

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

**DEFINING THE GHANAIAN FEMINIST NOVEL: A STUDY OF AMA ATA AIDOO'S
OUR SISTER KILLJOY AND *CHANGES* AND AMMA DARKO'S *BEYOND THE
HORIZON* AND *NOT WITHOUT FLOWERS***



**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MPhil
ENGLISH DEGREE**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original research, except for references to other studies which have been duly acknowledged, and that no part of it has been published as part of the requirement for any degree in any University.

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I cannot end without thanking you, KWAKU. For all the support and help you gave me, especially at the crucial hour. May God richly bless you for the time you spent proofreading.

Finally, I must conclude by saying that I bear sole responsibility for any errors in this thesis.

Araba Ayiaba Asare-Kumi.



DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to all feminists in the Ghanaian society. This thesis is also dedicated to my family and to *KWAKU*.

ABSTRACT

Since Simon De Beauvoir's *Second Sex* (1949), various debates have taken place concerning feminism and its objectives. The definition of feminism and what it means to a group of people or region has also been very controversial. In Africa, feminism has been received with mixed feelings leading to the proposal of alternative terms and definitions in a bid to clearly define the struggle of African women. The search for diversity in feminism that is responsive to the different needs and concerns of different women, especially Ghanaian women, inspires this thesis. This thesis is written on the premise that feminism is universal but varies in objectives as a result of difference in region and culture. The main aim of this thesis is to examine and identify the concerns of feminism in Ghanaian fiction leading to a description of the Ghanaian Feminist Novel. Four novels are discussed using feminist concepts proposed by various African and Ghanaian feminist scholars to determine the nature of feminism in the selected novels. The study shows that the Ghanaian feminist novel portrays consciousness of the subjugation, fears and struggles of women in the Ghanaian socio-cultural context. In addition, the analyses isolate four major parameters for identifying the Ghanaian feminist novel: Characters, Situations, Conflicts and Themes. The main characters in the novel are usually educated women, who encounter conflicts that stem from the problem of reconciling the changing roles and responsibilities of Ghanaian women with that of the traditionally accepted ones. The difficulties encountered are marital, political, professional, social and sexual in nature. The above situations also reflect themes (such as issues of poverty, social vice and health) that are of concern to Ghanaian women.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this thesis is to examine and explain the concerns of feminism in Ghanaian fiction, and to provide a definition of "The Ghanaian Feminist Novel." To achieve this purpose, four novels from two different female authors have been selected. From various feminist theories and discussions, themes and character traits expected in feminist novels will be used to read the selected novels while paying attention to specific issues in the Ghanaian community. From these themes and characters, a description of the Ghanaian Feminist Novel will be provided.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Feminism is a very controversial concept. After Simone De Beauvoir's *Second Sex* (1949, Trans 1953), various debates have taken place concerning feminism and its objectives. There have been two major concerns:

1. What is feminism?
2. Are there regional differences in feminism? If there are, what constitutes those differences?

Reviews of Western feminist literature for the past several years reveal no clear-cut answers. In attempting to constructively answer these questions, scholars such as Sheila Ruth (1980), Maggie Humm (1986), Karen Offen (1998) and Mary Dietz (2003) provide definitions that are partly conciliatory or partly confrontational in terms of tone and agenda. The problem is accentuated

when it comes to who can be characterized as a black feminist. Some contend that only women can qualify whereas others provide an unequal role for men.

In Ghana, feminism has received considerable attention by women in various sectors (academic, social, political and professional) of the country and in different ways. This is because the struggles to liberate women from oppressive situations have taken various forms. Efforts have been made to educate as well as help women overcome domestic violence, rape, discrimination at work places, etc. The education of the girl-child has also received its share of attention. Due to these efforts, women have risen to positions of professional importance such as attorneys-general, chief justice, professors of law, authors, lecturers, ministers, etc. At the same time, the Ghanaian woman is still considered a sexual aid; a wet nurse and a nursemaid of her children; a cook-steward and general housekeeper; a listening-post; an economic and general consultant; a field-hand and, if the man is that way inclined, a punch-ball (Aidoo, 1999: 12).

The concerns of feminists in Ghana, therefore, range from the role of women in the home and the contributions they make in their various societies, to the positions they hold in the political, economic and professional spheres. *The Women's Manifesto for Ghana* (2004), written as a form of rededication to the struggle for just, independent, democratic, peaceful and gender equitable society, mentions in detail a number of the issues of concern to women in Ghana. With the adoption of the women's manifesto, women from all the regions of Ghana, of diverse backgrounds, religions, occupations, ages, etc. have raised a number of concerns. According to the Manifesto, women in Ghana are:

“Concerned about the negative impacts of economic globalization on Ghana and other African countries; unhappy about the continuing economic decline, rising levels of poverty, aid dependency and foreign domination of economic decision-making after two decades of structural adjustment programmes in Africa; horrified by the scourge of conflicts, wars, disease and famine across Africa and the West African sub-region in particular, and growing threat of militarization and intolerance over the world; appalled by the conditions of extreme poverty and hardship, deprivation and exclusion of rural and urban poor, the majority of whom are women...; concerned about the failure of the Ghanaian State to honour its obligations under the 1992 constitution, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its commitment under the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its Outcome Document (Beijing + 5) and other international instruments to promote gender equality, with the result that decades of efforts at achieving gender equality and equity have yielded very little...” (*The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana*, 2004. 8-9)

The above suggests that women in Ghana are leading a struggle not only for their emancipation and independence from patriarchy but also for the total and complete independence of Ghana and Africa of foreign aid. In Ghanaian literature, various writers, especially female, have raised concerns about the position and various difficulties women face in this patriarchal society and to an extent suggested ways for liberating the women.

What then, is 'feminism'? Western thinkers have defined feminism in various ways. One thing that spreads through all the definitions is the focus on the emancipation of women from all forms of oppression and discrimination. A number of definitions have been attempted by scholars from diverse disciplines; Karen Offen, Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Stanford University (1998); Sheila Ruth, Philosophy and Women's Studies, Southern Illinois University (1980); Mary Dietz, Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota (2003), Alice Walker (1983), Clenora Hudson-Weems (1993), etc.

Out of these, Dietz's (2003) definition of feminism is considered appropriate for this research because of its focus on academic feminism. In her view,

"Feminism is a historically constituted, local and global, social and political movement with an emancipatory purpose and a normative content. It posits a subject (women), identifies a problem (the subjection and objectification of women through gendered relations), and expresses various aims (e.g., overturning relations of domination; ending sex discrimination; securing female sexual liberation; fighting for women's rights and interests, raising "consciousness," transforming institutional and legal structures; engendering democracy) in the name of specific principles (e.g., equality, rights, liberty, autonomy, dignity, self-realization, recognition, respect, justice, freedom). As a historical movement, feminism is geared toward action-coordination and social transformation, interrogating existing conditions and relations of power with a



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view toward not only interpreting but also changing the world". (Dietz, 2003: 399)

It is also a preferred definition, because it is comprehensive. That is, it captures the main subject of feminism – woman – and it is able to address the various issues of concern to all feminists in spite of regional differences. Dietz (2003) also appreciates the historical, local, global, social, and political aspects of feminism. However, since the thesis deals with an African country, specifically Ghana, feminism in the African region will be discussed as a background for the definition of feminism and feminist attributes to be used in this research.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Though various studies have used feminist theories to examine a number of Ghanaian novels, none has been able to define a genre that can be referred to as the Ghanaian Feminist Novel. This thesis attempts to explore the distinctive elements of the feminist novel in Ghana.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this thesis are to:

1. Identify the elements that constitute the Ghanaian Feminist Novel.
2. Identify novels that can be categorized under the genre.
3. Establish the major themes and characters in the Ghanaian Feminist Novel.
4. Establish the main concerns of feminists and women in Ghana, and to an extent, women in Africa, in a bid to ascertain regional similarities and differences.

1.4 FEMINISM IN AFRICA/AFRICAN FEMINISM

In Africa, feminism, as explained by the west, has been received with mixed feelings. Due to differences in culture between the western society and Africa, scholars have raised the necessity for diversity in the feminist concept. However, Uma Narayan (1997) is convinced that feminism is the same everywhere and so does not favour the distinction between Western feminism and Third-World feminism. Narayan argues that the distinction is an unnecessary product of the Western and Third-World diasporan feminist scholars who, in their discussion of feminism, recognize the historical changes and internal complexities in western contexts but do the opposite when looking at Third-World contexts. These scholars, according to Narayan, see the Third-World as a place where time stands still and where one culture rules all. Narayan implies that a difference in culture is not enough to distinguish between feminist discourses. This might be true since globally, women's activism concerns itself with basically the same themes – women's legal and political rights; violence, reproductive rights and abortion, sexual liberty, employment and discrimination, political participation and representation. However, one of the expected outcomes of this research is to show that cultural differences are reflected in the discussions of feminism across regions.

