. What is called Nigeria was taken over by the British.

Hitherto, Nigeria was composed of scattered states, chiefdoms, empires, principalities and smaller communities which were further translated into Hausa States, Borno Empire, Nupe and Jukun kingdoms in the North, Yoruba Kingdoms, and Benin Empires in the South West, the Igbo societies in the south east amongst others. These states and kingdoms had different historical backgrounds, religions and levels of development, until colonialism forced a merging in 1914 when Lord Lugard amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates. In 1960, Nigeria got her independence. After independence, there was the need to integrate the divergent ethnic nationalities, cultures and people of the country, Nigeria. The National Youth Service Corps Scheme, the Unity Schools, the Federal Character Principle and state creations are examples of policies intended to achieve this goal. However, it is clear that the outcome of the integration policies and programmes in Nigeria have to some extent fallen far below expectation as ethnic loyalties are still deep-seated. Nigerians often times cannot engage in meaningful collective activities without the glimpse of ethnic or tribal instinct materialising. Nigerians remain in Omotosho's (1998:334) assertion, 'Strange bed fellows'. Hence, there is a need of transforming Nigeria, in the words of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, 'from a mere geographical expression into a cultural expression,' and this can be achieved through deliberate attempts of literature and imaginary works of cultural integration in Children's literature.

Literature in fact has played great roles in uniting people and mobilizing them for collective action. "According to Kermode (2007:111) "the great virtue of literary fiction is that it is able by engaging *the* imagination of *those who study it* to lead *them* to

discovery and recognition by an unexpected and instructive route”. Gordimer (2007:115) adds that:

Morals have bedded with storytelling since the magic of the imaginative capacity developed in the human brain, the harsh lessons of daily existence, co-existence between human and human, with animals and nature could be made sense of in the ordering of properties by the transforming imagination.

It is little wonder that Arnold (1864) defines literature as ‘the best that is thought and said on the world, human culture complete in all its sides’ This means that anyone who engages in the study of literature is supposed to acquire the most decent values as well as imbibe the very best of culture. To this end Akuso, (2012:11) concludes that “where the creative spirit of a society is weak, development cannot be easily enhanced”. Therefore, Akuso, For the literature plays the role of educating, shaping, influencing, developing and above all humansing those who study it.

Speaking about the viability of Children’s literature. Chambers (1985:16) opines that:

... I hold that in *Children’s* literature we find our best experience of the human imaginations and the most useful means by which we come to grips with ideas about ourselves and what we are.

Therefore, Children’s literature could be seen as a realm of discovery for the young mind and nurturance for the young spirit. By facilitating the magical encounter between children and books of diverse human experiences, we foster their contact with diversity of realities and nurture their appreciation for ways of life different from their own (Ada, 2011). These literatures would build understanding, tolerance and harmony, as they tell the stories from the perspective of unity in diversity, and a child embedded with the spirit of such cultural integration grows forgetting all bias and

differences. This is exemplified in Fatima Akilu's Millennium Development Goals series of Children's literature books 1-8 which the research examines. The research examines the subtle but laudable issue of cultural integration projected in some of Akilu's works which includes *Ngozi Comes to Town*, *Timi's Dream Comes True*, *Kitwa Plays the Drum*, *The Red Transistor Radio*, *Yinka Washes His Hands*, *The Yellow Mosquitoes Net*, *Preye and The Sea of Plastics* and *Aliyyah Learns a New Dance*.

Obviously, Akilu has the Nigerian child at heart, hence her setting as well as her characters are a symbolic representation of various geographical regions of the Nigerian state. This is to make more familiar the immediate environment of her target audience and to imbibe the spirit of cultural nationalism in them. Hence, from the various locations in the South-South is the setting of *Timi's Dream Comes True*, *Preye and The Sea of Plastics* and *Ngozi Comes to Town*. *Yinka Washes His Hands* has a modern Yoruba setting (South West) with characters such as Olu, Yemisi and Aunt Bisi. In *The Red Transistor Radio* the reader witnesses a Hausa cultural setting with Khalida, Aunt Safina, Habiba, Halima, Mama and Baba as characters from the North East. Kitwa, Ogaga, Isioma and Ugo hail from the South East region, the setting for *Kitwa Plays the Drums*. Grace, Kemi, Ada and Zara are characters dwelling in the North Central region in *The Yellow Mosquitoes Net*. Then of course the deliberate choice of the Fulani regions in the North Eastern parts (the most cultural hybrids of all ethnic tribes in Nigeria and known wanderers), in *Aliyyah Learns a New Dance*, to buttress the point of cultural integration that is binding all the eight books. In other words, a reading of the eight stories carries the child on a guided travel tour as a tourist around the landscapes of Nigeria. Delight, wonder, pleasure

and inspiration are likely to be the child's experiences even though themes of social, economic and political relevance abound in the texts.

The Nigerian government has put these goals at the heart of its vision to ensure the betterment of the lives of its citizens. Akilu is making use of these goals in an attempt to create positive change in the psyche of the Nigerian child towards national development and the advancement of governmental policies. The research further looks at these texts as instruments for curbing the menace of ethnic loyalty and tribalism in the Nigerian state. For the purpose of this research, four selected texts are chosen from the series to examine the subtle but laudable issue of cultural integration in Akilu's works; *Timi's Dream Comes True*, *The Red Transistor Radio*, *Preye and the Sea of Plastics* and *Aliyyah Learns a New Dance*. The texts demonstrate strong social ties and brotherhood in its characters that are from a heterogeneous Nigeria. The characters work in teams, in the process building unity, tolerance and a society with a solid foundation upon the values of national and cultural identity.

1.1.1 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Millennium Development Goals are eight international goals that were officially established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2000, as well as the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. It was agreed upon by a record of 189 countries and 23 international organizations at the Assembly. Nigeria was an enthusiastic signatory to the MDG and has claimed to pursue the goals vigorously (Vintagesam, 2013).

The aim of the MDG's, Vintagesam (2013) further explains, is to encourage development by improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries. The Millennium Declaration proclaimed by the United Nations asserts that

every individual has the right to dignity, freedom, equality, and a basic standard of living that includes freedom from hunger and violence, and encourages tolerance and solidarity. The MDG's were made to operationalize these ideas by setting targets and indicators for poverty reduction in order to achieve the set goals in fifteen years.

There are eight set goals which include:

- Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.
- Achieving universal primary education.
- Promoting gender equality and women empowerment.
- Reducing child mortality.
- Improving maternal health.
- Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
- Ensuring environmental sustainability.
- Developing a global partnership for development.

Each goal has specific targets and dates for achieving those targets. To accelerate progress, the G8 Finance Ministers agreed in June 2005, to provide enough funds to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the African Development Bank (ADB), to cancel forty to fifty five billion dollars in debt owed by members of the heavily indebted poor countries, to allow them to redirect resources to the programme.

The United Nation Conference in September, 2010, reviewed progress and concluded with the adoption of a global plan to achieve the eight goals by their target dates. New commitment targeted women's and children's health and new initiatives in the worldwide battle against poverty, hunger and disease. However, by 2013, progress towards the goals was uneven. Some countries achieved many goals, while others were not on track to realize any. In Nigeria, there seems to be little or no progress.

The research makes use of the goals of achieving universal primary education, improving maternal health, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership for development to key in the focus of the thesis.

1.1.2 Biosketch of Fatima Akilu

Fatima Akilu has been working at a very senior level in the field of psychology and health for more than two decades. Her work has spanned three continents; Africa, Europe and the United States. She has been both an educator holding teaching position in various Universities and an advocate for a number of marginalized groups such as the homeless, the mentally ill, prisoners, victims of HIV/Aids and the developmentally disabled.

Akilu has had extensive experience working with forensic dually diagnosed mentally retarded women, violent offenders, as well as sex offenders. She has been working as part of a behaviour change process, strategically communicating through research and advocacy to groups needing change and working with those in position to effect the changes. The result has been far reaching change for many groups both statutory and voluntary.

In addition to holding a full time job as a Director in the office of the National Security Adviser, Akilu also sees patients on a private basis. Previously, Head of Communication for the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Millennium Development Goals, she is currently Chairman Editorial Board, Leadership Newspaper. Akilu is also a children's literature writer and ehosts a weekly radio show "Radio Psyche," which discusses socio-psychological issues.

Akilu was until recently the Director of Behavioural Analyses and Strategic Communication that has developed a multi pronged programme that consists of a prison- de radicalisation programme; a counter radicalisation programme geared at

stemming the tide of radicalisation and building community resilience, as well as strategic communication. The programme now has a public diplomacy arm and a messaging component. She is also involved in driving policy changes in areas of education and mental health through the provision of post traumatic stress disorder counseling.

Dr Akilu's book, *Preye and the Sea of Plastics* was in 2011 winner of Association of Nigerian Authors/Atiku Abubakar price for Children's Literature. Her book *Zahra and Coco* also won the American Children Book Award in 2012. Fatima Akilu holds a Bachelor Degree in English and an MSC in Research Methods in Psychology and a Ph.D in Psychology from Reading University.

Fatima Akilu has written eight books captioned under the "Millennium Development Goals Series of Children's Literature Books 1-8". The research examines Akilu's contribution towards cultural integration in Children's literature. Akilu presents literature for children in Nigeria by displaying topical ideas and themes, that explain the MDGs in a language children can understand, with good illustrations that would enhance comprehension. Each of these goals is reflected in a book. Thus, eradication of extreme hunger and poverty in *Ngozi Comes To Town*, achieving Universal Primary Education in *Timi's Dream Comes True*, promoting gender equality and empowering women in *Kitwa Plays The Drums*, reducing child mortality in *Yinka Washes his Hands*, improving maternal Health in *The Red Transistor Radio*, combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases in *The Yellow MosquitoNet*, ensuring environmental sustainability in *Preye and the Sea of Plastics* and developing a global partnership for development in *Aliyyah Learns a New Dance*.

Through the four selected stories, readers would find out how in *Timi's Dream Comes True*, Timi who comes from a family of fishermen, dreams of being a teacher.

Then Aminu offers to create a school for Timi's village. Could this be Timi's chance of fulfilling his dream? Khalida does not know what to write about for her science class story until Aunty Safina tells her about Mama's very special radio in *The Red Transistor Radio*. In *Preye and the Sea of Plastics*, Preye and his friends gather up to clean the plastic bags and rubbish that are cluttering their neighbourhood, but can a group of children really making a difference. Aliyyah is thrilled to be representing Nigeria at the African regional dance competition, even with her brother, Ashraf's help, will she ever learn all the moves? Find out in the charming story, *Aliyyah Learns a new Dance*.

1.1.3 Children's Literature: From Infancy to Maturation

The earliest of what came to be regarded as Children's literature was first meant for adults. Among these ancient body of oral literature were myths and legends created to explain the natural phenomena of night and day and the changing seasons. Ballads, epic tales and sagas were told by the fireside or in courts to an audience of adults and children eager to hear of the adventures of heroes. Many of these tales Piskunov (2013) traces to some writings of Children's literature that are enjoyed by children today.

