

## **I. Introduction: *The Last Song* as a Bildungsroman**

The goal of this research is to study Nicholas Sparks' novel *The Last Song* (2009) from the perspective of Bildungsroman the genre that focuses on the coming of age and rites of passage of an adolescent or adult and is recognized for how it educates its readers about personal growth and self consciousness. This research on *The Last Song* focuses on the quest of self-awakening and attempts to analyze the protagonist's own progression of identity, that is, her journey from immaturity to maturity. The female protagonist Ronnie is the radical character who is makes a journey from childhood to adulthood and physical experience to psychological awakening. The main character Ronnie in this novel is stubborn and rebellious, who is quickly approaching womanhood without any plans for her life. Ronnie is furious when she and her younger brother, Jonah are shipped to their father's house for the summer. She has not spoken to her dad since he left three years ago, and is far from happy to hear that she'll be living with him. Her father is patient and kind with her and she starts to regret having pushed him away for so long.

Sparks's novel features traditional narrative techniques. The story is told by a first person narrator, who relates the events of the story. Sparks employs the narrative technique of flashbacks in that his narrator tells the strong month after the events. Sparks' dictions are descriptive and evocative his imagery is rooted in emotion and evokes emotion in readers.

There are many critics and reviewers who have approached the text from several view points. A renowned critic and writer, Jeb Blake responds that this novel not to see from the perspective of only one side but also watch from different sites: "It may be great mistake to see Nicholas' novels from the perspectives of love and romance, because in every work he has raised the repressed and marginalize voices of

the women" (120). Jeb Blake here tries to say that though in most of Sparks' novel we find romantic images and symbols, he has strongly raised the dominated voices of women Sparks wants to give the message; women not only endure the male domination but also create their independent identity in the society.

Specifically, the novel is about Ronnie's process of maturation. Thus, it is the Bildungsroman a coming-of-age novel that deals with the moral and spiritual development of the protagonist. Talking about *The Last Song*, New Bern highlights, an American teenager, their behavior of this stage and he wants to show the uniqueness in childhood: "I know the teenagers will love this book-but I really think this book is just as much for the young at hearts as well *The Last Song* greatly exceeded my expectation" (57).

New Bern finds above this extract only emotional (love) but he does not address social religions and individual identity. In this novel, the critic does not find about father's and daughter relation. There is relation between father and daughter that gets Ronnie is changing day to day and matured. She is changing herself physically, spiritually and psychologically also.

In the same way Mary J. Gramlich in discussion of Sparks' novel explores the movement of Ronnie from the stage of innocence to emerging woman hood. She sees Ronnie's physical action as the cause behind his psychological maturity also:

An eighteen year old has been enough to deal with and now she has to spend the summer in Wrightsville with her father, perfection is not the name of this adventure. But Ronnie finds herself gravitating to trouble at first but as the summer progresses new purpose shows itself and clarifies that life is not all black and with there is some gray. (11)

Mary J. Gramlich finds above this lines only self-identity for dealing obstacles but she doesn't express social structure identity. In spite of social structure identity, Ronnie solves so many problems and she knows her punctuate father, social norms and environment in the summer. That's why the summer progresses new purpose shows itself.

Another critic, Kaylee Byrne interprets that childhood is not only a stage of imaginative indulgence but also the stage of storm. And these features enable one to be matured not only physically but also psychologically. "Ronnie's summer gets off to a shanky starts but it all changes when she meets Will Blakelee, the local heartthrob with a big secret. Over the course of the summer, Ronnie matures as life throws out obstacles that she was not expecting, but she realized she needed to be strong for her brother" (20).

He focuses only on brother's role to throughout obstacles but he doesn't find individual and social structure identity. Ronnie faces many obstacles in her life that throw out by physical, individual and social so, Ronnie gets knowledge through the experience, in summer and returns to her society and adopts its norms and values.

Similarly, another critic Tara Mark takes the novel as a minute observation of a young girl's journey. Then he believes that every circumstance, event, environment, physical journey, love affair, etc. is responsible for every person's upbringing. So is there in case of Ronnie. He says:

Ronnie is falling in love with Will, it happened so fast, too fast-to find myself invested in their relationship. I found this story to be utterly predictable. From the very beginning I knew Steve was going to die and of course Ronnie would get close to him and end up sorry for the way she treated him for the past 3 years. (76)

He discusses emotional identity of her father but he doesn't focus other identity that Ronnie would get close to him and end up sorry for the way. Ronnie's upbringing from childhood to maturity is physical and psychological on the one hand and social and cultural on the other.

Another reviewer Celie Atchley, talking about the novel, says that there is no chance to go away without social norms and values, instead there is a chain of social responsibility also. He says "I think the best character in this book is her father. He is the kind of dad that we all want, and the kind of person we all respect. His trails of divorce, moving back to where he grew up, and trying to create a relationship with his kinds is the best part of this book" (85).

Here, she raises the social identity only of father but she could not find other identity to make her feeling responsibility. Not only, that Ronnie is responsible from her lover Will Blakelee, but also different types of friends and summer vacation is also the sign of maturation that why Ronnie changes into ignorance to insight.

Above mentioned critics have expressed their own opinion towards Ronnie. But I believe that I can find the multiple identities emotional, group, social, religious and individual that cause Ronnie's move from immaturity to maturity. Therefore, this research studies Sparks' *The Last Song* as a novel full of incidents of tragedy, loss, brokenness and forgiveness. The protagonist Ronnie's experiences make her adult. This study therefore tries to critically probe into Ronnie's passage into adulthood. As such, it posits the novel as a Bildungsroman.

The Bildungsroman genre was not introduced until the 1820's by German philologist Karl Morgenstern. On the contrary, the term "Bildungsroman" was not commonly brought up in literature studies until 1870 by German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey. Dilthey's research claims that the first novel that initiated the genre was

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, published in 1795.

In Dilthey's case, he explains:

The protagonist engages in a double task of self-integration and integration into society. For Dilthey, the first implies the second, and thus he reads the Bildungsroman as a fundamentally affirmative, conservative genre, confident in the validity of the society it depicts, and anxious to lead both hero and reader to a productive place in that society. (195)

Evidently, this is the basic purpose and meaning of the Bildungsroman, a novel that "forms" and/or educates. As mentioned, the genre was not fully recognized until some of the novels had been published a few decades afterwards. The several noted aspects were not the only components necessary for his genre.