Other African scholars have also come to the conclusion that feminism does not exist in the African context since women in their culture occupy positions of power and are not oppressed. One such scholar is Oyèrónké Oyewùmí (2002). She argues that Western “feminist concepts emerged out of the logic of the patriarchal nuclear family, a family form that is inappropriately universalized” (5) because the extended family system plays a vital role in the African contexts.

Using the example from her Yoruba culture, she shows that her culture does not recognize differences in gender. She states:

In this section drawing from my own research on Yoruba society of southwestern Nigeria, I present a different kind of family organization. The traditional Yoruba family can be described as a non-gendered family. It is non-gendered because kinship roles and categories are not gender-differentiated. Significantly then, power centers within the family are diffused and are not gender-specific. (5)

But that is only one culture in Africa. Ifi Amadiume (1997), a social anthropologist, is another Nigerian scholar who supports Oyewùmi's view. She develops her argument using the Igbo society. According to Amadiume, many social positions may be taken up either by men or women. She uses the example of the Igbo term for husband, *di*, which refers to both a man and a woman (128). In like manner, daughters may step into positions of sons, and women may act as husbands for other wives. Thus, Amadiume says, there is "in African gender systems a flexibility which allows a neuter construct for men and women to share roles and status" (112). The above may be true for the specific cultures but what happens to those who are in subjugated and oppressive societies where gender roles are defined? Even for societies who lay claims to undefined gender roles, the practical situation may not necessarily be so. It is obviously clear, therefore, that feminism cannot be discussed if participants of the discussion do not recognize the role cultural and racial differences play in it.

On the other hand, there is another group of scholars who acknowledge that feminism does exist in Africa but not in the way in which it is expounded by Western feminists. In a presentation made at the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme Festival (6-9 Sept. 2005), Marren Akatsa-Bukachi in answering the question "African Feminism, Does it exist?" states that "I think the answer should be yes it does exist, it is only the structure or form that we should strengthen." Among the issues taken up by feminist theory, she says, are the representation and misrepresentation of women in literary texts; the education of women; the access of women to the economic means of survival; motherhood; women in the domestic sphere; women as part of their communities; women's role in politics and revolution; sexuality; and the direct treatment of women by men, and men by women. Underlying this array of specific interests are questions of gender in representation and of the reality or realities of life for women in Africa – past, present, and future.

Other scholars who agree with Marren Akatsa-Bukachi (theorists, scholars, writers), have simply refused the label, 'feminist'. The reasons they give are varied. In the first instance, women who consider themselves feminist are dubbed, "copy cat". That is, African feminists are believed to copy blindly from western European feminists without paying attention to their own culture. Ama Ata Aidoo, for instance, is worried about the fact that anytime feminism is mentioned it is viewed as "something that has been imported into Africa to ruin the nice relationship between African women and African men." (Arndt, 2002:30)

Secondly, African theorists believe that when western feminists speak of 'woman' they imply the 'white woman'. "They do not see beyond their society and hence ignore or marginalize the specific problems of African women" (Arndt, 2002:33). Another contributory factor to the anti-western feminist view in Africa is that feminism is misunderstood. Arndt (2002) quotes Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo as writing that feminism 'conjugates up visions of aggressive women who try to be like men, dress carelessly and abandon essential feminine attributes.' (27) Arndt further states that "feminism is often equated with radical feminism and this in turn with hatred of men, penis envy, the non-acceptance of African traditions, the fundamental rejection of marriage and motherhood, the favoring of lesbian love and endeavor to invert the relationship of the genders." (27)

What then, is feminism to the African? The answer to this question lies with various scholars and theorists who realize the need for modification. For instance, Ama Ata Aidoo will admit to being a feminist by insisting on what it should mean: "when people ask me rather bluntly, every now and then, whether I am feminist, I not only answer yes, but I go on to insist that every woman and every man should be feminist – especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives and the burden of African development" (qtd. in Arndt 21). In a bid to add to what is believed to be missing in feminism as explicated by the west, African women (scholars, writers and theoreticians) have sought terminological and conceptual alternatives for their endeavors toward their liberation.

Various alternative concepts have been suggested as a replacement for feminism in Africa. The concept of 'Womanism' has been proposed and explained in three ways which differ markedly in their detail. In 1983, Alice walker introduces 'Womanism' which focuses on the struggle to free *"all women; women of colour, working class women, poor women, disabled women..."* (1) (emphasis mine). That is, all women, especially, black women's identity should receive critical attention in feminist discussions and that is lacking in feminism as expounded by the west.

Like Walker, Ogunyemi's (1985/86) African Womanism believes in the emancipation and independence of women just as feminism does. The difference between feminism and Womanism is how each theory perceives patriarchy and the approach to changes. Ogunyemi states that the struggle of 'Womanism' should not only be sexual but also focus on issues of race, culture, nation building, economics and politics. Ogunyemi considers this demarcation necessary because:

"as a woman writer with her own peculiar burden, knowing that she is deprived of her rights by sexist attitudes in the black domestic domain and by Euro-American patriarchy in the public sphere; as a member of a race that feels powerless and under siege, with little esteem in the world – the black female novelist cannot wholeheartedly join forces with white feminists to fight a battle against patriarchy that, given her understanding and experience, is absurd. So she is a womanist because of her racial and sexual predicament" (qtd. in Arndt 40).

This view is supported by the Nigerian literary critic, Mary E. Modupe Kolawole who also believes that the womanist consciousness should relate gender problems to the larger issues of class and race (Kolawole 155).

Kolawole is of the view that the womanist should seek to “change the status quo, interrogate patriarchy, imperialism and western feminism” (153). The desire of the womanist is to “liberate African women, change their consciousness and recreate a positive self-perception to enhance progress” (153). Therefore, “the search for self-respect, dignity, self-assertion, and new moral values in a new quest for redefinition and self-esteem” (Ibid) is of great importance in the womanist concept.

An interesting concept was also introduced in 1994 by Ogundipe-Leslie, the Nigerian scholar, who proposed ‘Stiwanism’. She explains that

“‘STIWA’ is my acronym for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa.... This new term STIWA allows me to discuss the needs of African women today in the tradition of the spaces and strategies provided in our indigenous cultures for the social being of women... ‘STIWA’ is about the inclusion of African women in the contemporary social and political transformation of Africa. I am sure there will be few African men who will oppose the concept of including women in the social transformation of Africa,

which is really the issue. Women have to participate as co-partners in social transformation." (qtd. in Arndt, 2002: 50)

Ogundipe-Leslie suggests that the success of social transformation and restructuring should include the essential ingredient of gender issues. Her definition like that of Ogunyemi is a concept for *only* African women. Ogundipe-Leslie is of the view that coining this new term will "deflect energies from constantly having to respond to charges of imitating Western feminism and, in this way, conserve those energies, to avoid being distracted from the real issues of the conditions of women in Africa...."

Another alternative concept to feminism that has come out of Africa is Catherine Acholonu's 'Motherism' which is defined in her book *Motherism: the Afrocentric alternative to feminism* (1999). With the central role of motherhood in mind, she suggests that "Africa's alternative to Western feminism is motherism and motherism denotes motherhood, nature and nurture" (Arndt, 2002: 54). That is, "cooperation with Nature is paramount to motherism and the task of the Motherist is that of healing and protecting the natural cohesive essence of the family, child, the society and the environment" (Ibid). Social transformation and change will be total and possible when women are concerned with all aspects of societal development.

In conclusion, it is evident that the need for an alternative concept for feminism is very important in capturing the various socio-cultural peculiarities in the issues concerning women and the quest for change. In other words, there is and must be “diversity in feminism that is responsive to the different needs and concerns of different women and defined by themselves” (Arndt, 2002: 59). The introduction of the new concept has broadened the western definition of feminism, thereby making it relevant to the struggle of Africa and other ‘Third-World’ women. Their main additions are summed by Ogunديpe-Leslie in the following way:

1) that feminism need not be opposition to men 2) that women need not neglect their biological roles, 3) that motherhood is idealized and claimed as a strength by African women and seen as having a special manifestation in Africa 4) that the total configuration of the conditions of women should be addressed rather than obsessing with sexual issues, 5) that certain aspects of women’s reproductive rights take priority over others, 6) that women’s conditions in Africa need to be addressed in the context of the total production and reproduction of their society and the scenario involves men and children 7) and that the ideology of women has to be cast in the context of the race and class struggles which bedevil the continent of Africa today (cited in Gyimah, 2003: 2).