The first literature written specifically for children was intended to instruct them. During the Middle Ages, the venerable Bede, Aelfric, St. Anslem and St. Aldhelm all wrote school texts in Latin, some of which were later used in schools in England and Colonial America (Piskunov, 2013).

With the new printing facilities in the mid 15th century, books could be printed and read and before anyone seemed to think of books specifically for children, in 1484 William Caxton published *Aesop's Fables* and Sir Thomas Malory published

Morte 'd Arthur (1485) with lively woodcuts, Children may have seen and enjoyed it but it was originally intended for adults. Printed books were far too costly to be available to most children thus an inexpensive substitute called the Hornbook came into general use in Britain and British Colonies in America in the 17th and 18th centuries (Americana Encyclopedia, 561: n.date).

Joyfully, Huck and Kuhn (1968:63) assert that with the invention of the Hornbook, children were able to handle their own books; it is a sheet of paper printed with the alphabets, vowels, the Lord's prayer and Roman numerals fastened to a small board about 2¾ by 5 inches. The parchment was covered with transparent horn and bound with strips of brass. Sometimes a hole in the handle made it possible for the child to carry the book on a cord around his neck or waist.

Meanwhile, itinerant peddlers or chapbooks and battledore's added to printed materials (American Encyclopedia, n.date:561). These were often very small, inexpensive paper booklets sold by peddlers or chapmen. In a collection published in 1680s according to Huck (1968:60) is *Tom Thumb*, *Guy of Warwick* and *Jack The Giant Killer*. Despite poor writing, crude illustration, miserable printing on dingy paper, chap books were sold and bought by thousands and were often the only family reading material other than the Bible. Much later, *New England Primer* was published in (1689) in the American Colonies (American Encyclopedia, n.date:561).

Even while chapbook circulation was swelling, the religious favour of the puritans was sweeping through 17th century England. Warnings of hell and damnation prevailed in several of the first books for children, such as John Cotton's catechism, *Spiritual Milk for Boston Babes* (1646) and James Janeway's *A token for Children* (1671). Both include morbid commentaries on death and eternal torment. *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) by John Bunyan came out of this same gloomy atmosphere.

Although written for adults, it became popular with children who may have sensed in certain sections, the same good story-telling style they knew in the chapbooks which Bunyan himself had read (American Encyclopedia, n.date: 561).

In 1697, an extraordinary little book was published in France, *Stories or Tales of Long Ago with Morals*. It consisted of eight stories including the *Sleeping Beauty*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Puss in Boots* and *Cinderella*. *Tales of Mother Goose*, was the title and it was thought to be authored by Charles Perrault, a member of the French Academy who wrote simply and gracefully with only the gentlest morality for each story. The book became immensely popular with English children (American Encyclopedia, n.date: 562). Later works written for adults but adapted for children were Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726).

In the 18th Century John Newberry became established as a writer, printer and children's book publisher in London, where he must surely have been aware of the great Juvenile market for chapbooks and Perrault's tales. In 1744, Newberry published *A Little Pocket-Book Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly*, in covers of gilt and flowered paper which he advertised was intended for instruction and amusement. It included rhyming fables, letters from "Jack the Giant killer" and 163 rules for children behaviours. The pocket book was so successful that Newberry brought out numerous juvenile titles, many of them old chapbooks favourites. One of the most famous was *The History of Little Goody Two-shoes* (1765). This is thought to be the first book of fiction written especially for children, with illustrations made expressly (Americana Encyclopedia, n.date:562).

In the last half of the 18th century, on a new dimension, Huck and Kuhn (1968: 68) posit that women writers entered the field of Juvenile literature with the purpose of teaching through stories. Sarah Fielding published *Mrs Teachem's School for Girls*, Mrs Barbauld published *Easy Lessons for Children* and Sarah Trimmer's *Fable Fabulous Histories*. The books emphasized character development. As 18th century drew to a close, the influence of Locke and Rousseau was felt in Children's literature. Following Rousseau's theory of accompanying the child in his natural search for knowledge, parents, relatives or teachers always seize upon every comment made by a child or call attention to objects of interest so that the incident might be used as a means of instruction. Books frequently contained dialogue and conversations instead of long list of rules, the lessons were now concealed in didactic tales and juvenile biographies. As evidenced in the sober, uplifting books of such authors as Thomas Day, Mary Sherwood and Maria Edgeworth in England and in the United States by Samuel Goodrich and Martha Finley who wrote the Famous *Elsie Dinsmore Series*.

Huck and Kuhn (1968:66) further give insight to the nineteenth century which brought tremendous changes to the western world as powerful nations arose. The use of agricultural machinery and improved communication and transportation brought technological changes that influenced man's values and attitudes. Teaching children through objects in nature was emphasised. Experimental schools were based on the idea of the child as the centre of the school curriculum. Dewey's new philosophy held that education was a social process, the child's interest is significant and should be channeled, thinking was viewed as problem solving. Children were considered individuals with unique rights. The attitudes towards religion gave way to secularism and to recognition of play as an acceptable part of child's life. Each type of book reflected these social, political and economic changes. By the end of the century, there

was a growing body of literature specifically written for children on religion and morals, instruction, folk-tale collections, stories of family life, stories of adventure, animal stories, books of humour and fantasy, books of games and sports, and magazines. Thus, the steady decline of Puritanism, and by the end of the century, literature was expressly designed for children to give them happiness rather than moral lectures only.

Also, the Romantic wave that swept through Europe in the early 19th century affected Children's literature. This era produced a body of literature that genuinely belonged to children. For the first time, children books contained fantasy and realism, fun and adventure, and many of the books written at that time are still popular today. William Blake and William Wordsworth provided the first example of literature concerned with the essential goodness of children. They portrayed childhood as a happy and virtuous time and considered growing up to be a saddening and complicated process.

The contributions and innovations of the 19th century continued into the 20th century, achieving a distinct place in literature for children's books and spawning innumerable genres of Children's literature. Among fantasy written for children are L-Frank Bauni's *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) and A.A. Milne's *Winnie-The-Pooh* (1997-2007). The novel for children now includes many of the literary, psychological and socially relevant elements found in its counterpart, adult literature, treating subjects like death, drug, sex, urban crisis, discrimination, the environment and women liberation, multi-cultural concerns have also become an important aspect of the new realistic tradition in Children's literature.

We can thus gather and submit that English Children's literature developed in accordance with the changing attitudes of the society and changing cultural values

towards children. The literature available for children reflects the attitudes of society in that period. Books for children have always been viewed as instruments for transmitting the mores of the culture and for inculcating attitudes and values.

1.1.4 Children's Literature in Nigeria

Hitherto, Nigerian children like their counterparts in Africa, read books written, edited, illustrated and published in Europe by people whose cultures differed considerably from those of their own country. Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*, *Alice in wonderland* and Hugh Lofting's *Dr. Do Little Series* are some books read by African children totally devoid of African background. In 1947, Cyprian Ekwerensi broke new ground when his book *Ikolo the Wrestler and other Igbo Tales* was published in London by Nelson publishers. From then onwards, Segun (1992:26) notes that African children continued to read books published in Europe and imported into the continent.

The beginning of written Nigerian Children's literature, according to Virginia W. Duke cited in Umaisha (2010), coincided with the attainment of independence in 1960. She observed that though a few titles like Cyprian Ekwensi's *The Drummer Boy and the Passport of Mallam Illia* were written some years earlier, they were not published until 1960. Umaisha (2010), further observed that the development of Children's literature was motivated by the felt need for a literature that would more adequately reflect indigenous views and realities. It was also stimulated by the rapid expansion of education and the resulting need and market for supplementary reading materials.

The early titles which concentrated on supplementary readers for the pre-adolescent age group in senior primary and junior secondary school, were produced by the African Readers Library of the African Universities Press which according to

Duke, came out with 34 titles between 1962 and 1988. Other series that came up later were the Nelson Rapid Readers (1965), Longman's Palm Library for younger readers (1968), Oxford University Press Adventures in Africa (1968). New indigenous publishing houses like Onibonoje, also produced titles for children. Onibonoje Book Industries in 1973 launched the Onibonoje Book Club, the first in Black Africa, recounts Segun (1992:28). It also launched the Junior African Literature Series for young readers.

Development in Children's literature was boosted particularly in the 1970s and the 1980s. The West African Book Publishers Ltd in Lagos published a highly illustrated series of children's books in English and Yoruba (the Atoka series), Fourth Dimension Publishers in Enugu published beautifully illustrated books of Chinua Achebe (*The Drum and The Flute* (1977)) and Mamman .J. Vatsa's *Children Rhymes* (1978), University Press Plc with its *Rainbow Series*, Longman Nigeria Ltd's *Leopard Series* and the *Winner Series* by Macmillan Nigeria Limited (Segun 1992: 28).

These early works according to Duke, were mainly based on especially boys, who fell into danger and helped bring criminals to book. For example, Achebe's *Chike and the River* which deals with Chike's mindless but successful adventure in crossing the River Niger and his encounter with armed robbers and Ekwensi's *Juju Rock* which cajoles the child reader to participate in a powerful drama of imagination which he not only sees but suffers alongside the hero, experiences directly and benefits from the adventure. Some had school stories as their subject matter, with the young hero succeeding in gaining admission into school, like *Eze Goes to School* which unveils the story of a boy who comes from a very poor background but is determined to acquire western education. Also women writers such as Christee Ajayi, Remi Adedeji, Teresa Meniru and Mabel Segun played some prominent roles in the

promotion of Children's literature in Nigeria. Each of them produced over 10 books in the genre including *My Father's Daughter*, *My Mother's Daughter*, *The Canon Boy*, and *The Twin's and the Tree Spirits*.

Hitherto, very few books have been written for adolescents, which deal with their everyday concerns and their problems of adjustment to approaching adulthood such as problems about love, parent- child conflicts, careers and drugs, as in Joy Ikede's *Joined by Love* (1985). Today however, Teen Authorship Scheme pioneered by the Hill- Top Creative Arts Foundation Minna is flourishing. The scheme was inspired by its successful implementation in Niger state by the state chapter of Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). Subsequently, ANA executives decided to extend the project across other ANA chapters of Abia, Taraba, Katsina, Kogi and Osun.