Coming-of-age novel are known to educate its readers about personal growth and self-consciousness, usually towards adolescents and young adults. This genre of literature allows individuals to understand the subjects of rite of passage and liminality. The stories tend to have the protagonists depart their stages of being a youth and entering adulthood. In the early nineteenth century, these types of novel refer to the Bildungsroman the prominently different from other types of novel genres. The books did not just allow readers to intellectually develop, but socially as well. Based on its etymology meaning "formation novels", the literary values of this genre that made it significant has blurred over time due to cultural and societal adaptations. There "coming-of-age" qualities have become popularized in other book genres that target toward youth and adolescent readers. Even through the time and culture has progressed in life and literature, the definition and components have remained the same, with the exception of cultural adjustment made within the story.

On the other hand, readers may still be unaware on what is considered a coming of age novel; however, by acknowledging the true definition of this genre, we would be able to recognize what the genre consists of. At the same time, this would not only allow readers to know the differences between this genre and similar ones, but also conduct a comparison between the contemporary coming of age novels and the ones that initiated the Bildungsromans in the first place.

The Bildungsroman genre can be defined as a complex type of novel due to its context. The stories are not just form of literary entertainment but education as well. In order for the novel to educate its readers, the genre must inform them through several literary aspects; psychological, social and cultural, philosophical and aesthetical and historical. The focus is not aimed towards the surrounding circumstances and problems, but towards the protagonist's personal growth and development.

At the same time, there were fundamental elements required in the novel, otherwise, it could be considered as another type of novel, similar to the situation today of not knowing which category a book is in. For example, the difference between an epic novel and a coming of age novel is that an epic novel shows:

. . . the protagonist who influences his surroundings. Coming of age novels presents more of the people and the surroundings influencing the protagonist and explaining to us the gradual formation of this inner self that is to be presented. Also, this type of novel shows more events and happenings with their emotional effects on the protagonist, whom we should see becoming through himself. (17)

Picaresque novels are similar, yet differ through structure and themes. The two types of novel do portray realistic stories of a protagonist going off onto an adventure;

however, picaresque novels focus more on the materialistic side of life. According to Miles and Gottfried's "Defining the Bildungsroman," this genre is "Composed of a numbers of episodes loosely strung together while the Bildungsroman is a progression of connected events that lead up to a definite denouement" (122). The confessional novel can be slightly mistaken coming of age as well. Similar to the Bildungsroman, it does focus on the thoughts and reflections of the protagonist, but just solely upon that and nothing else. In brief, the protagonist is a spiritual outsider, yet the novels is written retrospectively in order to find a patterns. Overall, the "Picaresque novel is turned outwards toward society, and the confessional novel is turned inwards toward consciousness where as the Bildungsromans maintains a peculiar balance between the social and personal, being able to explore international" (122). Based on Miles' taxonomy of novels, the Bildungsroman genre appears to be a combination of several novel genres. In a way, it consists of common literary and narrative components, such as a protagonist going on a journey without prior knowledge or experience, passages reflecting upon the individuals psyche, or a satire of the presented time and setting. On the other hand, the coming of age genres is set to be more structured and composed to incorporate its role in literature; and again, that is to educate its readers.

Along with its meaning of a "forming novel" it emphasizes the concepts of liminality. The protagonists of the stories are liminal begins with an "empty personal slate". In this case, they are characters that may be "represented as possessing nothing which this behaviour is normally passive or humble; they must obey their instructors implicitly, and accept arbitrary punishment without complaint". (359). Authors of the coming of age genre made their protagonists a culmination of several other characters from other types of literature. What tends to happen is that the main character of a Bildungsroman is composed of other literary components found in other protagonist

of other kinds of storytelling or literature. For instance "the origins of its characteristics here have been traced to a number of conventions and traditions; to the hero of the old moral allegories, to the picaresque hero who in his travels meets all sorts and conditions of men, to the Parzival – German romance - figure learning slowly through his trials, to the Renaissance man bent on exercising to the full his many talents" (13). Based on the characterization of a hero in these novels, the protagonist is most likely to carry the same values due to his/her literary role in the story, a liminal being. It seems that no matter what the plot of the story is or what conditions and circumstances the hero is in, the characterization between one hero and another is most likely to be similar. In "An Old Form Revitalized: Philip Roth's *Ghost Writer* and the Bildungsroman," W. C. Hendley's explains, "We often find the protagonist of the Bildungsroman in an uneasy relationship with his father or without a father at all"(89). Writers of this genre are more likely to focus on the main characters early life or past. By examining what the protagonist has gone through already, readers are able to see how he/she development before going through the liminal stage of adolescence. This component of the novel acts as a precursor to help put together the character's true persona.

For readers to learn how the protagonist overcomes moral and human challenges, we must understand how his/her identity develops. One of the main purposes of the Bildungsroman is to have the protagonist continue into society with acceptance. The method in attempting to achieve continuance and acceptance is through psychological means, not through the assimilation of an existing society. A common misconception of this genre is having reader as think that by having the protagonist finally integrating into a particular group or society, the character has fully matured and identified him/her self. In reference to Miles and Gottfried, the



Bildungsroman concentrates more towards the emotions, thoughts, actions and reflections of a total personality: physical, emotional, intellectual, and moral. At the same time, it is an attempt to balance the "social and personal" sides where it is played out through chronological connected events. Moreover, the writers also stress how the focus should be heavily put upon the protagonist's mental growth and continual search for "psychological elaboration, self-questioning, self-awareness and self-consciousness" (122). By concentrating more on the main character's psychological progression, this allows readers to examine the protagonist's emotions and his/her thought process of dealing with particular conflicts. It also gives readers the opportunity to explore and analyze his/her progression of identity and what steps he/she has done to reach maturity. In brief, the psychological segment of this genre lets readers observe how these liminal beings have walked out of their childhood and into adulthood as well as the transition in between.