Even though these alternative concepts are laudable and acceptable, one hardly comes across scholars, writers or even other theorists who consider themselves womanists, stiwanists or

motherists. When Ama Ata Aidoo's view is solicited on whether she preferred being called a feminist or a womanist, her answer is straight forward:

“...there are womanists, and feminists, but the most important thing is: what are we all trying to get at? If we are all trying to get at the development of society's awareness about the position of women in this world - and what to do about it, how to get women to develop - that's the important issue. If this is what we are about then, frankly, it is not relevant at all whether we are feminists, or womanists, or fundamentalists. Who cares? That's where I come from. I am not going to stop talking to somebody because she is a womanist. I will argue with the person about the view points. I will discuss them, like I have done with Alice Walker; I will discuss the validity of the term. But that does not mean that I will negate the validity of that term. I will want to point out the difficulties it raises for us, African women, in terms of clarity. But I will never say that womanists are so different I cannot talk to them.” (Frais, 2003: 28)

The research will continue to adopt the term, 'feminism'. However, it will take into account the various modifications made by the above-mentioned scholars since the focus is on an African country. It is therefore justifiable to consider African Women committed to issues of women and gender as feminist, recognizing that their “feminist commitment has a specific, distinctive face which is rooted in the specificities of African societies and of the situation, problems and concerns of African women and men” (Arndt, 2002 : 70).

1.5 FEMINISM IN GHANAIAN LITERATURE

The portrayal of women in Ghanaian creative literature has taken varied forms. The role played by the 'woman' in Ghanaian literature often falls within the framework of her traditional ones as wife and mother. If the 'ideal woman' is not present, what is seen is the promiscuous female

(prostitute) or the 'mari jata' type of woman whom men hate, and yet again the destroyer of man. These roles and attitudes the writers express have raised a lot of concern especially for the woman reader. Abena Busia, in her paper, "Parasites and Prophets: The Use of Women in Ayi Kwei Armah's novels" (1996), states that "there are basically two traditions of oppositions governing the portrayal of women in the novels which concern us here: women as wholesome whores or victimized or virtuous virgins, and women as nurturing earth mothers or destructive Jezebels." Busia follows the progress of Armah's women throughout the five novels and concludes that they are transformed from parasites to prophets. In the course of this transformation Armah's women become symbols of liberation; however, Busia emphasizes, the women are without a palpable individualism; they are largely symbols of womanhood: "women are always lovers, wives, or blood relatives of central male characters, and have significance in the texts only insofar as they affect those characters (Busia, 1992)."

Ama Ata Aidoo has also raised her own concerns in a number of articles about the presentation of women in literature. In "Unwelcomed Pals and Decorative Slaves or Glimpses of Women as Writers and Characters in Contemporary African Literature" (1999), she expresses her disapproval of the way Achebe and Soyinka portray women in their works. She then leads her argument to her fellow citizen, Ayi Kwei Armah: "And who says Soyinka is the only one who creates great women to service men, or worse just to frustrate? Armah is the expert here. Oyo is a whiner, unreasonable, plain unreasonable. Her mother is a greedy ageing bitch and Estella, your perfumed indolent whore. But it's the fate of Araba Jesiwa which sends you stark raving mad..."

Unsatisfied with the way women are portrayed by male authors, the female writers have and still are embarking on works that expose the various forms of women's oppression as well as suggesting ways of overcoming them. One such writer is Amma Darko, a Ghanaian writer whose views and concerns about the predicament of the Ghanaian woman are clearly spelt out in her novels. In various interviews and interactions, she has clearly stated that as a writer, her work challenges norms and issues that are affecting the Ghanaian community, especially the woman. In an interview on *Beyond the Horizon* (1995) with Patrick K. Muana (2003), Amma Darko's view concerning her work and her feminist status is:

I am first and foremost a storyteller who feels inspired to create stories out of pertinent issues. As an African woman also, I feel inclined toward working around female issues. I don't know where that places me in the writing world's classifications, but I definitely do have some reservations about carrying the tag of 'feminist writer'. The context in which the Western world perceives the term does not prevail here. Feminism is sort of placed in a tight and narrow square box. One perceived or labeled as a feminist whatever, is judged to be this aggressive man-hater who at best is a lesbian and who can be as worse as a butcher of masculinity. I tell stories and comment on situations. I would be completely satisfied to be perceived simply as a voice.

I agree with both Darko and Aidoo that identifying a person or a work as feminist is not just a matter of name but the meaning attached to it. To both writers, the focus should be on creating

awareness of the situation of women all over the world and advocating for necessary measures for positive change. From all the arguments raised so far, I am drawn to a number of questions whose answers I consider relevant to the feminist discussions in Ghana. They are:

What constitute the Ghanaian concept of feminism? Are there any Ghanaian novels that can be categorized as the 'Ghanaian feminist novel' and what does the Ghanaian feminist novel constitute? What are the major themes and characters in these novels?

The answers to these questions constitute the main objectives of this research. The novels selected are Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* (1991) and *Our Sister Killjoy or Reflections from a Black-eyed Squint* (1977) and Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* (1995) and *Not Without Flowers* (2007). By critically carrying out a study of Aidoo's *Changes* (C) and *Our Sister Killjoy* (OSK), and Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* (BTH) and *Not Without Flowers* (NWF), this research attempts a description of a literary genre, the 'Ghanaian Feminist Novel' which will refer to novels that portray consciousness of the subjugation, fears and struggles of women in a Ghanaian socio-cultural context. The description will be done by analyzing the characters and themes that are presented in the novel. The results will lead to the discovery of the features that constitute the Ghanaian concept of feminism.

1.6 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE SELECTION OF THE NOVELS

In the selection of the novels for this research, significance was placed on authors whose works allow for analyzing women's oppression, women's identity and women's standpoint in relation to issues of love, sexuality, equality and politics; economic oppression; and the contribution of religion and culture to women's oppression, which are some of the main issues in feminism. The choice is also based on the premise that the texts selected have characters that allow for a discussion on issues relating to women in Ghana. That is, the novels present contemporary Ghanaian women from different perspectives and raise the controversies and difficulties they face in their efforts to be recognized as people with the right to define themselves and chart the course of their lives. With the above in mind, Ama Ata Aidoo and Amma Darko were selected.

Of Ama Ata Aidoo's works, *Changes* and *Our Sister Killjoy* were chosen. The selection of Aidoo's novels was easy since the rest of her works are either short stories or drama. The two novels were chosen also because they portray a consciousness of the subjugation, fears and struggle of the Ghanaian woman for independence and equality. Since all Amma Darko's works are novels, the selection of *Beyond the Horizon* and *The Housemaid* was due to the fact the novels portray, in a total and all encompassing way, issues which are of concern to feminists as already mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Faceless was not selected because it focuses mainly on the realities of street life in the slums of Accra. The novel reveals the unpleasantness health risks, and vicious cycles of poverty and

violence that drive children to the streets and women to prostitution, which is one of the main concerns of feminists in the African region. As such the novel only addresses a section of the concerns of feminists or women as compared to the two selected novels which reveal the various aspects of feminist experiences in all aspects of society. *Not Without Flowers*, Darko's recent novel, was not chosen because the main focus is on the difficulty society is confronted with when it comes to choosing between African Tradition and Western Culture and how the choice affects women and the society as a whole. The issues of concern needed for this research are better presented in *Beyond the Horizon* and *The Housemaid* than the others.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The research is based solely on feminism as explicated in the selected Ghanaian novels. However, references may be made to other novels that have feminist themes.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

What distinguishes this study from existing research is that it attempts a description of a literary genre, the "Ghanaian Feminist Novel", which refers to novels that portray consciousness of the subjugation, fears and struggles of women in a Ghanaian socio-cultural context. Also, there has been no specifically feminist study of Ghanaian writing, though female characters and themes related to feminist concerns have been analyzed. The research will isolate the criteria for identifying the Ghanaian Feminist Novel thereby contributing to the discussion of feminism in



the country and perhaps opening up areas for further research. It will also expose the concerns of feminists in Ghana as reflected in the novels.

1.9 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Ideally, a study such as this one, which aims at defining the Ghanaian Feminist novel, should be based on all such novels available. However, this research is based on two novels each from two Ghanaian female authors. Consequently, it could be argued that the results of the study may not be fully representative. Despite this limitation, I believe that the study of these four novels will provide a pioneering study of the above-mentioned literary genre.