ANA Teen Authorship Scheme is interested in investing in children for the development of tomorrow's leadership and to ignite the spirit of creativity and the culture of reading by encouraging and mentoring young creative minds to help explore their potentials. In the words of Dzukogi (2016), allowing children to grow in creativity is the only way to proffer solutions to some of the problems faced in the country. Pioneer authors of the scheme include, Saddiq Dzukogi, Halima Aliyu, Zanaib Manko, Mustapha Gimba, Peter Kwange, Priscilla Adeshina, Phidelis Obaseki, Victor Ugwu and Anas Dubani. Subsequently, Paul Liam, Deborah Olumiuran, Fodio Ahmed amongst others joined the team of aspiring writers. In 1997, the first book of teen authors came out to the 35th ANA Convention; *Beyond Limits (An Anthology of Nigerian Teen Authors)*. In 2009, ANA released three national anthologies in short story (*Shadows*), poetry (*Fireflies*) and Teen Authors (*Breaking*

the Bud). Individuals and organisations are further sponsoring the publications of Teen Authors individual progress.

Young adults also have the *Pacesetters Series* by Macmillan which feature crime, espionage and love tangles such as *When Love Whispers* (Segun,1992:36). The tradition of young adult's series has continued to flourish especially with the Platinum Tales and NaniBoi Series which have published amongst many, Tolulope Fabamwo's *When Dreams Happen*; Tade's dreams unexpectedly comes true and it brings pain, but there are life altering lessons to learn from the experience, most importantly, that of being able to forgive and move on and accept things that cannot be changed. *The Music Competition* by Divine Christian which tells the story of Mary, a highly talented sixteen year old girl who has dreams of becoming a great singer but there are obstacles in the way including the dashing eighteen year old boy, David.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

The impact of Children's literature in the growth and development of the child cannot be overemphasized. Among the many functions of Children's literature as identified by Segun (1992:32) is that, it arouses a child's imagination and extends his horizon, it gives him a knowledge of the past in relation to the present and imbues him with those ideals and values that are so necessary for national development. To this end, Nigerian children authors have written modern fantasy stories, modern realistic stories, science fiction stories, historical fictions and a few biographies with varying themes ranging from perseverance to honesty of purpose, good leadership, selflessness and so on. All in an effort to educate as well as inculcate moral and ethical values in the child. However, the aesthetic of cultural integration which is vital for national development is an area that has not been deeply explored. For,

herein lies the imperative of Fatima Akilu's writing for children with her deliberate focus to equip the Nigerian child with knowledge on nationhood and the necessity for cultural integration at a period when so many issues are threatening co-existence in Nigeria. For if Nigeria is to imbibe healthy socio-cultural values, she must begin at an early age. Children are the hope and future leaders of any society. Their minds are very impressionable and what they are exposed to early in life helps to shape or mar them. Therefore, this research is based on the following propositions:

1. Children's literature as a distinctive genre of prose-fiction is an appropriate and efficient channel of elucidating human experiences and the development of children in relation to themselves and the society at large.
2. Children's literature is not only about morality and didacticism but it also enjoins brotherhood love, leadership values and cultural integration.
3. Nigerian children stand the risk of misunderstanding issues of diversity and difference in the country without proper mentoring.
4. Reader Response criticism and New Historicism theory are viable platforms for evaluating the selected primary texts in response to the socio-economic, cultural, historical, political, class and gender issues embedded within the texts.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of the thesis is to uncover a new body of hidden creativity in the study of Children's literature. The study particularly examines Akilu's efforts in her four Millennium Development Goals series which expands the frontiers of Nigerian children's fiction to catch the conscience of the vulnerable child at a tender age on the issue of cultural integration.

The study's objectives are to:

- Prove that Children's literature is a significant genre of prose-fiction and a choice for writers in Nigeria.
- To show how Children's literature is a suitable literary discursive form about the psychological growth and development of children in relation to cultural integration.
- Illustrate the aesthetics of cultural integration in Akilu's MDG series which could help create a lasting impression on the child.
- Demonstrate that reader response criticism and new historicism are potent theories for literary evaluation as regards the researcher's response to the texts as well as the multiple discourses which literature signifies.

1.4 Justification of the Study

Like many other African countries Nigeria is an artificial creation of the British. The attempt to unify all her various ethnic groups eventually materialised in 1914 with the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates and October 1, 1960, saw Nigeria becoming an independent nation. From then onwards, it became apparent that the various ethnic groups have to readjust and accommodate one another for the evolvment of a national unity and a national art. However, the decades after independence saw Nigeria go through many social upheavals especially excessive regionalism and ethnicity and majority/minority domination and dichotomy. These occurred even though strategies have been lined up to checkmate the issues of unity and harmony some of which are the National Youth Service Corps, the unity schools and state creations. The aesthetics of cultural integration has not been deeply explored to rear, mould and nurture the Nigerian child at a tender age, to grow up with a healthy mindset devoid of ethnicity and tribalism. The study asserts that Children's literature could help fill this vacuum.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Human beings are always engaged in the process of development throughout their lives. An important part of one's personality and character is formed by what he is introduced to early in life, and reading according to research is one of the best possible avenues to bring up children and a key to developing this skill. Children's literature can act as a tool in the psychological and intellectual growth of any child. It could function as a footing for structuring and steering the highly impressionable conscience of the child towards positive social and moral ideals. Children's literature as a repository of culture could carefully be designed to enhance unity in children at their very impregnable age. As the child subconsciously leafs through the pages in books, the stories form ideas of his life and his world and would help shape the mind and thought of the child reader on positive socio-cultural and moral ideals. Nigerian literary artistes would be doing the nation a great service if they start from the cradle to erase tribal instincts from the minds and conscience of children with literatures that depict cultural harmony and unity as exemplified in the works of Fatima Akilu.

The study contributes to academic knowledge by bringing to lime light Akilu's MDG series. The study shows that children's books in Nigeria now have the ability of integrating the child more and in the process enhancing cultural integration both locally and globally. It is hoped that this study will be of great assistance to other researchers as well as suggesting more vibrant views and perspectives on the vexed issue of Children's literature in Nigeria.

1.6 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

Although there are other children's books authored in the North such as B.M. Dzukogi's *Teacher Dangara is a Cheat*, Yusuf Adamu's *Animals In The*

Neighbourhood, Ladi S. Adamu's *Adventures of Mustapha*; Fatima Pam's *Hussaini the Adventure*; Teresa Ameh's *The Twins Visit*, and Esther Bali's *It is Story Time*, this research focuses on the writings of one northern Nigeria Children's literature author, Fatima Akilu, particularly her set of Books 1-8 prompted by Millennium Development Goals. This is because the books are carefully interwoven through various thematic thrusts to unify the various cultural entities in the country and across borders. Hence, the study is delimited to examining critically only some selected works of Akilu so as to identify the effect or impact made so far on Children's literature and cultural integration in Nigeria.

1.7 Research Methodology

The method used for this investigation is based on thematic analysis of the primary texts, using the qualitative research method. The research also utilises library and internet sources in the analysis of its primary texts. It also made extensive use of books, journals and articles from the academic field.

The researcher's method relies on a close reading of the texts, an explication of their contexts and biographical information about the author. The research used the reader response criticism and the new historicist (cultural poetics) theoretical approach to criticism which allows the researcher to respond to investigate on how social structures are represented in literature as well as how texts reflect the time and society within which they are produced.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The theory used for the research is new historicism, also called cultural poetics. New historicism is a term coined by Stephen Greenblatt which began to be applied to texts in the 1970s and early 1980's. Dobie (2009:175) argues that new

historicism is difficult to pin down because it is still changing and developing and because it draws on widely diverse fields of Sociology, Psychology, Economics and a host of others. Despite its diverse agenda of interest and approaches, one could clearly assert that new historicism challenged and resisted the prominent position held by old historicism. The old traditional historicism has been concerned with finding out the actual happenings of a particular age. It is concerned with the actual facts of stories that objectively depict the record of the human past, so that they could establish accuracy and in the process unlock the worldview and meaning of a period's literature, art, politics and social behaviours (Dobie 2009:175-176).

New historicism argues that no one can ever know an exact account of incidents at a given time and place. Rather, history is mere perception and subjective renditions in official documents, text books or other sources of investigation, coloured by the cultural context of the recorder (usually a person of power), who leaves untold the stories of those who are powerless and who could only circulate their stories as separate discourses (Dobie, 2009: 176-177). Moreover, Dobie further asserts that not only are history stories subjectively recorded, but they are also subjectively read and interpreted. Therefore, history becomes a text rather than a series of empirically verifiable events. For authentic renditions, new historicists would want to hear the narratives of dominant groups as well as those of other groups that have helped shape what and how ideologies operated and interacted to form personal and group identities.

However, the new historicists do not claim to have the 'truth' about a text or historical event, but, they are of the view that if such a thing as 'truth' could exist, it would be "narratologically and culturally contingent" (Dobie, 2009:176). The principal concern of new historicists is therefore, "the historicity of the text and the

textuality of history”, a cultural poetics that is both historicist and formalist. From this perspective, Habib (2011:204) categorically states that:

New historicism called for the literary text to be situated within a super structural fabric of political and cultural discourse, it saw literary texts as a kind of discourse situated within a complex of cultural discourses – religious, political, economics, aesthetic (and so on), which shaped it and in turn were shaped by it.

In other word’s new historicism seeks a resituating of literature not only in relation to other fields and discourses but in relation to social institutions and non-discursive practices and these accounts for the diversity of new historicism. On this note, Bressler concludes that in new historicism theory, the goal of interpretative analysis is the formation of an understanding of a “poetics of culture”. In essence new historicism attempts to dissect and analyze a people through the social, economic, political, literary, environmental and other structures that produce the varying forms of the concepts of culture in a given society. In other words, the total world view of a society is embedded in the culture in which it emanates. Literary analysis of texts could stem from the relationship between the individual and the society in which he lives and which is somewhat dynamic. For, like history new historicist’s theory sees literature as an unending dialogue between the text and the social forces that bind it.

In addition, Dobie (2009:177,178) exposes the new historicists challenge to the existence of what is referred to as “the spirit of an age”, (a single, unified worldview of an age) and that history has goals. New historicist’s claim that there are varying narratives produced by institutions and social strata that may hold contrasting bodies of belief and practices or differing modes of behaviour. The new historicists also deny that history has goals. They claim that events do not necessarily march

forward connected by cause and effect, nor do they necessarily constitute progress. For progress is likely to vary from one society to another. There is also the problem that cultures wax and wane; powerful, affluent people do not stay in power forever.

In a nutshell, the new historicist critic works in two directions. He seeks to understand a text by examining its cultural context, the anxieties, issues, struggles, politics and more, surrounding the era in which it is produced. He also seeks to understand the culture by looking at its literature. In particular, the new historicist is interested in understanding a culture's power structure. He sees a text as an instrument of political awareness and a statement of ideology. Like the Marxists who preceded them, these critics assume that literature addresses cultural concerns and can affect society's attitudes and values (Dobie 2009:179).

In relation to the application of new historicism theory to Children's literatures, Myers (1988:142) asserts that:

New historicism of children's literature would integrate text and socio-historic context, demonstrating on the one hand how extra literary cultural formations shape literary discourse and on the other, how literary practices are actions that make things happen not only by shaping the psychi and moral consciousness of young readers but also by performing many more kinds of cultural work, from satisfying authorial fantasies to legitimating or subverting dominant class and gender ideologies....