Focusing on a protagonist's mental growth is necessary in trying to define the coming of age genre. But in order to study the protagonist's development, readers must put some emphasis on what is happening in the story, particularly what the culture is like and his/her stance in society. Just like what Richard D. Beard claims, the protagonists in these books cannot fulfill this 'personal journey "unless they come across certain crucial concerns such as vocation, religion, mating and identity"' (205). For instance, Beard explains how protagonists tend to design and shape their own lives when the culture within an educative institution such as a school or church is in disorder. The concern of mating permits us to examine how the progressing main character interacts and/or exploits the member of the opposite sex. For religion, it lets readers observe how one becomes aware and summons their faith at specific situations, whereas identity, as mentioned, allows us to study the protagonist's self-

development (211-212). When a protagonist overcomes these concerns, the experience will heighten his/her sense of self. According to Buckley's *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*, it states that "the Bildungsroman in its pure form has been defined as a novel of all around development or self culture" with a more or less conscious attempt on the part of the hero to integrate his powers to cultivate himself by his experience" (13). The social and cultural feature within the genre coincides with the purpose of the psychological aspect. In a way, it also allows the readers to analyze the protagonists' process, yet the emphasis is more on how he/she reacts to the "cultural forces" he/she comes across.

Unlike the other aspects of the coming of age genre, the philosophical and aesthetical part does not strongly emphasize the personal growth of the novel's protagonist. Based on this segment, it is more on the need to make the reader feel like he/she is feeling connected. According to James Hardin, "the Bildungsroman genre overlaps with other types of novel, but is considered to be more philosophical" (10). This type of novel is easily distinct compared to the other types. Since it has a balance between philosophical and aesthetical, in this case, the literature is able to teach moral issues, but in order for readers to understand, there must be a personal connection between the reader and the author on the way it was written and what it consists of. In reference to Fritz Martini's *Bildungsroman—Term and Theory*, he explains:

The novel appears as a transitional form between reality, that is, "history" and poetry; It deceives through the impression of reality wrought by prose and, in fictive narration, weaves with . . . the prosaic mood in which people usually find themselves into an entertaining poetic work. Moreover, it encourages the cultivation of the reader more fully than any other types of novel. It presents material according to

the laws of beauty as an artwork and it communicates to serve a purpose, to teach, and to improve. (17-18)

Besides being educated through the protagonist's thoughts, emotions and reactions readers are learning moral values through the connection they have with the protagonist, the book, and/or the author. If the readers build a relationship with either the main character or author, then he/she will have some sense of reliability, familiarity and personal growth. In other words if an individual realizes with the protagonist is going through and the situation is realistic and believable a bond will form and he/she can be informed by what the character does in the novel to overcome an obstacle. Based on this part of the Bildungsroman definition, it is necessary for the novel to be written realistically and with the author's aesthetics and beliefs, otherwise, the objective of educating the novel's readers will have no effect since they would not believe such things could happen.

The historical features of the Bildungsroman give the author the opportunity to make a correlation between the text and the history. In a way, the novel can help provide a reflection of what the time, setting and culture was like in the novel. In accordance with Tobias Boes' "The Apprenticeship of the Novel: The Bildungsroman and the Invention of History, 1770–1820," the writer states how the individual formation of the protagonist progresses along with the historical development of time and setting he/she is in. Furthermore, "the novel works with concrete examples rather than with abstractions and traces how the currents of history pulse through ordinary objectives" (275). Coming of age writers also concentrate on the time and setting to help depict what society was like and how the characters reacted within it. At the same time, the sense of image and life the author created had also taught readers about social and individual development, particularly through the protagonist's progression in

the story from beginning to end. Hardin's *Reflection and Action* described how the "Bildungsroman readily accommodated the concerns of a new middle-class reading public, willing to be absorbed by the history of an individual and gratified to see how its collective experience of social mobility might be rendered as the individual's pursuit of an ideal of self-development" (24). Based on the concept of his aspect, we are able to study how the factors derived from the protagonist's surroundings affect his/her growth and development from that, we are able to take what we learn into consideration. In comparison to the psychological and social-cultural aspects, the historical does not focus upon the protagonist's emotional behavior or the issues and concerns he/she encounters, but he steps, reactions, and directions the protagonist makes in the place he/she is settled in.

As noted, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* is recognized to be the first novel of the Bildungsroman genre. Goethe portrays the protagonist, Wilhelm, as a young male who comes across two paths of either continuing his family's business or directing himself to the career of being a theatre actor. Wilhelm goes on a pursuit to marry an actress and go against his father's wishes, but plans go away when he realizes she is with another man, thus, leads Wilhelm to take an alternative direction. On his journey, the protagonist encounters several companions along the way, which these characters are covert literary tools used to educate Wilhelm about the aspect of life, transitioning into adulthood, and him as a human being. The supporting characters explicitly teach Wilhelm these aspects as they come and significantly unfolding the story even more. Goethe's protagonist then attempts to find a way into the Tower Society – a group of enlightened aristocrats–which his acceptance into the group brings to tie up the story loose ends.

*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* fits the structure of what the Bildungsroman is composed of, in reference to Morgenstern's research. The main character's journey consists of many of the components, such as the plot being written in a chronological manner and having companions assist him on his adventure. To write a coming of age novel in a linear storyline is essential and one of the foundational elements that make it part of the genre. Boes discusses how the Bildungsroman is written this way due to its reflection upon how certain areas tell and organize time from this he explains:

Goethe explicitly theorizes this interconnectedness . . . which Germans and Italians tell time and organize their days. Germans Goethe insists, rely on mechanical clock time to synchronize their activities, Italians, on the other hand, organize their lives according to the rhythms of the seasons . . . In other words, the two cultures resolve the opposition between cyclical and "emergent" or "linear" temporalities in different ways: in the German System, the linear element predominates, while in Italian society, cyclical patterns are still given a greater weight. (278)

Having a literary work be told in linear fashions allows the occurring events to be connected. If the protagonist's chain of events and actions are chronological and connected, it makes learning about him/her easier. In this case, readers go straight from point A to point B and comprehend how the protagonist got to a certain position as well as why he/she got there. Throughout Goethe's novel, Wilhelm's actions were tied to an end result-good or bad -that education and/or helped him reach the sense of adulthood. Examples from the book would be his path of not following his father's directions, attempting to marry Mariane, and meeting particular characters that were related to someone of importance later into story.

The overall storyline of a Bildungsroman novel must be realistic; otherwise, readers would not believe such values could be accomplished or attained in reality. An element the author uses to make the story realistic is by incorporating it with current issues or conflicts at the time. In this case, Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*:

Borrows from the English novels of social realism, a devotion to mimetic details, an obsession with plausible plot and character development and most importantly, a celebration of the ordinary and the everyday. . . . Also, wars and social upheavals do exist in *Wilhelm Meister*, but they are relegated to the back ground of the action. In volume 4, chapter 4, for example, a marauding army is briefly mentioned, but it ultimately does not influence Wilhelm and Serolo's travel deliberations. (275–276)

As mentioned, the Bildungsroman novel focuses more on development of the character, not the surroundings or incidents that occur to the protagonist. If the book was to detail the historical or current events that happened, readers would lose focus and the values would pertain more about the events-why and how they occurred-rather than the protagonist. But by partially hiding it in the background of the main character's setting, it might allow readers to acknowledge how the protagonist reacts to what is happening around them.

Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is recognized to be a contemporary coming of age novel that takes place in the United States during the 1990's. The book received quite the controversy for its explicit subjects, such as drug and alcohol use, sexuality, suicide, and abuse, Chbosky's novel is composed into an epistolary format where readers get the story through a series of letters, written by an

anonymous adolescent male protagonist. The story starts with the protagonist being given the alias name of Charlie and proceeds with how his best friend had just committed suicide. In the midst of his grieving, Charlie must face his first year of high school alone and unguided. As the school year goes by, he meets new friends – Sam and Patrick that introduce him to friends, partying, and adolescent issues that unbind his introverted personality. The more Charlie is exposed to teenage problems that he is unfamiliar with-in this case, dating, relationships, homosexuality, and trauma the more he finds out about himself as well as a childhood secret he bears. By the end of the story, the issues that Charlie faces, allow him to find acceptance and a better understanding of life.

One component of the Bildungsroman genre that significantly stands out is Chbosky's book is the realism and believability. The author not only made the story realistic enough for readers to believe and follow, but it explicitly displays adolescents' issues openly. Journalist Marty Beckerman explained that, "part of the reason why *Perks* connects with so many kids is because the situations described in the book are so universal, but it seems like the people who challenge the book don't want to admit these things happen" (1). In response, Chbosky stated, "The more you talk about it, the more you take away its power and its mystery, and people can make much more informed and mature decisions about these things" (1). Because of the book, it has been noted that it had saved two teenagers from committing suicide. In the story, Charlie and his friends deal with the issue of teenage pregnancy and abortion. By actually showing the severity of the situation and not ending it with a happy, fairytale-like outcome, it depicts the reality of the situation where such incidents can occur in real life. As previously said, the reality in coming-of-age novels from the eighteenth century to contemporary is vital to the genre. It not only makes

the story realistic and possible relatable, but it proves the fact that such human growth and personal development can happen in real life.

The way Chbosky composed his book is also viewed as a prominent element. From the coming-of-age genre aspect of writing linear and chronologically, this is emphasized through the way the writer delivers the story. For instance, "the format of letters allows readers to immediately get into the mood of the narrator" (194). The use of an anonymous introverted protagonist also permits readers to deal with several issues without feeling too judged. Charlies' letters do reflect chronological storytelling where the events and characters' actions are connected to each other, similar to having a cause and effect relationship. With the content of one letter leading up to another letter, this helps keep track of the protagonist's development. For example, Charlie usually mentions a situation that he was involved in. The letter that succeeds after tends to follow up on how the situation is resolved or continued. In the book, an example would be how at one point, Charlie confesses his feelings about Sam. However, the next letter reveals a scene of the two characters sharing a conversation, which leads to Charlie's first kiss, and causes him to discuss about his perceptions about love and relationship afterward. Thus readers get to keep track of how he is progressing as a character and how he came to a certain resolution of a situation.

According to Blakean notion of innocence and experience, an individual cannot achieve maturity, knowledge, wisdom and experience until and unless s/he suffers. For her/him, there is no gain without pain and no knowledge about the world without experiencing pain, suffering and hard perseverance:

To reconcile the surprising and grave experience with those joyous revelations which come to eyes newly opened upon the world was not a single problem. The life-giving ray of the sun, which awakened the



child to ecstasy, are found to parch and burn as the day moves on to its room, Is here no light without heat; no joy, however natural and innocent; without its price exacted in pain? . . . The burnt child learns all too soon to shun the light, Doubt, misgiving, and fear assume control over the mind and memory utter the final verdict. (55)

A child incurs all the glorious features of the nature. Nature becomes his or her savior. But the understanding of nature is only possible after a long physical and mental perseverance. The pain and suffering he undergoes while physical journey gives her an insight into the real world.

To prove the hypothesis, this researcher has used the Bildungsroman on the "coming-of-age" as the methodology. The motto of adult or teenagers is to adopt physically, psychologically, social and culturally to their society and also adopt its norms and values to set a journey from ignorance to insight.

Actually, this research paper has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter presents an introductory outline to this research of Nicholas Sparks and provides a theoretical basis for the analysis of the text. It primarily consists of a discussion the Bildungsroman on "coming-of-age" genre. The second chapter based on methodology offers the textual analysis which supports the various theories idea about Bildungsroman related to my work- Analysis of a Journey from Immaturity to Maturity a study of Nicholas Sparks' *The Last Song*. Likewise, the final chapter concludes the finding of the research.

## II. From Ignorance to Insight: A Study of Nicholas Sparks' *The Last Song*

In Nicholas Sparks' *The Last Song*, the protagonist Ronnie is involved in the physical movement to reach adulthood. But at the deeper level she undergoes the movement of the self journey from immaturity to maturity. The main character Ronnie indulges in the imaginative world because of the result of her childish nature. Ronnie is egocentric who tries to interpret the world from her own perspective. Her physical experience Ronnie gets the knowledge of the self and she enters into the world of maturity from her childhood.

Nicholas Sparks's *The Last Song*, the textual analysis is study from the perspective of the Bildungstoman genre. The Bildungsroman genres focuses on the coming of age and rites of passage of an adolescent or young adult and is recognized from how it educates its readers about personal and self-consciousness. The novel *The Last Song* is not only a geographical journey from New York to North Carolina Ronnie but also a journey that makes the protagonist emotionally and psychologically also matured. The stories end to have the protagonists depart their state of being a youth and entering adulthood. The genre must inform them through several literary aspects; psychological, social and cultural, philosophical and aesthetical, and historical.