1.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Brown (1973), Kamara (2001), Ogunyemi (1985) feminism implies a number of social objectives. My discussion of the selected works involved an assessment of the extent to which these social objectives are pursued in the novels. These are:

- i. Female education. How educational background or the lack of it affects women's economic power and intellectual ability to make informed critical judgment on matters affecting their well-being.
- ii. Fostering a mutual and equitable relationship between men and women, whether in marriage or outside marriage

- iii. Society's Conventional restrictive notions of 'female feelings' - The concepts of heritage, tradition and religion and their effects on women's sexual passion, love, parenthood and general conduct.
- iv. A critical perception of and reaction to patriarchy, often articulated through the struggle of a victim or rebel who must face a patriarchal institution
- v. Sensitivity to the issues of sexism allied with an acceptance of women and understanding of the choices open to them
- vi. A metamorphosis leading to female victory in a feminist utopia, or stasis, signifying the failure to eliminate sexism; a style spiced with the acrimony of feminist discourse

The thesis also took into considerations various political issues that are of relevance to Ghanaian women as enumerated and discussed in *The Women's Manifesto for Ghana*, 2004. However, since I discussed novels and not political writings, I was guided by the ideas of some of the better known feminist literary critics. Two literary theorists were central to my effort. I, in my discussion, made use of Elaine Showalter's classification of feminist novels into three phases¹ and tried to apply her concept of gynocriticism to the selected texts, where applicable.

¹ **Feminine:** In the Feminine phase "women wrote in an effort to equal the intellectual achievements of the male culture, and internalized its assumptions about female nature"

Feminist: The Feminist phase was characterized by women's writing that protested against male standards and values, and advocated women's rights and values, including a demand for autonomy.

Female: The Female phase is one of self-discovery. Showalter says, "women reject both imitation and protest—two forms of dependency—and turn instead to female experience as the source of an autonomous art, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the forms and techniques of literature."

I also tried to assess the extent to which the selected writers meet the “commitments” suggested by Ogundipe-Leslie in her famous essay, “The Female Writer and Her Commitment”. This thesis also explored the relevance of the various African feminist concepts proposed by various African scholars as discussed under African feminism.

1.11 METHODOLOGY

Three approaches were adopted in pursuing the objectives of this thesis. A global introduction of feminism and an in-depth discussion of feminism in Africa and Ghana were done in order to provide the background and criteria for defining the Ghanaian feminist novel. A critical reading of the selected texts already mentioned above concentrated mainly on examining the works with reference to the characters and themes, to isolate the different ways in which the two authors approach and discuss the feminist objectives. The analysis of the themes was done simultaneously with the characters, since the various themes were identified from characters and their reaction to patriarchy and its resultant difficulties they find themselves in. Roles played by the various Ghanaian social institutions such as culture, religion, education, economic etc, were also analyzed in relation to the various forms of oppression described in the novels. The above were compiled as features of feminist novels in Ghana to provide a description of the genre.

1.12 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The first chapter discusses feminist theories and feminist debates and provides the background to the study. It also provides the criteria for defining the Ghanaian feminist novel as well as the

methodology of the study. Chapter Two reviews the available literature and criticism on the chosen texts and also establish the main concerns of this research. Chapter Three provides an analysis of the themes and characters in Ama Ata Aidoo's novels. Chapter Four offers a similar analysis based on the novels of Amma Darko. The fifth chapter, which is the final chapter, presents the isolated criteria for identifying the Ghanaian feminist novel. From the isolated criteria, an account of the Ghanaian Feminist Novel will be provided. Finally, the chapter will state the conclusions drawn and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews relevant literature and critiques on the novels chosen to establish the various angles of analysis thereby exposing the gap that this research seeks to fill. The review is in two sections with one for each author. Ama Ata Aidoo's works have received significant attention from critics, academic commentators and other writers. Her two novels *Our Sister Killjoy: Reflections from a Black-eyed Squint* (1977) and *Changes: A Love Story* (1991) have been critiqued based on the style, characterization, plot development, themes, etc. For instance, Aidoo's narrative technique alternates between prose and poetry in *Our Sister Killjoy*, with one word sometimes covering an entire page. In the manner of oral storytelling, Aidoo directly draws the reader's attention to the need for a distinct African identity, which she sees from a female perspective.

Also, Amma Darko's novels have received considerable attention from various critics on the worth of her works in terms of syntactic value, style, characterization and plot development and how these project the art of her novels. The majority of the critical essays and analyses that will be reviewed in this section are about *Beyond the Horizon*. This is because, *Not Without Flowers*, Darko's most recent novel is still new on the literary scene and, thus, has fewer critical commentaries or reviews. Despite the variety of available literature on the novels under

discussion, this review will focus on works that comment on the themes that are stated in the theoretical framework in the first chapter.

2.1 REVIEW

To begin with, one of the main issues of concern to the works reviewed is that of the women's liberation. For example, Kofi Owusu (1999) examines "Aidoo's contribution to the ongoing attempts to rescue the African woman from the fringes of African literature and restore flesh, blood, voice and credibility to her" (342). According to him, through Sissie, Aidoo reveals "the self-supporting, decision-making woman – the cornerstone of the African family life (Ibid)," instead of the usual prostitute, faceless and/or voiceless woman in African literature. Though Owusu's discussion of OSK falls under feminism, he adopts the term, "womanist-feminist" or "womanist/feminist", which signifies a merger of the womanist and feminist perspectives¹. However, even though this research makes use of both perspectives in African and western feminism, the term feminism is still used because of the common concern for women and the focus on feminism in the Ghanaian context.

Also contributing to the above theme, Mensah (1992) sees *Changes* as a "women's liberationist project designed to expose what the modern educated woman endures in marriage (1)." Esi leaves a marriage with a man who is devoted to her, in spite of the admonitions of her mother and grandmother and chooses to be a second wife to a Muslim man who has little time for her.

¹ "What is often described as "Black/African feminism" will be referred to in the ensuing pages as "womanism." "Radical" or "extremist" will be used to premodify "womanism" and "feminism" wherever appropriate" (Owusu, 1990 :341)

Mensah explains that the problem that confronts Esi is the same problem faced by many educated African women for whom marriage is no longer a means of financial survival (Mensah, 1992). That is, such a woman needs to find a marriage that satisfies her natural human need for companionship without requiring her to give up all her personal ambitions and potential. Mensah (1992), however, raises an objection to the way men are portrayed in the novel. He believes that Aidoo reduces men to almost mindless creatures. He says that “sometimes the reader is tempted to believe that Ms Aidoo, the author, is calling on her female readers to join her in a little fun at the expense of men, giving men a taste of how it feels to be the object of unfair generalizations.” Perhaps, though, another way of looking at Aidoo’s depiction of men is to see it as a revelation of what women see men to be; in other words, a feminist’s portrayal of a patriarchal society.

Mensah concludes by stating that it is not entirely true to say that Esi suffers self-ostracization because patriarchal society fails to keep pace with her aspiration but her loneliness is due in part to her failure to give sufficient consideration to new articulations of freedom and responsibility in relationships.

The liberationist theme extends to the history of women’s writing or women’s participation in African literature. According to Tuzyline Jita Allen (1991), “the novel pulses with an irrepressible pioneering spirit, clearing the ground for a new tradition of women’s writing in Africa. It is a record of the changing circumstances of women’s lives in contemporary Africa, but more importantly, it transcends realistic significance and constructs a psychological blueprint for female portraiture. Based on the novel’s cumulative impact, African women’s diminishment

in literature may be a thing of the past. The three main female characters together provide a composite portrait of an emerging African femininity from which future experiments will be drawn.” Agreeing with Allen, this thesis does not examine Aidoo’s pioneering of a new tradition of women’s writing but also her pioneering of the Ghanaian Feminist Novel.

Another issue that is central to critics of Aidoo’s novels is female sexual self-determination. As far as Maria Olaussen (2002) is concerned:

The most challenging idea in Changes revolves around the idea of female sexual self-determination. What does a woman want? Maybe this isn’t the question Esi’s mothers are attempting to answer after all. How much can a woman possibly expect in this world ruled by men? ...but when Esi leaves her perfectly good husband and agrees to become a second wife of her lover Ali, they literally scream at her for her stupidity. It is not that they are entirely blind to Esi’s vision or that they wouldn’t see that her demands are based on a perfectly reasonable sense of entitlement – if she was a woman. The problem is that she is a woman and that she chooses to behave as if this didn’t matter (65).” (Emphasis mine)

It is obvious that Esi’s visions and demands are reasonable desires that should be tolerated. However, her vision is disregarded because she is woman. So what happens to the visions of women? Who determines what matters and what doesn’t? All individuals should be able to pursue their dreams and aspirations, even if they are women.