1.8.1 The Key Proponents of the New Historicism Theory

Cultural Poetics often called New Historicism in America and Cultural Materialism in Great Britain, as a literary approach has its beginnings in the late 1970's and early 1980's with the publication of several essays and texts such as "Improvisation and Power", Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self Fashioning: From*

More to Shakespeare, and the works of Louis Montrose, Jonathan Dollimore's *Radical Tragedy* (1994), Jerome Mc Gann and others. In their view, historical methods of literary analysis were erroneous. Hitherto, many scholars believed that history served as background information for textual analysis. Historians were able to objectively reproduce a given historical period and state "how it really was", but because of its broader concerns with culture, history, literature and a host of other factors that help determine texts meaning, new historicism study is able to present to scholars, critics, teachers, and students, a more appropriate methodology for interpreting texts (Bressler, 2003: 181-182).

However, Bressler (2003:185) traces the basis for Cultural poetics concerns as well as its coherent body of assumption in the writings of the 20th century French archaeologist, historian and philosopher, Michael Foucault. According to Bressler, Foucault begins by redefining the concept of history. Foucault declares that history is not linear, nor can history be explained as a series of causes and effects controlled by some mysterious destiny or an all powerful deity. For Foucault, history is the complex relationship of a variety of discourses; the various ways artistic, social, political structures and so on that people think and talk about their world. How these discourses interact in any given historical period is not random. Rather, the interaction is dependent on a unifying principle or pattern Foucault calls the episteme; through language and thought, each period in history develops its own perceptions concerning the nature of reality (or what is defined as truth), sets up its own acceptable and unacceptable standards of behaviour, establishes its criteria for judging what it deems good or bad and certifies what group of people articulate, protect and defend the yardstick whereby all established truths, values and actions will be deemed acceptable.

1.8.2 Basic Tenets of New Historicism

Bressler (2003:188, 189) outlines the basic tenets of New Historicism thus:

- Cultural poetics begin by assuming that language shapes and is shaped by the culture that uses it. Language includes discourse, writing, literature, social actions and any social relationship whereby a person or group impose their ideas or action upon another.
- Like history, our interaction with any text is a dynamic ongoing process that will always be somewhat incomplete. Neither can claim a complete or an objective understanding of its content or historical situation. Both are ongoing conversations with their creators, readers and cultures.
- The meaning of a text resides in the cultural system composed of the interlocking discourse of its author, the text and its reader. Hence to unlock textual meaning, a cultural poetic critic investigates three areas of concern; the life of the author, the social rules and dictates found within a text, and a reflection of a works historical situation as evidenced in the text. In addition, the standard of behaviour as reflected in a society's rules of decorum must also be investigated because these behavioural codes simultaneously helped shape and were shaped by the text.
- All narrative discourse such as history, literature and other social productions interact with, define, and are in turn shaped by their culture. Therefore there is no rigid or un-theorized distinction between literature and history, and between text and context.
- Cultural poetics critics view a work of art as they would any other social discourse that interacts with its culture to produce meaning. No longer is one discourse (history) superior to another, but all are necessary components that shape and are

shaped by society (literature, history, anthropology, art, the sciences and other disciplines, all discourses that affect any social production). In other words the formal (textual) and the historical (non-discursive practices) are complementary, rather than opposites.

The Research used the aforementioned tenets in the analysis of its primary texts. It highlights issue of culture, the social rules and dictates, the aesthetics, political structures, environmental and the historical situation that abounds in the texts, the multiple narrations as well as other necessary components that shape the texts.

1.8.3 Reader Response Criticism

Some aspects of Reader Response Criticism will be deployed in the analysis to complement the shortcomings of the New Historicism theory. Reader Response Criticism is a theory which gained prominence in the late 1960s and which according to the *Glossary of Literary Terms* focuses on the reader or audience reaction to a particular text. This is in contrast to other schools and theories such as the new historicism and new criticism that focuses attention primarily on the author or the content and form or some objective meaning already present in the work being examined. Reader response criticism can be connected to post – structuralism's emphasis on the role of the reader in actively constructing text rather than passively consuming them. Reader response critic argues that a text has no meaning before a reader experiences or reads it. Reader response critics examine the scope and variety to reader reactions and analyze the way in which different readers make meaning out of both purely personal reactions and inherited or culturally conditioned ways of reading.

1.9 Conclusion

The main focus of this research is to investigate cultural integration in Children's literature particularly in the work of Fatima Akilu's MDG series with an aim to illustrate the importance of literature to the growth and development of children. The chapter then traced the development of Children's literature in Europe and in Nigeria from infancy, growth and maturation. The research is hopeful that its findings would trigger more researches to ginger Nigerian authors to write more in the field of Children's literature, to enable the child reader more experience on the vastness of his lands and beyond and to also help curb the problem of ethnicity and tribalism.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the concept of Children's literature and its complex nature as it is defined by critics and scholars such as Townsend, Susina and Oguwho seem to argue that Children's literature is not simply a book written for or about children, it is much more elaborate. The chapter also reviews the concept of cultural integration especially as it relates to the management of business around the world, then specifically as it relates to Children's literature. The research further creates a gap in existing knowledge as regards cultural integration and Children's literature. However, to the best of the researchers knowledge, Akilu's work appears to be grey both in the field of research and criticism alike. Very few critics have discussed them. One of which is Shafii (2016).

2.2 Children's Literature

Literature embodies the artistic experiences of people's life. The socio - cultural, economic, moral and political values of a people are encoded in their literatures. Children's literature refers to carefully illustrated books or otherwise, containing short stories, legends, folktales, poetry among others, that is produced with a child's interest and needs in mind, and more often aims at teaching morals to children with a view to entrenching the values of the society in them. However, often times, no consensus is reached whether a given work is best categorized as adult or children's, because many of these books are marketed for both adults and children.

Hence, defining Children's literature is tricky. For Children's literature is not as it seems, simply a book written for children. Books written for children reached an adult audience too and not only through the selecting and purchasing aspect by the publisher or his reader, but by parents and teachers for individual children, and often

read aloud to the youngest of those children by adults. Children writers have always been very much aware of the adults reading over children's shoulders. Also, books that enthralled in childhood stayed with their readers into adulthood, establishing a tie between the writer and reader, and lasts pretty much for life (Banarjee, 2013).

In the same vein, Townsend, (1974) argues that the only practical definition of a Children's book is one that appears on the children's list by a publisher, but Susina(2008) is quick to realise that contemporary publishers are not making that distinction easier. For example, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* (1997) series is available in adult and children's versions with the only difference being the book's cover art. MavriceSendak's *Outside Over There* (1981) was published as a picture book for both children and adults. While folk and fairy tales were not originally intended for children, they have become a staple of Children's literature since the early 19th century. On the other hand, many books written for and widely read by children during the 17th and 18th centuries are considered historical Children's literature today and are read almost exclusively by adult scholars of Children's literature.

Moreso, adults, particularly parents, teachers, and librarians, often function as gatekeepers who identify appropriate texts for children. Since Children's literature has been marketed and purchased by adults who in turn present it to children, authors and publishers have attempted to produce children's texts that appeal to the desires of the actual adult purchaser. Consequently, Children's literature more often embodies adult concerns and concepts of childhood rather than topics children might choose for themselves. It is only with the advent of the paperback book that adolescents and in some cases younger children, have been able to select their books independent of adult supervision. But in the picture and chapbook genres especially, an adult makes the choice and reads to a child or children in a group (Susina, 2008: n.pag).

In the same direction, Ogu, cited in Ikonne, Oko and Onwudinjo (1992:84, 85), argues that writers of Children's literature should not insist on fitting the child into a conceptual mould that is too narrowly circumscribed. After all, majority of the earliest writings designated now as Children's literature were written primarily for adults but later became associated with children; such books as Caxton's *Aesop's Fables* (1484), Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), Jonathan Swift's *Gullivers Travels* (1726) and of course, the most famous of them all Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865). Based on this argument, Ogu sees no reason why one should give a clear cut definition between a seven year old and a thirty five year old literature. In other words, Ogu sees no reason for categorizing literature as adults and children's. Thus, he defines Children's literature as that which:

...Should help children ask questions that need to be asked, rather than merely memorize somebody else's answer. It must be a literature that forces children to face their very self and to cope with the unknown – their own existence (1992:84).

Similarly, in Huck and Kuhn's (1968: 4, 5) opinion, a child's book should be a book a child reads and is interested in, and an adult book is a book occupying the attention of an adult, but obviously according to Huck, the line between Children's literature and adults' literature is blurred. Before the 19th century only a few books were written for the specific readership of children. Children read books written for adults, taking from them what they could understand. Today, children continue to read some books intended for adults. For example Eric Segal's *Love Story* (1970) and Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land*. (1965). Yet some books first written for children such as *The Velveteen Rabbit* (1922), *Winnie the Pooh* (1926) and *The Hobbit* (1937) have been enjoyed by adults. Simultaneously, books like Richard Adam's *Water Ship Down* (1972) was published as a children's book in England and

as an adult book in the U.S. Soon after its publication in the U.S, it was listed as a best seller for adults, the young and children.

On a much wider picture Huck and Kuhn (1968:5) describe children today as more sophisticated and knowledgeable than any other generation of their age has been. They spend more time viewing television than they spend in school. The evening news has shown them actual viewers of war, they have witnessed the shootings of Martin Luther King and George Wallace, the starving Biafran children, the vicarious and daily experiences of crime, poverty, war, sex, divorce and murder. Such exposure according to Huck and Kuhn has forced adults to consider what seems appropriate for Children's literature. To this end, children's books are now reflecting the problems of today, the ones children read about in dailies and view on mass media and movies.

However, in Huck and Kuhn's opinion, the content of Children's literature is limited by the experience and understanding of children. Certain emotional and psychological responses seem outside the realm of childhood. For example, the feeling of nostalgia is an adult emotion that is foreign to children; children seldom look back on their childhood, but always look forward or are too busy living in the present. Cynicism and despair are also not childlike emotions. The cynic is bitter, angry, frustrated about the loss of values he once believed in, but very few children have known despair. They may have endured pain, sorrow or horror or been in a hopeless situation, but they are always hopeful.

Huck and Kuhn (1968: 6) then sum up their argumenst and offer a definition to the complex nature of Children's literature as:

...a literature circumscribed only by the experiences of childhood; but these are vast and complex. For, children feel and think, they wonder and they dream. Their lives may be filled with love or terror. The child

is curious about life and adult activities. He lives in the midst of tensions, of balances, of love and hate within the family and the neighborhood.