The theme of the story is that Ronnie falls in love with Will. She also does this for her dad and cares for him when he is dying and finishes a song with him. She had finally forgiven him and loves him when he dies. But, at the beginning, Ronnie does not want to stay with her father for the summer. She does not want to talk and get along with her father because she thinks that her father is cheating on her mother. She screams at him about never wanting to play the piano again. This makes it harder for him to get closer to her when he is dying. She causes a lot of tension in between them

by never talking to him that is the conflict of *The Last Song*. The novel follows the growing of Ronnie's characters, the development of her feelings towards Will and her interaction with Blaze who has similar problems to Ronnie's as a teenager. A unique thing about *The Last Song* is that most of the characters are teenagers and the story is told from the view point of different characters. Such a technique makes the story deeper and builds it on many levels. The readers also get the change to view the events from different side and this helps Sparks to convey clearer messages through his book. Thus, *The Last Song* becomes more insightful and mysterious.

The novel is about the search for meaning for the protagonist, who is usually foolish and inexperienced at the beginning of the narrative. The story typically centers on the maturation process of a single person, the protagonist Ronnie. Here, this passage also clarifies Ronnie's behaviour:

No, scratch that, she wasn't just visiting her dad. Visiting implied a weakened or two, maybe even a week. She supposed she could live with a visit. But to stay until late August? Pretty much the entire summer? That was banishment, and for most of the nine hours it had taken them to drive down, she'd felt like a prisoner being transferred to a rural penitentiary. She couldn't believe her mom was actually going to make her go through with this. (1)

In the passage above, early in the chapter, Ronnie is described as feeling "like a prisoner". This feeling of being trapped in a state of helplessness is a motif that is developed throughout *The Last Song*. Many characters experience these feelings and they chose different ways and means to address them. Ronnie's voice is that of a disgruntled teenager one who is trying to find her won place in the world one who is without a sense of purpose and direction.

The novel presents Ronnie's upbringing from childhood to mature adult by in terms of her physical and psychological as well as social and cultural development. At the latter phase of the novel Ronnie gets knowledge through the experience, returns to her society and adopts its norms and values. In the process of maturation certain environmental, physical and psychological forces play the vital role to get maturation. As Ronnie says:

"I'm only visiting", Ronnie answered just as a roar erupted from the beach. She craned her neck, trying too see. "what's going on? A concert?" The woman shook her head. "Beach volleyball. They've been playing for hours-some kind of tournament. You should go watch. I've heard the cheering all day, so that games must be pretty exciting. Ronnie though about it, figuring, why not? It couldn't be any worse than that what was happening up here. She throw a couple of dollar into the donation, jar before heading toward the steps. (25-26)

In this passage above the novelist shows Ronnie's summer journey from New York to Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. In this small seaside community Ronnie's initial reaction to both the boys playing volley ball and the girls cheering for them demonstrates Ronnie's judgmental tendency. Then Ronnie introduces different types of people and friends. This instance is another glimpse into the complex personality of the protagonist. One whose outer persona is actually quite different from the person within Ronnie is angry at her parents who are separated and resents having to spend the summer with her father.

During the summer, however, Ronnie gains a new sight for family life, faith and love as she develops from a rebellious teenager into a responsible young woman. The passage above also hints the possibility of summer holiday as she is brought into

the sphere of civilizing mission by the people of the society. The novel is developed by the chain of events. At that time there is a debate between main character Ronnie and her father Steve. That is why Ronnie always likes to go outside with her friends but her father wanted to play piano with him. It is exemplified in the sentences given below:

"I know what you're doing, and I already told you I'm not going to play."

"I believe you," he said

"Then why do you keep trying to get me to change my mind? Why is it that every time I see you, you're sitting there pounding away?"

He seemed genuinely confused. "It has nothing to do with you", he offered. "It just . . . makes me feel better."

"Well, it makes me feel sick. Don't you get that? I hate the piano. I hate that I had to play every single day! And I hate that I even have to see the damn thing anymore!" (94)

The next morning, Steve is playing the piano again, and Ronnie is convinced that he has an ulterior motive—perhaps to forge a bond with her or convince her to start playing of the piano. Steve is confused by her outburst and tells her that playing the piano makes him feel better, but Ronnie storms out.

*The Last Song* is a phenomenal novel, not only because of the incredibly hear-warming love story, but also because of the thoughtful yet relatable plot that the romance is woven into. This book is about love of all kinds. It is about love between couples, love between family members, and even love between enemies. As Ronnie's relationship with her father flourishes, she also falls deeply in love with Will Blakelee. Initially, Will does not appear to be her type, but she soon discovers that the

wealthy beach boy is everything she could ever want. Of course, a summer like this cannot last forever. How will Ronnie cope when Will leaves for college right before tragedy strikes, leaving her without the ones she loves.

The story revolves round the development of Ronnie's relationship with Blaze and Ronnie's own growth through the novel. It is about five teenagers who seemingly do not have anything in common, but who, after spending a day in detention together, gain an understanding of one another and themselves and learn to the labels they have been given by others. Moreover, psychology holds the view that a childish girl is playful by nature and that her playfulness becomes the source of her 'self' knowledge. It is playfulness that accordingly pushes one to the world of experience and maturity, thereby giving him/her an insight in to the better understanding of himself/herself.

Specifically, the novel is about Ronnie's maturation. Thus, it is a Bildungsroman, or the novel of formation, about the moral and spiritual development of the protagonist Ronnie. The novel shows the active heroine who influences her surroundings it presents more the people and surroundings and be presented.

Ronnie attains maturity as the novel progresses. *The Last Song* is about growing up physically, emotionally and spiritually. When she allows herself to accept help and criticism from others, she begins to change. Ronnie's growing sense of responsibility and her interaction with the circumstances make her no different than an adult grace with all the virtues of analysis.

*The Last Song* begins after the major action of the plot has already occurred. So, most of the novel is actually told to us as a flash back. *The Last Song* is told not only from Ronnie's perspective but also as a limited omnipresent, third person narrative with the perspective changing from chapter to chapter. *The Last Song* opens with Ronnie staring out of the window remembering the installation of a stained-glass

window over a month ago. She wonders if Pastor Harris is already at the Church and thinks of how the beach has fascinated her younger brother Jonah during the summer. As she ponders these things her silence is interrupted by her mother. Ronnie's mother encourages her to take about what is on her mind, commenting that Ronnie has been mostly silent for the past couple of a day. The next morning, when Steve tries to talk to Ronnie about how she spent the previous day, Ronnie refuses to listen to him. Her anger and self-centeredness prevent her from realizing that Steve is being honest when he tells Ronnie his reason for playing. At that time, she was in the wrong place at the wrong time. So, Steve is worried about his kind, he want to know that they'll be okay Ronnie's father Steve was a musician, a husband, a son, and a father-than either of his children know. That's why Steve cares everyone and everything such as:

"Whatcha got?" Jonah asked.