Commenting on the above issue, McWilliams observes that the book is an investigation of “how women’s sexuality is circumscribed by (neo) colonialism, gender oppression, and compulsory heterosexuality” (p. 335). Basing her essay on a statement made by Aidoo when she was part of the a panel on African Literature and issues confronting African women writers, McWilliams sets out to describe “how Aidoo moves beyond the stifling binary oppositions established

between Western feminist discourse and African male discourse of female identity through her representations of African Feminism in *Our Sister Killjoy: Reflections from a Black-eyed Squint* (1977) and *Changes: A Love Story* (1991)." (334)

Other scholars have examined Aidoo's perceptions and insight on neo-colonialism and its effects on the Ghanaian woman and society. For McWilliams, OSK is a narrative of disturbance and transition between African and Western ideologies. She explains that:

"The hybrid narrative form foregrounds the text's resistance to abide by any one set of norms, be they literary or ideological. Just as the narrative mixes prose and poetry with oral traditions to create a new literary form, so too does the mixture of African and Western beliefs highlights the protagonist's entry into a world criss-crossed with competing systems of knowledge. Sissie, the titular character journeys from her homeland in West Africa into the vast ideologically complicated morass of Europe to her so-called imperial 'motherland' of England; she then turns back to Ghana with new insights about the regulatory fictions of post-colonial society that shape her existence as a sexual and social female being" (339).

The above theme is examined differently in *Changes* by Odamtten (1994). He suggests that the purpose of the novel is to get the reader to think about the impact of neocolonial change and the best ways of coping with the resultant dilemmas. For Nfah-Abbenyi (1999), *Changes* highlights simultaneously, a demonstration of contributions of the postcolonial woman to her own colonization and of the social and historical capital available for her empowerment.

Women's way of dealing with the above theme as they explore options available for their empowerment leads to the issue of the changing roles in women in the African society. For instance, Arlene A. Elder (1999) *OSK* reveals the development of a woman's voice. She explains

that the novel conveys different stages of a developing consciousness that reflects Molara Ogundipe-Leslie's (1994) concept of "STIWA," the privileging equally of women's freedom and overall African development that encompasses both genders" (165). Thus, Aidoo reveals her concerns for the 'locked mouth' and the 'locked minds' of Sissie's listeners. Sissie destroys the letter she writes to her westernized lover in England who considers her too idealistic and political. According to Elder, "the ending of *Our Sister Killjoy* offers both a thematic and formal ambiguity" (165). That is, the un-posted letter represents another woman who has been silenced by an unresponsive man. However, the open-endedness of the novel reveals the woman's (Sissie) refusal to accept inferiority and suppression. Even though no one listens to her, she will continue to speak for those that might listen. Though Elder states that the novel reveals Aidoo's feminist perceptions, she does not explore the feminist idea much further than the development of a woman's voice.

Examining the changing roles of women in *Changes*, Uwakweh (1999) discusses Aidoo's celebration of the spirit of the modern Ghanaian woman—especially her status as independent and self-determined—and the dilemmas that these modern changes trigger within the sociocultural milieu. It examines personal lifestyle choices and its main achievement thus lies in the portrayal of Esi's choice of polygyny as a "new portrayal of female whose assertion need not lie in separateness nor tagged with immorality... Ironically, this modern female chooses a traditional institution to resolve the conflicts of time and space in the monogamous relationship" (366). This observation takes for granted marriage as an institution where the emotional, sexual, social, procreative, and reproductive needs of men are met by his wife or wives. Morality defined

as a simple adherence to institutionalize forms removes the concept from deeper discussions of right and wrong, not to mention power structures and the gendered nature of dominant ideas concerning sexual morality (Olaussen, 2002).

For Bryce and Dako (2000), the change reflects “an ironic commentary on the disillusion that followed the degeneration of the physical fabric of Ghanaian society and the disappointment of those early hopes” (3). This irony is further examined in 2004 by Dako et al. According to them, the novel looks at marriage, family and male-female relationships with brutal honesty. It unravels traditional concepts, it strips the modern concepts naked and leaves the emancipated African woman abandoned and alone, paid off with a new car but short changed in everything else. She has lost both husbands and abandoned her only child for her own gratification. (Dako et al, 2004). Perhaps, Esi’s situation reflects the challenges, suffering and confusion of women as a result of the changing ideas of marriage and motherhood. The issue of marriage is thus taken beyond a concern with individual choice or morality to the question of how subjects are shaped and changed in changing societies.

From the reviews, Aidoo’s novels examine the issue concerning the changing roles of women in the Ghanaian society, women’s liberation, women’s sexual self-determination, and effects of neocolonialism on the African continent and societal norms and conventions that oppress women. The reviews also suggest that Aidoo’s novels set a feminist agenda through the development of a feminist voice and female bonding and emancipation. This thesis focuses on the novels’ feminist agenda while further examining the issues of concern in its aim of defining

the Ghanaian Feminist Novel. The thesis also deducts from the novels other themes that reflect the Ghanaian writer's nature of feminism.

Reviews on Amma Darko's works reflect most of the issues raised from the reviews of Aidoo's novels. However, the same ideas are treated differently by each author. These differences will be examined in the fourth chapter. We begin with Odamtten (2007) who suggests that the Ghanaian social norms and system have become so corrupt and thus affecting all aspects of our lives especially in the social institution of marriage. Dwelling on the theme of the obedient daughter, he states that Darko "reveals the unvarnished truth about the social and moral corruption that plagues Africa's sons and daughters" (101). He explains that Mara loses her possibility of "being *sujet-pour-soi* and altering her karma" when she, "as a woman, was commodified and '...given away to this man (Akobi) who paid two white cows, four healthy goats, four lengths of cloth, beads, gold jewelry and two bottles of London Dry Gin'(3)" (103). Since obedience is very important to the Ghanaian social system, Mara's "comfortable blindness that allows her accept her role as the obedient daughter" (103) is accepted. However, she fails to visualize and develop past her naïve self and this is what causes her life. She took too long in wising up. This research will expand on this issue from the angle of how patriarchal structures give men the leverage to use and abuse women for their self-satisfaction.

Related to the above is the issue of marriage and family. Dako et al (2004) state that Darko implicitly laments the loss of the institutions of family and marriage as places where loyalty, loving kindness, trust and compassion may be nurtured for the good of men and women. Their impression of *BTH* is clearly stated as follows:

Darko deconstructs traditional marriage. In BTH, Mara is sold to her husband, Akobi, for a few heads of cattle and some trinkets and once sold, she is Akobi's to do with whatever he finds profitable. Mara is made to prostitute herself with Akobi acting as her pimp. Darko therefore, questions the way in which traditional marriage, as Mara's father practices it, differs from the relationship: prostitute/pimp that her marriage to Akobi turns out to be. Thus while being presented with traditional marriage, as seen through the materialistic eyes of Mara's father; we are also confronted with the metamorphosis of these same tendencies as they unfold through Akobi's perverted perception of a wife. (Dako et al, 2004)

Though their discussion of the novel is not necessary feminist, it will be examined in the definition of the GFN, but from the angle of oppression and violence against women. This idea will also be used in examining *NWF* because it raises the issues of both polygamous and monogamous marriage as she exposes the various forms of oppressions women face.

Contributing to the issue of marriage and violence, Olaussen (2002) argues that the novel "enlarges the issue of domestic violence and marital rape to include the situation of immigrant women in Europe forced to work as prostitutes in dangerous and extremely exploitative situations. It includes ideas about the rural-urban opposition as well as misguided ideas African villagers have about life in Europe. Comparing BTH with Nwapa's *One Is Enough* and *Changes*, Olaussen states that in all three novels, the protagonists are faced with the dilemma of having to maneuver within changing systems of sexual relations accommodating the contradictory and at times senseless expectations of kin. But whereas Esi and Amaka are successful professional women in charge of their own financial situation, Mara is the prototype of the innocent and vulnerable village woman forced to move to the city. Mara is both socially and economically dependent on her abusive husband, Akobi. The reason for her husband's behavior is to be found in the expectations that the villagers nurture about him as someone who has moved to the city.

Another issue that critics have been concerned with is the issue of sexual relations. Further in the examination of the theme of the obedient daughter, Odamtten (2007) states that “the novel explores, in the reflective light of the confessional, the global trading in women’s bodies, a fact that has often been denied, erased or discussed in terms of outside of the West – Thailand, the Philippines, the former eastern European countries and Russia and less often Africa” (109). In telling this story Darko exposes issues that have long been suppressed and ignored and as Odamtten says, “are too dangerous to keep secret” (110). By examining the sexual objectification of women *BTH* and *NWF*, this research reiterates the Odamtten’s idea from a feminist perspective.

Odamtten extends the above idea in “Licit desires, Alien bodies and the economics of invisibility” with O’Connell (2007). From that perspective, the two state that the novel offers chilling insights into the lives led by undocumented, non-white immigrants in Western democracies” (48). They examine how the desire for wealth and western lifestyle affect immigrants. Desires that force them to surrender part or all of their bodies to the appetites of the dominant cultural class in order to purchase the dubious privilege of continued presence in the host. They also raise the issue of the traffic in women and the how illegal alien women are rapidly converted into sexual objects; the employment opportunities available to them are generally only those that dehumanize them (57). Unfortunately for Mara, she does not become a prostitute of her own will but was forced into it by her husband, Akobi.