Huck and Kuhn posit that an author who can fill these experiences with imagination and insight, and communicates them to children effectively, in style or language, is writing Children's literature. Anozie cited in Ikonne, Oko&Onwudinjo (1992:10) adds that:

...authors of Children's literature should be ideally not only lovers and teachers of children, but people of wisdom whose visions of children and the world are grounded upon a sound practical knowledge of the real world in which children must grow up and live when they become adults.

In summation to the aforementioned arguments, Akorede (2008: 58, 59) gives an apt description of Children's literature thus:

...the imaginative work of art which takes the psychology of the child into consideration... a work of art written for children from a child's view of the world. The characters, setting and language take the knowledge and the interest of the child into consideration. It is a work of high creative imagination designed to entertain, teach, acculturate, expose, guide and prepare children for life in the society. Children's literature stimulates the child's thinking processes as it reveals the implication of negative choices and the reward of good choices. It equally helps the child to fulfill his/her need for love, understanding, desire for achievement, cognitive development and sense of aesthetic appreciation.

In other words, Children's literature is an art where the world is portrayed as it is supposed to be conceived by children from adults' perspectives. It is good books for

children from birth to adolescence (0-18 years), covering topics of relevance and interest to children of these ages, and with valuable insights into the human condition.

Generally, like the concept of Childhood, Children's literature is very much a cultural construct that continues to evolve over time. Children's literature should supposedly comprise of texts that have been written specifically for children and those texts that children have selected to read on their own. However there exists a thin line between Children's literature and adult literature. Children's literature has often been written, illustrated, published, and marketed consistently by adults, and it is widely being purchased and consumed by both children and adults. Hence it is more accurate to view such texts as having dual audiences, but which cover topics of relevance and interest particularly to the child. Children's literature is simply good literature that anyone can enjoy; children would enjoy in wonder and delight and with maturity and wisdom by the adult.

2.3 Millennium Development Goal (MDG's)

A lot has been written about the Millennium Development Goals. Generally, writers and critics examine the progress made so far in the process of implementation of the MDGs, review the key challenges and suggest possible policies and strategies which will facilitate the achievement of the goal. Martins (2014) in "An Analysis of the Prospect of Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria (A Case Study of Ebonyi State)", examines the progress of Nigeria towards achieving these goals by 2015. The report concludes that there is potential to reach some of the targets related to achieving universal primary education, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing a global partnership. However, it is most unlikely Nigeria has been able to meet the goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating diseases other than HIV/AIDS. This is

despite Nigeria deploying so much money and personnel geared towards achieving the MDGs as outlined by Evans (2011); the adoption of MDGs based planning and the commissioning of an MDGS needs assessment study whose broad objective is to provide a solid foundation for policy, budgeting, planning and financing strategy on the MDGs and the subsequent establishment by Federal Government of the office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs. The office has the mandate to act as secretariat to the presidential committee on the MDGs and develop a coherent approach for the achievement of the MDGs.

Nonetheless, the MDGs face challenges amongst which are the quality of governance, the absence of collaboration between the three tiers of government (the federal, state and local governments) the private sectors, civil society organizations and development partners in order to speed up progress. Others are, lapses in the system of information gathering and management and above all lack of funds. Consequently, Evans (2014) concludes that, with Nigeria's current economic condition, the MDGs are unaffordable and too expensive to realise. However in the light of the above, Martins remains optimistic that light awaits at the end of the tunnel and thus, recommends aggressive investment in poverty reduction schemes both by the public and non-governmental institutions, massive investment in agriculture and rural economic development and massive mobilisation of grassroots participant in project implementation of MDGs programmes amongst others.

As the thematic thrust of Children's literature, Fatima Akilu writes a book on each of the eight goals to teach children about the MDGs. The books place children at the centre of these goals as a good way to educate them about it. Shafii (2016) looks at the aesthetic appeal of some of Akilu's books. This she does by trying to erase the long/held tradition of Children's literature always being viewed from the perspective

of morality and didacticism.. To compete favourably with the visual and audio stimulants of contemporary culture, writers of Children's literature now experiment with the aesthetics of form to showcase the beauty of their works. Akilu's art of telling her tale obviously has an aesthetic experience. Akilu's beautiful and strong layout, glossy cover, bold and bright illustrations would compete favourably with the visual and audio stimulants of contemporary culture such as the *Ben Ten* syndrome, *Power Rangers*, *Thomas and Friends*, amongst other.

Using Akilu's *The Yellow Mosquito Net*, *The Red Transistor Radio*, *Timi's Dream Comes True*, *Kitwa Plays the Drum* and *Ngozi Comes to Town*, Shafii depicts the relationship between text and illustration through different components. For example, Shafii illustrates a synergistic relationship through the colourful illustrations and descriptive text right from the cover page of *Ngozi Comes to Town*. In this visual, picturesque story, Akilu aesthetically creates in her lead character Ngozi, the train, human attributes, human touch, name and feeling, to insinuate the nostalgia, emphasize the apathy and lament the loss of commercial and social vibrancy of Nigeria's railway system. Children often judge a book by its cover and in Shafii's view all the elements of the picture book which the reader sees before flipping through the pages of *Ngozi Comes to Town*, communicates a mood and may give the reader signals about the thematic thrust of the story. In some instances argues Shafii, the story line begins with the cover page and this can be deduced from the cover page of *Ngozi Comes to Town* which has a picture of a joyful looking train that seems to actually conclude the book in a triumphant manner. In other words, before the pages are turned, the cover page already gives an insight into how the story ends. Shafii concludes that instead of the serious tone that often characteristics adult

literature, Akilu's use of simple diction and vivid colorful illustrations, makes the rather serious thematic preoccupation of the book less gloomy and less despondent.

Shafii (2016) further looks at the images of animals in Children's literature in Agama's *The Tiger and the Rat and Other Stories*, Shoneyin's *Mayowa and the Masquerade* and Oyekanmi's *The Lion and the Hare and Other Stories*. Also in Olofintuade's *Eno's Story*, Shafii looks at the language of Children's literature. The language in children's literary texts must correspond with children's ability which means that vocabulary as well as sentence structure should be simple so that a clear expression could be created. Olofintuade makes use of repetition of words like 'ignoramus' to emphasis and aid the child in building his vocabulary, nonsense words like "Beelzebub" to capture the child's creative imagination and lots of humours and exaggerations as coping mechanisms for the characters sad experiences.

Amongst the many relevance attached to Children's literature are acquiring literacy, expanding the imagination and inculcating general or specific social attitudes. Above all Children's literature is good for coping with issues of ethnic and racial superiority (cultural integration), both at the national and global levels.

2.4 Cultural Integration

Cultural Integration can be defined as a combination of two words -cultural and integration. The word cultural is derived from the word culture which generally refers to that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society (Taylor, 2003: 1). Culture is the whole way of life which makes up human society. Because of its broad nature, Williams (1976:76) describes culture as "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" . Samovar and Porter define culture as:

...the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, belief, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religions, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual striving.

The definition above sees culture as a word for the totality of a people's way of life passed on from one generation onwards by way of learning. Mitchell (2007:14) argues for a more political understanding of culture: 'culture is politics by another name' He identifies six ways of understanding the term culture:

First, culture is the opposite of nature. It is what makes humans human. Second, culture is the actual, perhaps unexamined patterns and differentiations of a people...Third, it is the process by which these patterns developed... Fourth, the term indicates a set of markers that set one people off from another and which indicate to use our membership in a group ... Fifth, culture is the way that all these patterns, processes and markers are represented ... Finally, the idea of culture often indicates a hierarchical ordering of all these processes, activities, ways of life, and cultural production.

The word integration on the other hand means 'a unification of varying perceptions from different people' (Arifin, 2013). Integration is based on the sentiment that a people belong to one whole. It is this sentiment that binds people in one common bond no matter what their religion, language or social custom may be. Integration is a strong force that creates unbreakable ties among a people in developing an outlook which makes individuals subordinate their interest in favour of the larger interest of the community and the country at large. It encourages people to contribute to the welfare, peace and prosperity of a country as a whole.

Hence, the term cultural integration would mean a process as well as a goal by which all the people inhabiting a particular territory, irrespective of their religious, ethnic and linguistic differences, and on the basis of certain shared traditions, experiences, common history and values, strive to live together forever with honour and dignity (Arifin,2013). Cultural integration is the increasing integration of the different cultures found throughout the world and the diffusion of a dominant 'global culture'. It could be argued that this leads to a reduction of the cultural differences and a dilution of local cultures ("Globalisation and Cultural Integration" 2014:3).

In other words, cultural integration creates awareness of a single identity by which people from a particular area, country or countries should subscribe regardless of their different cultures, religions, regions and languages. It seeks to eliminate vices such as tribalism, ethnicity, inequality and inferiority or superiority complex while strengthening solidarity and unity towards a goal of peaceful co-existence, hence an overall socio-economic development. The process of cultural integration is psychological, involving the development of a feeling of unity, solidarity and cohesion in the hearts of the people, with a desire to defend the interest of their country. It encourages people to contribute to the welfare and peace of the society as well as have a sense of common citizenship and a feeling of loyalty to their nation.

Many literatures have been written on cultural integration from different fields of study, especially in the field of Business Management. The need for integration of various cultures in organizations around the world is becoming more and more necessary with the increasing globalization and consolidation within many industries. Zhanwen (2007:1) in "Cultural Integration in the Process of Cross- border Mergers and Acquisitions," defines cultural integration as:

... a culture that, eliminates conflicts arising from cultural differences by organizing and amalgamating the values, psychological states and behaviour modes of different communities.

In Zhanwen's opinion, in the process of cross-border merger and acquisitions, the enterprises involved will encounter cultural differences and conflicts. How to integrate these cultural differences and eliminate the conflicts becomes an important issue for the enterprise. Zhanwen thus discusses the necessity for employing cultural integration in cross – cultural management as a strategy for eliminating conflicts arising from cultural differences. By organizing and amalgamating the values, psychological states and behaviour modes of different individuals, the organizations achieve and maintain peaceful social relations amongst their staff.

Wolfenden (2015) also sees the need to successfully integrate cultures within organizations, whether precipitated by a merger or acquisition, development of a new unit, labor management difficulties or cross-functional projects. This is because the absence of integration presents complex management challenges. According to Wolfenden (2015) :

An organizations culture is like gravity. You can't see it or touch it, but it exerts a constant pull that holds things in a place. Like gravity, culture is made tangible by its effects; it can be seen in the behaviours and practices of an organizations management and employees. When two or more different cultures are required to work together, the effects while often catalytic can sometimes be disruptive and can undermine morale, productivity and profits.

Wolfenden then suggests that organizations employ the services of Culture Integration groups like the Vanto Group; a full scale consulting firm which works with clients to create initiatives on which people can successfully step outside their familiar frameworks to identify and address the embedded attitudes, assumptions and

ways of thinking that drive behaviour and hold the cultures limitation in place. By so doing, participants gain the freedom to act in new ways, and to forge a new culture based on common goals and values.