"It's a loggerhead nest," Steve answered.

"But don't get too close. And don't touch.

You don't want to disturb it."

Jona learned closer, still holding the kite, "What's a loggerhead" he panted, struggling to control the kite.

Steve reached for a piece of driftwood and began etching a large circle around the nest. "Its' a sea turtle. An endangered one. They come ashore at night to say their eggs."

"Behind our house?"

"This is one of the place sea turtles lay their eggs. But that main thing you should know is that they're endangered. Do you know what that means?"

"It means they're dying," Jonah answered. (102)

Generally, storm clouds approach, while Steve and Jonah are on the beach-two storms are actually coming, one literal and the metaphorical on the surface Steve's comments about faith are in regards to the raccoons and the eggs; but the comment also refers to Steve's faith in his daughter her faith in him and others and his faith in God. In fact, faith along with trust and love, are themes that recur throughout the novel. His actions are purely selfless here, although it will take some time for Ronnie to realize this. Steve's reaction to Ronnie's arrest is a turning point in his relationship with Ronnie. He does not call Kim immediately but he trusts her-something, Ronnie will soon come to appreciate. In this passage above Steve wants to save any living creature and he shows important role of parental.

Seeing Steve read the Bible enables readers to deduce that his faith may be part of the source of his strength because of it, he can maintain a calm presence and loving self. So, we readers also say that *The Last Song* is like a religious novel. Although, Ronnie experiences the emotional up levels of dealing with the death of loved one, she uses the knowledge of her father and their summer together to go on living rather than mourn him for too long. Ronnie and her mom no longer fight and Jonah is concerned that his mother is sick too. Ronnie reassures him that they have not stopped fighting because of that she now spreads most of her brother and practicing the piano. Ronnie says "And if you don't believe me, try me, try me I have already gone three years without talking to your and it was the easiest thing I have ever done" (64).

Ronnie is thinking of others, admitting to have made bad choice and accepting help. As Ronnie processes the information about her father's illness, she feels alone and scared. Ronnie does not know this but there are the exact feelings. Steve had such feelings when he first got confirmation of his cancer. And like Steve, Ronnie also



turns to God. However, it brings into sharp focus on self-awakening by choosing dynamism.

Ronnie moves to maturity as she faces up to the reality of the shoplifting situation including the need for her mother to know. It does not matter that to know. It does not matter that she is innocent; she follows the judicial process to run its course. She also shows a more responsible as she gathers the courage to face Will and has conversation with her father. The maturity on the part of Ronnie's emotionality is due to her interaction with the circumstance in which she finds herself.

The journey which Ronnie undergoes on the stage of innocence to experience is that from child to an adult. This shift from one stage to another is close to the Blakean notion of innocence and experience where Ronnie starts off the journey at the stage of mental and physical inception. But as the story develops through the interactions with others on the summer holiday, riverbank, wedding party, funeral time, beach volleyball game, Ronnie comes to realize that the real world is not always pleasurable and exulting as she had thought it to be earlier.

When Ronnie is arrested for shoplifting, her father being affected by cancer disease, her lover Will's parents' unkind behaviour, she is made to spend very miserable time. In that case she is ignorant to find the way out and therefore has to suffer from pain, fear and anxiety. She is desperately in search of the way out and this indicates Ronnie's responsibility as a mature lady.

Ronnie is attempting to reconcile with Blaze, who admits to Ronnie, but is unable to do anything about it because of Marcus's threats. Even though he does not change Ronnie's situation, the confession softens Blaze who is not a bad person but who keeps had company. Blaze also drops an ominous hint about Marcus plans when she tells Ronnie that "I do not think Marcus is done with you" (55). Ronnie is desirous

to have him board up the piano. She is upset that she acted selfishly but Steve makes her see that he had no problem making that sacrifice and that he had an incredible summer, one that may not have turned out the way it did if he had not boarded up the piano. Ronnie's decision to stay to care for her father is the first of many important decisions she makes as an adult.

In both Will's and Ronnie's families, things are not what they seem and contain a mixture of happiness and sadness. During an early exchange with Will, Ronnie collects her hair into a loose ponytail. As discussed earlier, this unconscious action is comforting to Ronnie. This sign shows readers that Ronnie is warming up to the possibility of getting to know Will. Mabel, the injured turtles, serves as a symbol for Ronnie-scars and all. Just as Will is helping to nurse Mabel back to health, he may be able to help Ronnie heal her emotional and spiritual like this, "Without thinking, Ronnie walked toward him and felt him hold her close. There was something . . . gentle and forgiving in this embrace, something she'd missed for years. It was all she could do to stop the tears from coming before she pulled back. "How about I give you a hand with dinner?" (154)

Ronnie goes through a few emotions in this passage. Initially, she is intrigued by her interest in Will, since they don't seem like each others' types. Will and Ronnie are a clear case of opposites attracting. What with Will's determination and Ronnie's stubbornness. She is pleased that is until she is upset by Ashley's hurtful remarks. In contrast to Ronnie, whose emotions are clearly on display, her father is more reserved. His comment "If I can" when asked about visiting New York is quite the understatement because he knows that he probably cannot" (155). Ronnie does not understand his remark. By giving readers access to information that is being withheld from Ronnie, Sparks continuous to build suspense and develop his characters.

It is significant that sometimes Steve has the characteristics of God the father, and other times he has the characteristic of an Everyman. This seems to suggest the every person has a god-like quality within them. Steve misses playing piano, but that he is giving up something so important to him shows his willingness to make sacrifices for his daughter. The passage is full of references to Steve's medical condition yet his physical comfort is not Steve's priority this summer. He wants to make this time about his children, and he especially wants Ronnie to have a great summers. Following lines also clarify that Steve is honest to his children, especially to Ronnie as:

Moon-light drifted through the window, and he heard the steady drone of ocean waves beyond the glass. The tender fire of distant stars flickered a heavenly affirmation, as if God were announcing his present somewhere else suddenly he felt tired, he was alone, he thought, he would always be alone. He bent and kissed Ronnie gently on the cheek, feeling again the undertow of his love for her, a joy an intense as pains. (168)

Although, Steve may be unhappy with his past and is feeling lonely, his love towards his children forever. Steve longs to know God, and he is confident that he will find peace because he sees now that music is not the most important thing in this life. He made some bad decisions to be on the right path to finding a way to fill the emptiness in his life. Even though Steve's realization that the search for God's presences is as much as mystery as God himself, provides him with a sense of peace, yet he may never understand it.