The portrayal of Akobi, Mara's father and insensitive and exploitative men in Darko's novel, attracts the criticism of Mawuli Agyei (2009). According to him, "Darko presents situations in which the relationship between men and women is one in which women are victims of various types of physical and psychological violence. Women are victims of rape, battery, betrayal, abandonment by irresponsible husbands, economic exploitation and obnoxious cultural practices (48)." Darko's works become the avenue for her to vent her pent-up feelings of the experiences of women. I agree with Darko and other Ghanaian and even African female writers that for far too long the story and experiences of the woman have been told by men and the accounts of these men have failed, most of the time, to expose the suffering and discrimination against women. It is only fair that the woman tells her story and tells it the way it is. Consequently, although it may be true, that to some extent, men are unfairly portrayed, I believe that women have been quiet for too long, so with such an opportunity, they must make exceptional use of it.

Most important to the objective of this thesis is the feminist review of Darko's works by Ansongtinge *et al* (2007). These critics state that even though the novel was written by a woman, Darko's novels "are not simplistic feminist novels in the sense that their main themes are of female solidarity and the suppression of women in a patriarchal society. Even though the exploitation and the marginalization of women is central to her work, the women in Darko's first two novels all have choices but are trapped in a warped society in which everything, including all human relationships, is commodified (81)." The nature of the feminism in *BTH* and *NWF* is what this thesis examines as it leads to the definition of the Ghanaian feminist novel. They, however, suggest that Darko's feminism is unconscious since it lacks the political edge and tends

to dwell on the wider issue of the quality of social relations between women and men in contemporary society. Whether unconscious or not, Darko explores issues that are politically supported by feminist theories and by so doing she describes a phase of feminism, a phase this thesis seeks to explore.

The various reviews of Darko's novels that have been discussed above have been consolidated under the heading of feminism. These themes will be discussed with focus on their contribution to the definition of the Ghanaian Feminist Novel. The last novel of Darko, *Not Without Flowers* (2007) is relatively new in the literary scene, as such yet to receive critical analysis. Themes and ideas from the reviews of Darko's work together with African and Ghanaian feminist theories will be used in reading *NWF*. Hopefully my analysis of the feminist issues it discusses will create room for more reviews and readings of it.

CHAPTER THREE

FEMINISM IN *OUR SISTER KILLJOY* AND *CHANGES*

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses women in Ghana as presented in the two novels of Ama Ata Aidoo – *Our Sister Killjoy* (OSK) and *Changes*. The novels present four major (educated) female characters, each with a different level of consciousness about the experiences of women in third-world countries, culture, marriage, career, education etc. in Ghana. Sissie ranks high with her view on both political and social issues affecting Ghana and Africa; Esi follows with her views on education, marriage and career development of women in Ghana; then comes Opokuya with her concerns for relationships in marriage and general societal perception of women; and the last is Fusena who experiences the derogatory effects of culture and religion but is unable to do anything about them. The chapter also examines how these women deal with and utilize their educational experiences for their own liberation and the general liberation of women and the society from various forms of oppression. The concerns of the women as well as those of the few men in the novels are considered and related to the various African/Ghanaian feminist theories discussed in the first chapter. The chapter concludes with a summary of Aidoo's contribution to the definition of the Ghanaian feminist novel.

3.1 *OUR SISTER KILLJOY*

In OSK, Aidoo's heroine, Sissie, represents the new educated African woman who expresses the concern that Ogunjide-Leslie requires of the feminist writer in Africa. Sissie discusses and pursues egalitarianism in relation to larger global issues such as racism, post and neo-colonialism, imperialism, the economy, language and culture. Therefore, this section of the

chapter examines Sissie's reflections and views on the effects of neo-colonialism in Ghana(Africa), which is perpetuated in the constant glorification of the West, racism, the brain drain, insensitive governments, language, sexism, lesbianism, and how they affect women and the general development of the country. She also comments on the silencing of women and the need for women to speak as well as take active part in the development of their country.

OSK portrays a young educated Ghanaian woman, Sissie, who travels from Ghana to Germany, England and back to Ghana. In her interactions with other people in the course of her travels, Sissie “forever carries Africa's problems on her shoulders as though they (Africans) have paid her to do so” (118). Through her, Aidoo examines the past and current issues of colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, racism, culture and language use, nationalism and sexuality encountered by Ghanaians in their relationship with the west. Aidoo uses Sissie as a tool of social analysis; although it is not so much Sissie's experience in the Western developed world which shapes her view of Ghanaian/African society as her conscious identification of herself as a Ghanaian (African) in Europe. Most importantly, Sissie becomes the mouth, eyes and ears of Ghana in the foreign lands she visits. She makes it a point not only to think about these third-world problems but also to discuss them with various third world people in search of understanding and possible solutions.

The first issue that Aidoo critiques in *OSK* is the unrelenting glorification of the West by Ghanaians (and Africans in general). Most Africans believe that the flight to European and Western countries is the ultimate indication of progress and success that they should aspire to. As Sissie notes, her trip to Europe is discussed as if “...somehow, going to Europe was

altogether more like a dress rehearsal for a journey to paradise" (9) and it becomes a sign that "Our Sister had made it" (9). Aidoo satirizes this idealization of Europe and immediately contrasts it with the reality of racism and poverty that awaits the majority of Africans who emigrate to these 'promised lands'. At the dinner organized in Sissie's honour, she meets Sammy who had obviously been to Europe and was anxious to make Sissie realise that "she was unbelievably lucky to have been chosen for the trip ... His voice as he spoke of the far-off land, was wet with longing" (9). This, instead of pleasing Sissie, fills her with disgust and sadness. Like other Africans, Sammy suffers a lack of self-worth that is the product of colonial intimidation and its conscious process of socialization. Through Sissie's reaction, Aidoo demystifies the notion of the West as the land of opportunity and prosperity, demonstrating instead that the legacy of colonialism continues for Africans who seek their fortunes abroad where the common experience is one marked by racism and further subjugation and degradation. The concern of the Ghanaian feminist is the need to instil self-worth in a bid to prevent the mass migration of Ghanaians and Africans to the west instead of staying and developing the country and continent as a whole.

Unfortunately, the journey to the 'promised land' that is presented to Sissie by Sammy becomes a bad dream for her (and for many other Ghanaians and Africans who go there). Sissie experiences her first instance of (very subtle) racism when she is asked by the flight attendant of the plane, if she wants to join her two (black) friends at the back who were also coincidentally on the same programme. Aidoo uses this incident as the point of entry for her critique of racism. Consequently, even though Sissie is able to ignore this subtle racism by the flight attendant, the difference in her complexion actually dawns on her, when she is called a 'black girl'. She takes time to look around and is forced to do something she regrets for the rest of her life "when she was made to notice differences in human colouring" (13),

where the skin of white people are “the colour of pickled pig parts that used to come from foreign places to the markets at home” (12). Sissie would not have reacted in that manner, if her attention had not been drawn to her own colour.

Other Africans who make that journey in search of better conditions experience worse forms of racism. They realize that as immigrants, most of them do not find the freedom, self-realization, and success they hoped for; instead, they are judged by the colour of their skin. Despite the challenges faced in the foreign land, Africans will not come back home because the situation still seems much better than at home. Sissie discusses this issue with an Indian who has been in Germany for a number of years working as a doctor. In answering the question about why he remained, the Indian draws Sissie’s attention to the higher number of Ghanaian doctors in Germany who have refused to come home. Not knowing what to say, she agrees with the Indian, the Ghanaians and many other Africans living and working in foreign lands (in this case doctors) that “Going to work in a State hospital is Unnecessary Slavery...”(30) they should not subject themselves to since most of the leaders of their countries care only about bettering themselves.

Sissie’s sentiments provide the opportunity for Aidoo to comment on another third-world problem – the Brain Drain. This large-scale exodus of skilled professionals to the West greatly affects Ghana and the African continent as a whole. According to Sissie, no one stays in “But those of us, who fear / We cannot survive abroad, / One reason or another?” (32) Through Sissie, Aidoo expresses anguish at the fact that the few human resources Africa possesses are being taken from her. Aidoo calls on the Ghanaians and Africans in foreign lands to return to help in building Ghana and the continent as a whole. She expects that

women should also be concerned about the effects of the Brain Drain on the policies and development of their countries, bearing in mind that women suffer the worst in impoverished countries. However, she blames Ghanaian and African leaders for their inability to keep the few intellectuals at home. Ghanaian women/feminists are therefore stressing the importance of maintaining and utilizing our intellectual resources to produce development, instead of losing them to the developed world.