Accordingly, Turner (2015) has also advised many clients to secure the business benefits of integration policies by embracing culture at an early stage and by actively creating a new high performing culture focused on shared values and reconciled differences. He opines that:

Culture defines the context in which people leverage their energies in order for the organization to deliver optimum results. This human element often explains what distinguishes the highest performing companies from those that lag behind. High performing companies are those that ensure that business operations, management strategy culture and people are aligned.

He therefore suggests that companies engage the human factor in an integration program which would lead to accelerated growth on a personal and team level, resulting in raised and sustained performance in the new organization.

In other words, the process of inter and intra border merger and acquisition and joint partnerships, often encounters cultural differences and conflicts. Hence the need for providing a road map for cultural integration and positive intergroup relationships so that the staff develop healthy relationships and become functioning members of their new communities. The important aspect of integration is that the individual cultures and members of cultural communities are welcomed and accepted for what they are; there is respect for the practices, beliefs, and values of that culture. The critical question is why wait to become adults before engaging and acquiring the spirit of cultural integration? Why not inculcate the spirit into the social conscience of the child who would become the springboard of future generations? On this note,

Chinua Achebe in an interview in 1981 emphasises on the need for writers to produce books that portray a wide variety of people of diverse origins sharing and maintaining a peaceful co-existence. Achebe, cited in Osa (2001:166) posits that:

If the world is to become a united and human abode to be in, children must be brought up on a common vocabulary, for the heroic and the cowardly, the just and the unjust. Hence the need to raise well rounded children and the youth on literature that is in touch with their cultural heritage as well as of those of other nationalities, their individual lives and social functions. This promises to ensure a next generation of peaceful and stable societies than it would with the verbal bombardment of National Anthems. Which means preserving and refurbishing the landscape of the imagination and the domain of stories.

Achebe in that speech projects a vision of a harmonious entity based on the uniform inculcation of integral values in literatures for children, worldwide. Consequently, future generations would be unified on the basis of existing shared, common system of values inco-operated in their literatures.

Corroborating Achebe's view, Ada (2011) asserts as follows:

We live in a planet of diversity. It could even be affirmed that diversity is the only norm in our planet. In nature there is nothing that could be a flower, the flower but roses and carnations, tulips and jasmine, daffodils and bougainvillea, myriad of forms, colors and fragrances. There is not a bird, the bird but creatures as diverse as ostriches and humming birds. And what is an insect, a fish, a tree but beetles and bees, trout and sharks oaks and palms. This constant reminder of variety in nature becomes even more poignant when we learn that these diverse species of our planet co-exist in close contact with each other. They develop a synergy that allows them not only to

share reduced space and resources, but to thrive in their contact to the extent of becoming indispensable to the survival of each other.

Unfortunately, human beings have yet to learn this message of integrating from nature. Creating a world that embraces all humanity and its resources is one of the greatest challenges people face in the 21st century, further asserts Ada. Yet this kind of integration is very important in the building of a strong and prosperous globalizing world in general and nation in particular. Hence the need for multi-cultural literatures.

Achebe has emphasised the need for integrating cultures based on the uniformity of Children's literature on a global perspective, and to Ada, children authors should embark on the journey towards displaying diverse cultures of the world in their books. However, both Achebe and Ada have a broad conception of the concept of cultural integration. They seem to articulate the concept on a global worldview of Children's literature. Both writers fail to acknowledge the fact that cultural integration should be imbibed in the child first and foremost through relationships he or she builds in his/her immediate environment. The child should acclimatise to the concept in his/her own environment before embarking on a wider adventure. In other words, the issue of cultural integration in Children's literature is maximised by Achebe and Ada in terms of racism.

This study therefore hopes to bridge the gap by taking a look at cultural integration in Children's literature as a force for eliminating tribal and ethnic loyalty at societal levels. The study asserts that a good medication for the cure of ethnic loyalty and tribalism in Nigeria is a dose of carefully illustrated Children's literature as exemplified in Fatima Akilu's Millennium Development Goals Series. Akilu creates a series of wonderful and inspiring stories on how young Nigerian children of varying ethnic groups can come together and make a difference in their world.

2.5 Conclusion

It is not in doubt that Children's literature is the best art form for enhancing cultural integration in the socio-cultural and psychological development of the child. The primary message Nigerian children receive from a rich and diverse literature is that their culture is one of the many cultures in their country, all of which are equally viable, coherent, consistent and deserving of respect. As children develop self-affirmation in their own cultural identity, they open generously to other peoples both found within and around their terrain. At the same time, children and youths need to see their culture as vital and in a state of change. For cultures are not static, they are the products of daily endeavours, constantly in the making. Some items would disappear, some multiplied, some merged, some changed and other new elements incorporated. As the growth of every society is subject to the functional growth of her children, this research is particularly concerned with cultural integration in Children's literature in Nigeria and shows that through the efforts of Akilu, concerted efforts are arriving that will enhance greater understanding and development.

CHAPTER THREE

TEAM WORK AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION IN FATIMA AKILU'S WORKS.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses two of Akilu's texts amongst the Millennium Development Goals Series Books 1-8. It interpretes to its readers the notion of cultural integration in relation to team work in *Timi's Dream Comes True* and *Preye and the Sea of Plastics*. Using new historicism and reader response theory as a framework of analysis to buttress the point that the stories continually engage with the political, economic, social, ideological and other elements that lead to progressive change or otherwise in a people.

3.2 The Concept of Teamwork

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines teamwork as a group of people working effectively together. Pearson (2011:3), also sees teamwork as a group of people working in collaboration together towards a common goal. In essence teamwork is when a group of people work together cohesively, towards a common goal, creating a positive working atmosphere and supporting one another to combine individual strength.

Today, almost everything in life is accomplished through teamwork. According to Pearson (2011:3), large and small companies use teams to ensure that their products and services reach their customers, Organizations put teams together to accomplish goals; instructors teach and develop curriculum in teams; government workers from local to national levels work in teams, academic institutions, staff and students work together to create documents, put together presentations and complete projects. The prime advantage of working in teams further remarks Pearson, is the ability to combine skills and talents especially when things need to get done in a specific time frame.

3.2.1 *Timi's Dream Comes True*

In a small village known as Koko lives an eight year old Timi and his family. Koko is an ancient historic village known for its trade but today, people no longer come for trade Timi secretly dreams to acquire education and become a teacher someday. As Timi turns nine, his father engaged him on the family occupation; fishing, which lazy Timi abhors. This blurred Timi's dreams for a while. Luckily for Timi, the Millennium Development Goal evolves and father excitedly reveals to the family, government's plans on Universal Basic Education. Timi's dream may actually come true.

Thematic Analysis

Narrated by Timi, the reader listens to the story from the marginalise point of view (one among those non-discursive versions outlined by the new historicist critic). The story has a village setting where we witness the cock crows to wake the people at dawn and villagers begin to stir and prepare for the daily hussles of life in the stagnant village. Koko symbolises the good old days when people live in communal harmony, sharing common interests, property, possessions and resources. Also, socio-cultural activities abound due to trade, as Timi tells us that visitors are easily identified:

Koko was a historic place and many people came to trade ...All I see now are the same people. No one new comes anymore (4).

In this dimly illustrated story, Akilu presents dreams and imaginations as essential aspects of human growth and development not only to children of the dorminant groups but also to the marginalised groups. Timi dreams all day and uses colours as symbolic representation of his dreams. The personified imaginary language represents a naïve Timi:

When I get tired of playing, I lie on my back and watch the sky change. On some days it is angry and purple with red edges. On other days it is happy and I see it smiling in golden yellow.

The sky reminds me of what happens inside my head. I have many thoughts and I dream all day. My brother says. It is my imagination (5).

The interpretation of nature as reflected in the sky subtly extends to the temperament of human feelings and behaviours. Sometimes moods are joyful and at other times sorrowful. Through the use of imagery again Timi tells us,

I close my eyes and I see many cities, each a different colour, I ride on the wings of a bird far away from Koko and its black soil (10).

Here, Timi is wishing the impossible using marginal realism. The colour black as Timi has used to represent the soil in Koko is a metaphor for degeneration and infertility of the land. The soil is unable to yield crops, trade has wane and even the fishing occupation the family strives on to survive is hindered by lack of power supply. 'We don't even have a fridge to store our fish so all our food gets spoilt' (12), 'Where is the man from the big city?' Timi's mother questions rhetorically while lamenting bitterly. This depicts Koko as a microcosm of life in the villages of the Niger Delta regions of Nigeria. The story testifies to social wrongs that cry out for attention.

The Niger Delta is a very densely populated region sometimes called the oil rivers because it was once a major producer of palm oil. The Delta is also an oil rich region. The area is the largest wet land and maintains the third largest drainage basin in Africa. The Delta environment contains one of the highest concentrations of biodiversity on the planet, in addition to supporting abundant flora and fauna, arable terrain that can sustain a wide variety of crops, timber or agricultural trees, and more species of freshwater fish than any ecosystem in West Africa. However the extensive dam construction in the region, the carelessness of the oil industry, as well as the non-chalant attitude of government has precipitated an unhealthy situation. The region has

been the centre of international controversy over devastating pollution due to oil spills which hinders terrestrial life and human rights violations. Surprisingly, both the oil companies and government are doing little or nothing to aid the communities of the hazards (Cgingold, 2014).

Fortunately, ‘a tall thin man’ (Aminu), who hails from the north and an official of the MDG Nigeria project suffices, urging the people of Koko to co-operate with the government so they could work together to improve life in the village. But the villagers all look at him in disbelief, for they are used to government’s lies; government’s unfulfilled promises. Here Akilucriticises the Nigerian government just like Achebe in *The Trouble with Nigeria*. She sees the trouble with Nigeria as simply and squarely a failure of leadership. Governments have always been inseparable from lies, and have rarely provided adequate basic amenities for its people. The inequitable distribution of power is being questioned through the voice of the powerless. This is justified in Mother’s rhetorical questions:

Why do you listen to these lies?

What has the government done for us?

Our land used to be good for farming but look at it now!

Nothing can grow in our soil. I will not listen to any more government talk (9).

^s
Akilu’s deliberate choice of a northerner as a representative of change in the South is to enlighten the child reader and strengthen his/her cultural ties with people from other regions of the country and who are willing to be their brothers keepers. The character of Aminu, even though he is a representative of Federal Government Agency, can be seen as a conscious attempt by the writer to show that despite diversity, difference and pluralism characterising Nigeria, people from different geographical zones can be used as agents of transformation and cultural integration in

different parts of the country. The child visualises Nigeria being depicted as a one nation- state bound in unity and prosperity to which she/he must also uphold. Akilu further informs the child about other cities in Nigeria. Aminu lives in Abuja but his family comes from Kano, an ancient place she likens with koko. Aminu also wants people to go with him to Benin to bring equipment for the realisation of the school project.