Actually, Ronnie continues to mature as she faces up to the reality of the shoplifting situation including the need for her mother to know. It doesn't matter that

she is innocent; she has to follow the judicial process to run its course. She also shows a more mature side as she gathers the courage to face Will and has a conversation with her father. Not only that, it gives more information about Steve's childhood and the fire. Now, the readers know most of the reason that Steve has for wanting to complete the window. Ronnie is taking the first step towards getting to know her father, although real change takes time. As Will and Ronnie drive to his house their playful teasing in the car about duck hunting doesn't turn serious, though it could. Will's refusal to elaborate on the significance of the macramé bracelets is intriguing. All of these are sign of a growing romance and friendship as Will and Ronnie beginning to learn more about each other. It is significant that Will does not notice Ronnie growing quiet at the sight of his house there is a discrepancy in how they understand their socioeconomic status. The similarities between Will and Ronnie are quite interesting. He does not mention his family name and business and she doesn't mention being a piano prodigy. Both of them want to be recognized as individuals. It is important to realize that they have different socio-economic situation but that they also have similar circumstances like:

"Did you and Susan talk about the wedding?" He asked Ronnie shook her head. "No, Will mentioned something about it, thoughts"

"I had to spend two hours today at the florist's looking at flower arrangements. Have you ever spent two hours looking at flower arrangements"

"No",

"Consider yourself lucky."

Ronnie giggled, relieved to be out her with him. Just then Will came up behind her, freshly showered and dressed nearly in a polo shirt and shorts. (199)

Here Ronnie and Will's mother introduce to each other and Will's mother tension her. Ronnie already is not liked by Will's friend and having difficulties with his mother clearly is not going to help. At that time, Ronnie realizes that she is an outsiders, and for one of the first time in her life, she is concerned about what another person this of her. The time spent at Will's house and at dinner important to Ronnie's growth. She is appreciative of the fact that Steve did not offer any details from Ronnie's past and that he is allowing her to make her won decision.

On the hand, Marcus's emotional response, "screw her," which he repeats, demonstrates the anger that he is feeling—he doesn't know how to deal with not getting his own way. Clearly, Marcus's relationship with females is the antithesis to everything that is developing between Will and Ronnie. Marcus's history of starting fines not only develops his character but also foreshadows future events. This chapter serves to illustrate the extent to which Marcus is angry and maladjusted.

Six week go by during this chapter represent the romantic notion that time flies when you are having fun. Although Ronnie and Will are developing a strong relationship, summer is coming to an end and the uneasiness about what effect the end of the summer. Will wants Ronnie to attend his sister wedding, an important family event, which indicate a certain level of comment. This story emphasizes that Will and Ronnie's relationship is based on friendship and honesty. Nevertheless, Will is unable to tell Ronnie the truth about the fire when Ronnie and Will's relation is so deep and they spent their summer like:

His hands were roving over her back and stomach when he finally felt Ronnie palced her hands on his chest and push him away.

"Plase", she breathed, "We've got to stop".

"Why?"

"Because I don't want my dad to catch us. He might be watching us from the window right now."

"We're just kissing."

"Yeah. And we just sort of like each other, too," She landed. A languid smile spread over his face. "What?" we weren't just kissing?"

I'm just saying that it felt like. . . . (235)

Will would like nothing more than to establish a sexual relationship with Ronnie, but he recognizes that this is not something she is ready for, so he respects her and controls himself. In this case provides important insights into Will's character.

He struggles with his secret but is not yet able to do what he thinks is right. This humanizes Will and also shows how similar he is to Ronnie. Suspense and romance are both building as the story moves towards its climax. The concern of mating permits us to examine how the progressing main character interacts or exploits the member of the opposite sex. For religion, it lets readers observe how one becomes aware and summer their faith at specific situations whereas identity, as mentioned, allows us to study the protagonists' self-development. When a protagonist overcomes there concern, the experience will heighten his/her sense of self.

In this way, the story chronicles Ronnie's development, and she is attentive to Jonah. After taking care of Jonah, Ronnie turns her attention to her father. As she goes to the church to bring him home, Ronnie begins to understand the importance of music in her father's life. She recognizes her own mistake in the past and for the first

times notices the outward signs of how sick he is, Ronnie begins to consider how "childish" her demands regarding the piano were and realizes more fully the extent of Steve's sacrifice for her. As she listens to him compose, she also is proud of his continued ability to interpret and consider variations. It is Jonah who reveals to Ronnie that Steve has been talking helps in the afternoon. This demonstrates how caught up in her own life Ronnie has been during the past six weeks and illustrated how Steve's health is deteriorating.

In this context, we can take Ronnie's geographical journey as one that is done to spend summer vacation and get pleasure. However, there are two levels of Ronnie's journey. There is one levels of journey from which can be called geographical or physical. But beside this, there is also Ronnie's psychological journey which in fact is the journey from ignorance to insight. It is the psychological journey that gives Ronnie an insight to understand about the reality of the world and about herself. She comes to see how the real world is harassed by conflicting human impulses resulting violence, death, betrayal and greed. She begins to see the world in its true and naked from. It is at this particular stage when she makes an entry into the world of childish innocence. Not only that, the development of Ronnie's character to a matured lad is built up through his interaction with different character like Will, Blaze, Marcus, Scott, Kim, Jonah and many other characters. This interaction is set in the constantly changing world which entails the gradual change in Ronnie's personality.

Steve emphasizes that they all have changed this summer. He realizes that spending time with his children and talking about seemingly unimportant things, like learning to stand on your head, is one of the most important things in life. Jonah also suggests going to school in North Carolina or Steve moving back to New York and re-marrying his mother. In this moment, Johan is just a 10 year old innocent boy who

is searching for some stability in his life. One who loves his father and doesn't want their time together to end.