To further compound Africa's problems, those Africans who return from these foreign lands come with grandiose ideas on national development, which do not tackle the needs of the country. They become "Champagne sipping Ministers and commissioners" who "Sign away Mineral and timber/ Concessions, in exchange for/ Yellow wheat which/ The people can't eat" (57). This is because they have forgotten the problems of their nations and their compatriots. Instead of making wise decisions that will bring development to the people of the country, they take decisions that deteriorate the nation's already fragile economy; thus, increasing the level of poverty in the country.

Aidoo also criticizes those she calls the "moderates"; that is, people who ignore the real problems that the society faces and instead subordinate the interests of the majority of people to those of the bosses and foreign dominators, upholding "[t]he sanctity of the U.N. Charter", enforcing law and order and blaming all the problems on population explosion (6) because their ideas for development are, not even, their own.

Aidoo's criticism extends to the academic-pseudo-intellectual whose ideas for development are even more dangerous than the moderates; "who in the face of reality that is more tangible than the massive walls of the slave forts standing along our beaches, still talks of universal truth, universal art, universal literature and the Gross National Product" (57). The result is such statements such as "EDUCATION HAS BECOME TOO EXPENSIVE. THE COUNTRY CANNOT AFFORD IT FOR EVERYBODY"; however, "Our representatives and interpreters/ The low-achieving academics/ In low profile politics/ Have the time of their lives/ Grinning at cocktail parties and around/ Conference tables" (57). In other words, money spent on these cocktail parties can go a long way to provide educational or health facilities that will help reduce problems such as maternal and infant mortality rates in Ghana and Africa as a whole.

Aidoo, thus, condemns the educated elite of Ghana, who, in the face of severe societal problems, offer empty rhetoric on national development which does not address the needs of the country. Consequently, these individuals only encourage Ghana (Africa)'s present culture of inequity, corruption, and neo-colonial submissiveness, which only worsens the glorification of the Western culture and results in further prejudice, exploitation, and poverty.

Another issue of concern to Aidoo is the problem of language. It is a very important tool for fostering Ghanaian and African values. However, Aidoo notes that the exodus of African youth to Western countries to study prevents this fostering from happening. Language, therefore, becomes a form of oppression for Sissie and other African immigrants who have no choice but to use a language as well as adapt to a culture which is not their own. According to Sissie, the legacy of imperialism still persists since she and many other Africans

“have only been able to use a language that enslaved [them], and therefore, the messengers of [her] mind always come shackled” (112). Ngugi (1986) calls this the “cultural bomb” and what it does “...is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other peoples’ languages rather than their own” (3). If Ghanaians and Africans are mindful of maintaining African mores and values, then we must be concerned about the children and grandchildren returning from western lands with “whom [we] can’t communicate because/ they speak only English, French, Portuguese/ or even German, and [we do not]” (123). Sissie summarizes in her letter to her lover the extent of oppression through language: “all that I am saying about language is that I wish you and I could share our hopes, our fears and our fantasies, without feeling inhibited because we suspect someone is listening. As it is, we cannot write to one another, or speak across the talking cables or converse as we travel on a bus or train or anywhere, but we are sure they are listening, listening, listening” (115). The issues raised so far are common to all non-western peoples and they affect women not because they are women but because they fall into this subordinated group. Its importance in the definition of the Ghanaian Feminist novel is that it reveals the context in which the Ghanaian feminist novel is written.

Throughout the history of Ghana, various ethnic groups have had preference of male children over females. The reasons run from the desire to extend the family name to the male’s ability to become very resourceful and useful to the family especially when he is educated, as opposed to the female child who will take the name of her husband and will mostly support the family she makes with him. This preference, which is an act of sexism, greatly influenced

the rate of female children who were educated; until the women's movements and activist advocated for the education of the girl-child. Sissie discovers through her interaction with an Indian doctor that it costs more to have a baby boy than it does to have a baby girl:

'500 for a boy,
400 for a girl.'
Why should it surprise
That it costs a little more
To make a baby boy? (31)

As later revealed from the discussions between Sissie and Marija, the boy's worth over the girl seems to be a universally accepted phenomenon. Marija accepts her subservient role in her society. She speaks proudly of the fact that she "was happy that [her baby] was a boy" (51). In spite of the different perspectives various cultures have on feminism, Sissie's discovery suggests that "...sexual egalitarianism is a major goal on which all feminists can agree" (Johnson-Odim 315). The issue of sexism is further explored in Sissie's relationship with the men in the novel. When confronted by the fact she is not the expected quiet, respectful and uncontroversial African woman, her "excuse" is that no one taught her how to be a "proper" African woman, sarcastically complaining of the woman's unequal position in Africa.

She also raises the issue of lesbianism which stirs a great deal of controversy among feminists. Aidoo also touches on the difference between the Western female and the African female by Sissie's revulsion at Marija's display of lesbian affection. Surely, not all western women are lesbians, in fact there are a number of western women who frown on the idea of lesbianism. There are western feminist scholars who think that the solution to the sexual politics between men and women, is certainly not lesbianism. However, western society is



more accommodating as compared to African society. After Marija's sexual advances, Sissie's mind is stimulated as she questions herself:

How did she get here? What strings, pulled by whom, drew her into those pinelands where not so long ago human beings stoked their own funeral pyres with other human beings, where now a young Aryan housewife kisses a young black woman with such desperation, right in the middle of her own nuptial chamber, with its lower middle-class cosiness?(64)

Sissie knows that she cannot talk about this issue with anyone in her village in Africa. She is aware that "to the majority of ordinary Africans [Ghanaians], lesbianism is a non-existent issue because it is a mode of self-expression that is completely strange to their worldview" (Kolawole 15). As an African woman, societal convention of compulsory heterosexuality for women, racialism and neo-colonial oppressions leave her lonely, isolated and unfulfilled. Marija could opt for lesbianism but Sissie can only wish "that at least, she [were] a boy. A man" (67).

In a love letter written to an imaginary lover, Sissie recounts her conversation and experience with her "brothers". In Sissie's letter, Aidoo sends invitation to the "brothers" to join the train that leads to a change in the neo-colonial situation in Ghana and Africa. The "black eyed squint" discusses a number of issues with her "brothers" who do not really listen. She was never able to discuss the survival of the African race. Instead of criticizing her lover and his friends for wanting to stay in alien lands, she was expected to "shut up and meekly look to [the lover] even when [she] disagreed with [him]" (117). By mockingly claiming that she has a "big mouth", Sissie defies her lover and other Ghanaian (African) men who want to mould the Ghanaian woman into a controlled and passive object. She writes:

No, My Darling: it seems as if so much of the softness and meekness you and all the brothers expect of me and all the sisters is that which is really western. Some kind of hashed-up Victorian notions, hm? Allah, me and my big mouth!!

See, at home the woman knew her position and all that. Of course, this has been true of the woman everywhere – most of the time. But wasn't her position among our people a little more complicated than that of the dolls the colonizers brought along with them who fainted at the sight of their own bleeding fingers and carried smelling salts around, all the time, to meet just such emergencies as bleeding finger? (117)

Here, Aidoo is questioning the construction of the African woman as created by modern African men. In reality, the African woman is more complex. African women are courageous and bold; and they play very important roles in the African society. The woman should have the right to air her views on various social issues as well as make critical decisions concerning her life whether sexually, politically, economically and socially. She also encourages Ghanaian and African women to be bold and speak as well as fight for their liberation and that of their countries and continent as a whole. The novel ends while Sissie is on the verge of re-entry into the Ghanaian society. She arrives with different perspectives and is ready to reintegrate into the Ghanaian society, thereby giving hope for positive change for the country through women. To be able to tackle patriarchal structures at home, Ghanaian women should examine and explore their roles in society before the “hushed-up Victorian notion” of women was adopted. However, the situation of women in Ghana varied from one ethnic group to another and their roles in their various communities were and are still not the same.

It is clear from the above discussion that, in *OSK*, Aidoo reveals an emergent Ghanaian feminist principle where women are not only concerned about being victims of sexism and patriarchal social structures, but are also concerned about being victims of racism, neo-colonialism, cultural imperialism, socio-economic forms of oppression and corrupt systems. That is, Aidoo extends the concerns of the African feminist novel, thereby helping in the definition of an aspect of the Ghanaian feminist novel. Aidoo also suggests that Ghanaian

men and women should form an alliance to fight oppression since both genders experience the effects of the problems faced by third-world countries.