The adults in Koko may have already made up their minds about the government's new plan but like every other child, Timi holds onto hope. Using simile, Timi likens his warm feelings to 'tiny stars twinkling all over his body' (19). He begins to look forward to each new day, which is a day closer to the man's (Aminu) return and finally the man as promised did return. Here, Akilu displays the virtue of being true to ones words. On his return, Aminu introduces the Universal Basic Education Scheme (UBE) under the Government's Millennium Development Goals project which the whole community would benefit from; children will be taught during the day and adults can learn to read and write in the evening.

The Universal Basic Education Programme is a nine year basic education programme which was launched and executed by the Government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1999 to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance, and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness and national integration. The scheme aims at providing greater access to, and ensuring quality basic education throughout Nigeria with an objective of ensuring an uninterrupted access to nine year free and compulsory formal education for every child of school going age, under six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. This would enable the child acquire literacy numeracy, life skills and values for long life education and useful living (UBEC, 2014).

Hence education enters into Koko village to change and better the people's lives in grandeur. Akilu introduces improvisation in learning through the use of aeroplanes as classes. This would make learning livelier, fun, interesting and an adventure. The UBE works in concert with all stakeholders, thus mobilizing the nation's creative energies to ensure that education for all becomes the responsibility of all. As such, the good spirited Simeon Air donated their unused planes for communities to use as classrooms. Others from all around Nigeria donated computers, books, pens and paper, and the whole community joined in turning the air plane into a citadel for learning, using Timi's favourite colours. This single collective effort signifies integration that builds strong social ties amongst Nigerians. Indeed, it is good to dream. In an authorial intrusion Timi tells us:

This is my first time in a plane. It reminds me of the bird I flew in my dreams. Only this time it can really take me places (26).

In other words education empowers and the people in power have assumed a reasonable amount of their responsibilities to the marginalised. Life in Koko becomes habitable in a symbolic representation of bright rainbow colours. As Timi realises his dreams, the future holds good promises....The simple story offers more comment on socio-economic drive contrary to moralisation and references to values of behaviour usually associated to Children's Literature.

3.2.2 *Preye and the Sea Of Plastics*

Preye is fed up with tripping over the plastic bags that everyone throws about town. The whole neighborhood has been taken over by these plastic bags. In annoyance, Preye decides to do something about it. With the help of his friend Obinna, Preye organises the kids in the neighbourhood to clean the streets off the

plastics. Joy's mother who works in Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) also helps the children make a film on the implication of letting rubbish pile up everywhere in the neighbourhood.

Thematic Analysis

This inspiring imaginative story highlights the Millennium Development Goal of ensuring environmental hygiene and by extension, environmental sustainability. Through strong metaphors and imageries. Akilu shows how terrible the environment has been littered by plastic rubbish, such as plastic bags and empty cans. Environmental sustainability refers to actions or projects done by people that can be performed continuously with little or no adverse impact to the environment not only to protect resources for the present generation but to preserve them for future generations.

Unfortunately in an urban set up where Preye lives with his middle class parents, "the whole neighbourhood has been taken over by plastic bags. We are drowning in them" (3), Preye metaphorically states. Again through Preye's use of simile and personification, the reader visualises the extent of the plastic litter thus:

Everywhere you go all you find is plastic. It feels like it is going to swallow us up! (5).

Inspired by the wheel of change, Akilu projects Preye and the other children as ambassadors prompted by the vision to cater for the present and future generations. Preye encouraged by his mother embarks on the cleaning of the environment with Obinna, Joy and other children of different backgrounds who live in the neighbourhood. In the process, everyone was enlightened and educated on the importance of environmental sustainability. The children sadly learn from the district head, Mr. Peter that:

In the past, we had regular street cleaners and people used dustbins for their litter. Now they have stopped using them because the government can no longer afford to collect the rubbish especially the plastics bags (15).

This poses some questions to the consciousness of the reader. Is the ruling class insensitive to the sustainability of its lands? Or is it nonchalant or insensitive to the health and well being of its citizenry? Closely related to this, Akilu here raises the issue of mismanagement of funds by the ruling class.

The children also learn from the nostalgic reflections of an old man that a decade ago, where the rubbish is piled was arableland which grew much farm products. Today as a result of the refuse dumped, Akilu personifies the soil, 'the soil is choked with plastic that people throw out, nothing grows here anymore' (24). Consequently Akilu advocates in the child a desired change. An exemplary leadership in the characters of Preye and the neighbourhood children who represent the future is glaring. The children have taken over where the adults and even the government have failed.

Working harmoniously as a group, Joy initiated the idea of showing people the effects of unsustainable environment through the media with the help of her mother who works with NTA. Joy's mother organises the children into three teams of five. The first team did research to understand the problem better, the second team interviewed the people in the community, while the third team worked with NTA staff to get ready for filming. Preye's interview with Dr. Ibrahim, an Environmental Science Lecturer at local University reveals that:

... the rubbish people throw out in one place affects people and animals around the world ... the same type of plastic that is in your

neighbourhood is also floating in the sea, killing fish and other sea animals. The use of plastic bags should be banned (25, 26).

In other words, the consequences of man's hazardous undertaking are enormous. Throwing plastic bags endangers both man and animals, the soil and the aquatic terrain. It is a clarion call to all. Hence, as everyone praised the efforts of the children, the people promised to only use paper bags, cloth bags, or raffia baskets to carry their fruits and vegetables from the market. Above all, market sellers in the town also heed the call to stop using plastic bags too.

We see enthusiastic and focused characters in Preye and his friends. They are determined to excel hence they willingly spared their playtime to bring the project alive. The children become pacesetters; they were invited to various towns around Nigeria to talk on the effects of plastics on the environment and simultaneously integrating with other cultures. They were also celebrated by the Presidency in the State House. When the president shook Preye's hand, Preye very imaginatively foreshadows himself as the nation's number one citizen in the near future and proudly whispered to Joy "Someday that might be me! Or me! Joy replied" (30). Ascertaining the child as the future leader of tomorrow, Akilu foreshadows the child character as the ideal person to rectify the present shambles in the country, Nigeria. This she does with a salient feminist thrust, re-iterating her ideology; the tradition of male only president in Nigeria might certainly change in the future with characters like Joy. Again, Akilu prompts the Nigerian child to grow up being less dependable on government but rather to partner with government to help uplift themselves socially and economically.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has dwelt on the idea of working together as a tool for cultural integration as successfully highlighted in four of Akilu's texts. By attempting to shape the psychic and moral consciousness of the Nigerian child, Akilu's exemplifies the importance of collective work and communal living in her characters whom she has imbued with the spirit of cultural nationalism. The child becomes a witness to the fact that even though the stories abound in different settings in the regions of Nigeria, the regions are not restricted to their original inhabitants but they share their boundaries of space and work together with other Nigerians from various cultural groups and in the process upholding the socio-historic value of unity in diversity.

Akilu has successfully laid a sound footing of a collaborative environment for the children where teams stay focused, communicate more clearly and help one another succeed. This consistently leads to better outcomes in terms of generating multiple ideas for solving problems offered by the wide pool of talents and in the process strengthening bonds between the children who are future leaders and simultaneously enhancing cultural integration. Moreover, the stories are narrated from different points of view to stress the non-discursive experiences of different social groups that make up history as emphasised by new historicist. Hence, from the narrations of the marginalised group in *Timi's Dream Comes True*, down to the middle class families in *Preye and The Sea of Plastics*.

CHAPTER FOUR

GENDER AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION IN FATIMA AKILU'S WORKS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter continues with the analysis of two of Akilu's text of the Millennium Development Goals Series Books 1-8, *The Red Transistor Radio and Aliyyah Learns a New Dance*. The chapter presents a vital relationship between gender and cultural integration. In relation to feminism and cultural poetics, Mitchel (2000:55) posits that:

... no longer was it possible to study the workings of the economy without also and at the same time studying what had been seen as epiphenomenal to that basic {relations of family, ideologies of gender social structures of sexuality etc .

The interest in the gender aspect of Children's literature emerged in the 1960's and 70's as part of the general interest in a socio-historical approach to literature. Gender stereotyping was the key concept of the studies (Nikolajeva2005:149). It is in this regard that the study makes it paramount to look at the impact of gender or feminism on the field of cultural poetics.

4.2 The Concept of Gender

Gender is often misunderstood as simply a state of being male or female, it goes beyond that. According to the American Psychological Association, gender refers to the "attitudes, feelings and behaviours that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex." Baumann defines gender as "the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material." He argues that gender is not determined biologically as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but it is constructed socially. Reeves and Baden (2000:3) define gender by comparison with sex thus:

Sex refers to the biological characteristics that categorise someone as either female or male, whereas gender refers to the socially determined ideas and practices of what it is to be female or male.

From the aforementioned definitions, one can conclude that gender is the cultural and social roles, behaviours and attitudes ascribed to men and women in their respective societies. However, according to Baumann the term focuses more on women, their roles, access to and control over resources, division of labour, interests and need.

All around the globe, women are treated unequally and less value is placed on their lives in all institutional spheres (household communities, market and state), because of their gender (Reeves & Baden,2000:7). Women are generally expected to fulfill the reproductive role of being mothers as well as caring for other family members while men are associated with productive roles. This gender division of labour tends to appear natural but it is culturally and socially constructed.

Women are not given same opportunities in life as men in terms of distribution of power and resources. The attempt to redress the issue of gender equality and equity has led to the rise of feminism as a movement. Some feminists use the concept of patriarchy to explain the systematic subordination of women in terms of women's reproductive roles, sexual violence and capitalist exploitation. This question of power is what is obtainable in some of Akilu's texts. Akilu skillfully tries to subvert the dominant gender ideologies.

4.2.1 *The Red Transistor Radio*

The story has a rural, but gradually developing Northern Nigeria setting where Khalida and her parents are a part of. Khalida is bored and angered by the ever talking red transistor radio that Mama appears to value. Then one day at school,

Khalida's science teacher asked the pupils to write a story of something unusual that happened to them. After much thought, Khalida decides to explore and write on the red radio with the help of her parents. Baba and Mama reveal to Khalida a programme for pregnant women and nursing mothers on the radio known as "Mothers Hour", where mother learnt of maternal mortality, its precautions and repercussions, before Khalida's birth. Khalida learns that the red transistor radio is a special radio, for it has helped made many things happen, including her well being.

Thematic Analysis

Told in a joyful mood by an omniscient narrator, in this story, Akilu skillfully imbues in the girl child especially, the importance of antenatal and male support during pregnancy and the eating of balanced diet to keep mother and fetus healthy. Antenatal care is the clinical assessment of mother and fetus during pregnancy, for the purpose of obtaining the best possible outcome for mother and child. Efforts are made to maintain maternal physical and mental well being, prevent preterm delivery, and anticipate difficulties and complications at delivery to ensure the birth of a healthy infant and to assist the couple in preparation for parenting. While balanced diet is the classes of food (vitamins, carbohydrates, protein, mineral salt, fats and oil), in their right proportions, to meet the body needs. In reality, many women especially in rural areas where there is little or no awareness, do not eat balanced diet during pregnancy and they deliver their babies at home where no expert hands can offer their help. As a result, little complications often lead to death of mother and infant or both.