The whirlwind pacing of the chapter gives readers a change to experience the events as rapidly as Ronnie is experiencing them. This enables readers to better understand the shifting emotions and responses Ronnie is encountering in a single day. Ronnie's appearance at the wedding party provides her with a sense of confidence that enable her to stand up to Ashley. Although, Will says all the right things about the distance not being too far, his sister living in New York, and Ronnie is visiting him at Vanderbilt, Ronnie is not convinced. Ronnie's uncertainty about whether she wants to explore a sexual relationship with Will is consistent with her character but Marcus' interruption prevents Ronnie from finding out if she is really ready to sleep with Will. Another important thematic topic is communication; Ronnie privately considers talking to her mom like their way she has been talking with father this summer. Ronnie's internalization of this attitude indicates her now found maturity and growth.

It is important to recognize that Ronnie is the one who initiates the conversation about Steve's song and the completion of the stained-glass window—she is finally taking an interest in things that are important in her father's life. The conversation that Ronnie shares with her father enables them to get closer than they have been not only this summer but also probably in their entire lives. In this context, the mention of the circle of life which refers to the life cycle of all living things and is also the title of the opening song to the movie *The Lion King*, the young cub, has to replace his father as ruler, just as Ronnie is going to have to replace her father as the composer of his final musical creation. Her dad was hooked up to an IV in a hospital bed when he told her. She immediately began to shake her head and says:



"It wasn't true. It couldn't be true."

"No," she said, "This isn't right, Doctor make mistakes",

"Not this time" he said, reaching for her hand. "And I'm sorry you had to find out like this." (310)

The passage shows how Ronnie has matured, for once, she is thinking of other, admitting to have made bad choices, and accepting help. As Ronnie processes the information about her fathers' illness, she feels alone and scared. Ronnie doesn't know this but there is the exact feeling Steve had when he first got confirmation of his cancer. And like Steve, Ronnie also turns to God.

Sparks's *The Last Song* informs that Will helps Jonah and Ronnie complete the stained-glass window, thus supplying physical as well as emotional support during this trying time. In this event the readers show sense of responsibility in maturation period at the end of the novel. It also continuous the themes of faith and forgiveness that have run through the novel so far Ronnie is over whelmed by her father's forgiveness regarding herself desire to have him board up the piano. Learning how to deal with someone who has been dishonest is another important thematic topic in *The Last Song*. Ronnie learns that her mother has been lying to her regarding the affair a lie that was part of the reason Ronnie refused to talk to Steve for three years.

During the ending of this story Ronnie learns the value of prayer. Reading the Bible, like reading any good book, provides a new insight each time the reader returns to it again. This return to faith helps Ronnie and teacher her to list her gifts. Ronnie is doing for Jonah. Steve also teaches Ronnie about the importance of practicing forgiveness. It is important for Steve to listen so that they shared something together before Steve's death. There are not many people at the funeral, but almost all the important people form Ronnie's summer are there.

Ronnie, in the course of the journey to adulthood, realizes that the real world is cruel and competitive; it is a world of murder, and deception. Ronnie comes to know that this world has a combination of both good and evil, that life in general has not only the beauty of 'spring' but also the cruelty and dreariness of 'winter'. At last, Ronnie is finding out hidden ignorance from the chain of events like love, emotion, spiritual, friendship, parent, death, etc. and gain her knowledge of maturity. She is, thus, building an understanding of the nature of the adult world and dual nature of human character.

### **III. Conclusion: Assertion of the Protagonist's Self in *The Last Song***

Sparks' *The Last Song* dramatises the main character Ronnie's day to day experience in the physical world that makes her mature psychologically. She also comes to understand the multiple facets of human nature as she starts perceiving the world in its real images. Ronnie starts her journey as an innocent girl occupied with all whimsical notion, but returns as a girl's learned and matured by her experiences in the world. In the passage Ronnie finds out her father's secret. He has cancer, the doctor has predicted that he has only a few months left to live. The psychological maturity on the part of Ronnie is ensured only after she undergoes a series of troubles and suffering. Steve creates the stained-glass window with his son and a musical composition with his daughter. Both are tangible things that will serve as a reminder of their summer together. While taking care of her father composes a song for him and in the end, she is the only witness to his peaceful passing. However, his death brings her not only sorrow but also ambition and determination and she decides to pursue a musical career at all costs.

Hence, Ronnie earns the value of prayer after reading the Bible, which provides a new insight each time. It returns to faith which help Ronnie continues to mature as a young adult. Then after Ronnie's decision to finish her father's composition truly makes his last song a joint effort. *The Last Song* refers to the final song that both Steve and Ronnie wrote and 'The Last Song' becomes everyone's song as Ronnie creates it. Over the course of the novel, Ronnie learns to embrace life and flourishes for life.

The Bildungsroman genre can be defined as a complex type of novel due to its context. The stories are not just forms of literary aspects psychological, social, cultural, philosophical, aesthetical and historical. The focus is not aimed at the

surrounding circumstances and problems, but towards the protagonist's personal growth and development. The Bildungsroman genre was not introduced until the 1820's by German philologist Karl Morgenstern. On the contrary, the "Bildungsroman" was not commonly brought up in literature studies until 1870 by German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey. Dilthey's research claims that first novel that initiated the genre was Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship, published 1795. The Bildungsroman is given full freedom to include philosophical reflection, diary, memoir and it is also defined as a novel about the moral and psychological growth of the main characters. So is the story of *The Last Song*.

Ronnie is a troubled teenager who wants to live her own life and is trying her very best to ignore her divorced parents, Kim, her mother with whom she lives in New York, and Steve her, father who lives in his hometown of Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. Her mother decides that it would be in everyone's best interest if Ronnie and her 10-year-old brother, Jonah, spent the summer with her father Steve. After that, Ronnie runs off to the carnival down at the beach, where she watches a volleyball game in the crowd. As the turns to leave, one of the players, the privilege Will Blakelee, knocks into her while trying to reach the ball, spilling her soda all through the front of her shirts later days, Ronnie finds different types of friends who have different behaviour like Blaze, Marcus, Scott and Will. But she falls, in love with Will.

When Ronnie finds a nest of loggerhead turtle eggs in danger of raccoons behind her house, she decides to camp out next to it to save it. Ronnie takes Will to her house to show him the stained glass window Jonah and Steve have been working on for the new church. While there, Ronnie and Will begin to have sex but Ronnie

stops him, claiming that her dad will see. She then finds out that her dad has stomach cancer and will likely survive only until winter time. Ronnie experiences the different circumstances which lead her to adulthood. As a result, she gets awakening and becomes mature. She learns from her process of action, decision and mistakes, thus becoming better equipped in taking decision. Moreover, she gains faith, family and love for the assertion for the self.

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