Khalida is a bright primary five or six school girl with promising potentials. She is jovial and outspoken and always eager to learn new things. Khalida is surrounded by exciting classmates, Halima and Habiba, supportive parents and an encouraging class teacher. Before Khalida's birth, two of Mama's sisters and some of

her friends died at child birth, which could be attributed to the fact that there was no ante natal care sought by the mothers. Mama was fortunate, with the help of the Red Radio programme “Mothers Hour”, she learns of maternal mortality and how to curtail it by attending ante natal clinics and eating good food at the right proportion to make her and the unborn child strong and healthy.

Also, in trying to support the pregnant women, Baba helped form a Committee at work for people whose wives were pregnant. Through this communal engagement, each person contributed two hundred Naira a month which the women used to buy fruits and vegetables, which according to Baba, “was very helpful for those who couldn’t afford to buy healthy food” (18). Ante natal’s are vital avenues for different classes of women of diverse ethnic backgrounds to meet and converse in order to support themselves and prosper an agenda of good health and safe delivery during pregnancy. In the process these women promote cultural integration. As a result, the male folks also become integrated due to their uniting together to show support for the healthy living of their pregnant wives. The government was also not insensitive to the plight of its people, knowing that transportation poses a great hitch or setback in rural and remote areas, it aided in the distribution of *KekeNapep*(tricycles) which were used to convey pregnant women to hospitals in town during antenatal clinics.

However, a salient issue Akilu also raised in the story is that of creative writing. Through the science story project.Khalida’s teacher encourages her to unleash her potentials of creativity which is unraveled in the story, which would in future help, perhaps pave a career path for her. Khalida gives her story a symbolic title:**The Red Transistor Radio**. Research has shown that the radio has the highest number of audience especially in rural communities than any modern communication gadget.According to a survey conducted by the United Nations, radio stations are

adjudged to have an average listenership of about forty million audience at any given time. The radio is exemplified here as a modern symbol of cultural unity amongst Baba and his colleagues, of health in pregnant women and of wealth in successive child births. Kahlida is rewarded by the publication of her story by her school in the local newspapers. This could serve as a source of inspiration to her and to other pupils as well.

4.2.2 *Alliyah Learns a New Dance.*

Fatima Akilu's *Alliyah Learns a New Dance* relates the story of a young Fulani girl, Aliyyah who represents Nigeria at the African regional dance competition. Her brilliant performance crowned her first place and a month after the competition, Aliyyah was invited to represent Nigeria at the Junior Dance Competition in Sweden where she encounters contestants from all over the world wearing various attires from sari's and clog's to kimono's. Two winners emerged at the end of the contest ; Aliyyah and Mila, from Serbia and Akilu is innovative to offer each contestant a harmonious gift as each girl would spend a semester in the other's home country to learn about their different schools and cultures.

Thematic Analysis

In this colorfully illustrated book aimed at both national and global integration, Aliyyah from an upper class family is a symbol of unity. She sees herself as an active member, ready to contribute her quota to the glory of the society. Hence, during the dance practice sessions with her brother Ashraf, Aliyyah skillfully refuses to stick to a particular dance asserting that '...there are so many different cultures in Nigeria. How Can I choose just one?' (17). Aliyyah is consciously aware of the varying ethnic groups in the country and desires to project them in her dance as

Akilu has imbibed cultural consciousness in the good spirited girl who firmly believes she represents Nigeria and not just the Hausa Fulani regions. As such, Ashraf humorously offers his imaginary advice thus:

‘Why don’t you stick your bum out like the Yoruba’s, raise your legs up like Tiv’s and role your head like the Kanuri’s...?’ (18)

This is a dance step that fashions out the varying rich cultures embedded in the nation. An exemplarsymbolic integrating dance that recreates and in the process affirms desirable models of communal life in diversity.

The making of Aliyyah’s dress for the competition symbolises cultural hybrid and by extension cultural integration. For, the dress was made of cotton grown in Kano, with seeds from Alabama. The cloth was woven in a Chinese owned factory in Calabar and a tailor in Abeokuta made the costume.’(21) This chain of distribution represents so many people contributing to cultural harmony devoid of ethnicity and racism. Akilu’s choice of Aliyyah’s dress taken from most of the different sections of Nigeria, her dance step and music clearly symbolisesunity in diversity. Therefore, the reader sees all the different ethnic groups in Nigeria and beyond her borders existing amicably and living together happily with one another’s assistance for growth and development. Such that one would attempt to understand and reconstruct himself at the moment of reading.

Akilu has thus projected to the child that there are thousands of different cultures in the world in general and in Nigeria in particular. People dress, eat, and live differently. However, being different does not mean being inferior. All human beings are equal regardless of their technological advancement and are free to live life as it pleases them. Respecting such differences helps people to understand one another and live peacefully in their communities. Akilu thus invites the child character to keep

away from belonging to class, racial, ethnic, religious and or national groups. The child makes up a natural figure upon which ideas of national and racial identities are draped. Hence, the figure of the child provides a lens through which class identity can be interrogated.

Akilu sparsely made use of figurative expressions like simile, during Aliyyah's dance practice sessions with her brother Ashraf: "I want to win this competition, not look like a crazy cat stretching" (18). Again, Aliyyah describes her anxiety when they arrived at the competition venue in Tanzania, "I feel like I've got hundreds of butterflies dancing in my stomach" (6). After the triumphant "twirls and claps", as Aliyyah went off the stage, "she felt like she was walking on air" (12). Then the only use of onomatopoeic device is when Aliyyah walked onto the stage and saw the crowd clapping, "her belly started doing flip-flops".

4.3 Conclusion

Historically, many literary works, children's fiction inclusive, represented women in stereotypical terms, precisely playing the dominant roles of being mothers and wives. In order to promote positive over all attitudes with regards to sex roles, Akilu challenges prevailing norms and values in a bid to ascertain change in the social conscience of both the female and male child. Obviously, in these two stories, Akilu has presented female characters with an inbuilt self confidence, who understand themselves and have taken up their rightful positions as regards their capabilities in their own worlds. By so doing, they have resisted and unmasked what appears to be a natural, social and cultural construction of power (patriarchy). Also in trying to carve out an image for themselves, the women have in turn pledged allegiance to cultural integration in relationships they build in their societies during antenatal in *The Red*

Transistor Radio, and above all in global socio- cultural activities in Aliyah Learns a New Dance.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The research examined Children's literature in relation to cultural integration. It looked at Children's literature as a tool for enhancing cultural integration in Nigeria. Particularly, it examined Fatima Akilu's contribution towards the aforementioned discourse. Fatima Akilu has written eight books captioned the "Millennium Development Goals Series of Children's Literature Books 1-8". Akilu presents literature for children in Nigeria that explains the MDG's in languages children can understand, with good illustrations that would enhance comprehension, and make reading a pleasurable and enriching experience. Each of the MDG's is reflected in a book. The research looked at four of these goals in relation to cultural integration: Universal Primary Education in *Timi's Dream Comes True*, improving maternal Health in *The Red Transistor Radio*, ensuring environmental sustainability in *Preye and the Sea of Plastics* and developing a global partnership for development in *Aliyyah Learns a New Dance*.

The Nigerian government has put the MDG's at the heart of its vision to ensure the betterment of the lives of Nigerians. Akilu is making use of these goals in an attempt to create positive changes in the psyche of the Nigerian child towards national unity and the advancement of governmental policies. The research moved ahead to use new historicism as the measuring yardstick for its interpretation of the texts. This approach to literature gives pride of place to the historical, cultural, environmental, political and institutional background of the text by the specifics of race, class, gender and nation, the time and circumstances of its production and the reference of the work to actual events and historical circumstances as well as interpreting the multiple points of view within the text. The research also made use of the reader response criticism. In addition the research had utilised library and internet sources, books, journals and articles from academic field using the qualitative research method.

Akilu places her stories in modern settings. She uses contemporary ethos typical of the *Ben Ten* syndrome, *Power Rangers*, *Digimon Fusion*, *Thomas and Friends*, and other

human and animated stories, which is a far cry from the folktale and tale telling of yester years. However, because Akilu has the Nigerian child at heart, her setting as well as her characters are a symbolic representation of various geographical regions of the Nigerian state. This is to make more familiar the immediate environment of her audience and to imbibe the spirit of cultural nationalism in them. Hence from the various locations in the south-south is the setting of Timi's *Dream Comes True and Preye and The Sea of Plastic*. In *The Red Transistor Radio* the reader witnesses a Hausa cultural setting with Khalida, Aunt Safina, Habiba, Halima, Mama and Baba as characters from the north east. Then of course the deliberate choice of the Fulani regions in the north eastern parts (the most cultural hybrids of all ethnic tribes in Nigeria and known wanderers), in *Aliyya Learns a New Dance*, to buttress the point of cultural integration that is binding all texts. In other words, a reading of the eight stories carries the child on a guided travel tour as a tourist around the landscapes of Nigeria. Delight, wonder, pleasure and inspiration are likely to be the child's experiences even though themes of social, economic and political relevance abound in the texts. Like most feminist writers, Akilu dutifully brings her female characters to the fore, in the process empowering them. However, the male characters are neither lurking behind, but complement the female characters.

The stories are a source of nourishment and serve as an irresistible appeal to nationalism and patriotism. As such the audience of these books would be children from the age of nine to twelve. At this age, the child is fully conscious of his environment, therefore he could be imbued with such characters for the benefit of nation building. As the child dwells in and wonders at the lives lived in these stories he comes to know both herself/himself and the world as something over which she/he as a character in life might exercise some control over. The imaginative experience registers in his/her psyche and remains memorable for long.

Nigeria literary artist would be doing the nation a great service if they start from the cradle to design excellent recipes of Children's literature containing cultural integration values that would help shape the child into a responsible adult with a healthy mindset as Akilu has tried to do. Akilu's series could be seen as a source of nurturance for the young mind and spirit. Akilu has helped sewn the seed of patriotism and nationalism subtly in the minds and hearts of children. This she does by facilitating the magical encounter between her audience and the wonderful series of diverse human experiences, told with beautiful illustrations and bold prints which cajoles the reader into grabbing a copy. Even though Akilu's texts are in support of national objectives designed to benefit her sponsors, we must credit her creative endeavour in producing a series of colourful easy to read quality story books. Akilu makes the stories come alive and produces a gateway for children to learn about the characteristics of the natural and socio-cultural world, and to discover insights into their own personalities and abilities.

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