3.2 *CHANGES*

The Ghanaian woman is traditionally and conventionally expected to play the role of wife and mother. She is expected to be available to her husband and children at all times. She is responsible for her home, while her husband goes to work and provides for the family. With the introduction of formal education for girls and women, and the rise in women's rights advocacy, the role women play in the society continues to change. As a result of education we have a number of women in various professions such as law, academia, business, banking etc. Women also actively participate in political activities and also hold key political positions. These changes are relevant to the discussion of *Changes* because Aidoo focuses on the importance of education to the development of self-consciousness of women.

In *Changes*, Aidoo's main concern is with the modern educated woman and how her situation has "improved¹" with her education. Aidoo portrays two main categories of women in her novel; the conventional woman (represented by Oko's mother and sisters, the wives of the patriarchs of Nima, and Nana, Esi's mother), and the modern educated woman (represented by Esi, Opokuya and Fusena). Her feminist attack is mainly against patriarchal conventions such as stereotypes regarding desire, control, education, and marriage; and the conventional woman who does not see the need for change but rather frustrates the efforts of other women who are ready for change. Examples of such women are Oko's sisters and other women such

¹ Improved is in quotes because there is still a majority of women who do not have the opportunity of education and enlightenment. There are also those whose lives are not better in spite of their education and Fusena is an example of such women.

as those who criticize Opokuya for complaining about her husband and the use of his car. Through the contrasted marriages of three women, Esi, Opokuya and Fusena, Aidoo examines the “change²” in the roles and situation of the educated Ghanaian woman as she attempts to find a more fulfilling existence.

The main female character, Esi Sekyi, is a strong and independent woman. She has a job and genuinely enjoys her career as a government statistician. In addition to having a job that pays more than her husband's, Esi's job comes with the home in which she lives with her husband and daughter. Esi's strong will and independent nature is unusual, given the traditional role that women were generally expected to play in the family. Esi comes to represent the emergence of a new feminine identity — one that can compete equally with men in terms of financial and personal security.

As a career woman, Esi encounters difficulties with the men in her field. *Changes* begins with Esi reproving herself for taking up a responsibility that is not part of her job. Esi is angry about the fact that anytime their secretary is sick, it is assumed that, since she (Esi) is a woman, she will be able to stand in for her. Esi should know better how to assert herself with her male colleagues and not fall into the trap of pre-determined gender roles/hierarchies that construct and position women at the bottom of power structures. Her struggle against these pre-determined structures reveals the complexities concerning the changing roles of women in Ghana (Africa).

² The quote implies the same meaning attached to “improved” in the first line of the same paragraph.

Also, Esi Sekyi has to deal with antagonistic men, who try to “put her in her place”. For these men, “she was unwelcome, and a burden they did not know what to do with” (49). As far as they are concerned, it is hard enough to deal with over-qualified men; but “to have to cope with an over-qualified woman in any situation is a complete misfortune” (50). Aidoo encourages a rebellion against social conventions that define specific spaces for women in various professions. It is possible, this aspect of the novel is semi-autobiographical since she raises the same concerns in “Unwelcomed Pals and Decorative Slaves or Glimpses of Women Writers and Characters in Contemporary African Literature” (1999), where she illustrates this sexist issue with her own experience of teaching at the university. Aidoo narrates a conversation she had with one of her students after a hard morning lecture and tutorial in May, 1980. The student rushed to her and congratulated her on the “super lectures” (14) she gave. Her pleasure at the news is short lived as the student states that “As for you... but you know we like your lectures....Except that you outdid yourself this morning... they say your English was absolutely masculine” (14). Thus, intelligence, linguistic aptitude, political awareness and sensitivity to social issues are all masculine territories which should not be encroached upon. Knowing that she is unwelcome, Esi goes all out to prove her worth as well as to maintain her job. She ignores her emotional pain from the rape, bearing in mind that her lateness to work is a threat since “a woman in her kind of job must be careful...” (14). She reveals the fears and struggles of women in male dominated professions. Esi craves the freedom to pursue her career, desires and most of all, the freedom to find love. However, Esi’s ambitions affect her marriage and even her relationship with her family.

One of the ways that Esi’s marriage is affected by her career is that she earns more than her husband and this produces a level of independence in her, which draws criticism from Oko and his family, especially, his sisters. When Oko’s sisters find out that Esi earned more, they

quickly came to the conclusion that “it served him (Oko) right, marrying a woman who had more money than him” (48). The accusation, however, leads to the issue of education, which is of great importance to the Ghanaian feminist discourse. Oko’s sisters as well as Esi’s mother and grandmother are of the view that the educated woman loses sight of her role as a “woman” in the view of the patriarchal society.

Esi is also criticized for not making time for her husband, her only daughter and their home and also because she has refused to have any more children. Instead of playing the role of a good wife and mother, Esi has second thoughts about her marriage to Oko and she is focused on pursuing higher heights in her career. Oko’s sisters suggest that Oko gets himself “an unspoilt young woman properly brought up, whose eyes have not jumped over her eyebrows with too much education and too much money of her own...” (48). Aidoo certainly believes that a woman should be more than just “properly brought up”, however, the perfect recipe for a combination of career, ambitions and marriage is yet to be discovered. Because Esi is no longer the dependent woman, she is able to embark on her self-ambition and self-realization without hesitation; something that will be very difficult, if not impossible, for a woman who depends solely on her husband to do.

Esi’s husband Oko represents the unchanging patriarchal man, who fails to accept that everything around him is changing. Oko loves Esi dearly, not only for her beauty, but also for her independence and intelligence. But, at the same time, Oko resents her for exactly the same reasons. He struggles to understand what is going on around him. He even comes to the unfortunate conclusion that the despondent state of his marriage is due partly to the fact that he overtly expressed his love for Esi because “showing a woman you love her is like asking

er to walk all over you. How much of your love for how heavy her kicks” (11). Then he begins to wonder if his wife was really an “African woman”. Compared to the women who raised Oko, Esi’s independence is startling and even unthinkable. Nonetheless, Oko answers his own question regarding Esi’s African identity. Oko states that “she not only is, but there are plenty of them around these days...these days...these days” (12). He knows that she is still an African woman despite gaining independence from the man in her life. There is a strong sense of nostalgia implied in Oko’s thoughts by the series of ellipses surrounding the words “these days.” In part, this is nostalgia for an era in which women were relegated to the household while men were responsible for earning a living. In that era, Oko would not have felt so threatened and emasculated. The problem is even compounded by comments from his friends, who are beginning to regard him as less and less of a man because of his wife’s independence. Oko’s response to his friends’ ridicule is to rape his wife as an affirmation of his manhood — an act that leads directly to Esi’s decision to divorce him, given that he does not even apologize for it.

The introduction of marital rape raises the issue of male sexual dominance, as it expresses and actualizes the distinctive power of men over women. The concept of marital rape is quite new to the Ghanaian society. It names a probable situation women face in their various marriages but are unable to name or afraid to speak about since sexual intercourse is the prerogative of the man. Having stated in an argument that “you cannot go around claiming an idea or item was imported into a given society unless you could also conclude that to the best of your knowledge, there is not, and never was any word or phrase in that society’s indigenous language which describes that idea or item” (16), Esi is in a fix about how to psychologically deal with her experience and it is evident that the idea does not exist in any of the indigenous languages. Here, Aidoo seems to be commenting on the notion that many

African feminists copy blindly from feminists in the West³. Her reaction to this accusation is that Western feminists have enabled African feminists to confirm their own experiences and, therefore, join the fight for women's liberation.

Esi is concerned with naming the act (marital rape) and how society will perceive it. You cannot perceive what you cannot name, that is, that which has no name does not exist. That is why there is no name for marital rape in traditional society: it does not exist. Society did not recognize it as a "crime" against the woman. She belonged to her husband entirely. This situation is so widely accepted to the extent that other women would say that "any 'sane' person, especially sane woman would consider any woman lucky or talented or both, who can make her husband lose his head like that" (17). Through Esi, Aidoo questions men's sexual dominance and encourages women's sexual autonomy. Esi brings up the "meaning of sexuality within marriage against the overwhelming common sense 'knowledge'" (Olaussen 63) that "sex is something a husband claims from his wife as his right. Any time. And at his convenience" (16). The point that Aidoo seems to be making through Esi's reaction to the rape is that a woman's body belongs to her and she deserves the right to do with it as she pleases. It is certainly not up to the man to decide. Equality is achieved when both the man and woman take decisions together.

After Esi's decision to divorce Oko, she engages in an important conversation with Opokuya about divorce, the alienation of single women, female subjugation and education as a form of female empowerment. When Esi tells Opokuya of her plans to divorce Oko, Opokuya is

³ African feminists are believed to copy blindly from Western European feminists without paying attention to their own culture. Ama Ata Aidoo, for instance, is worried about the fact that anytime feminism is mentioned it is viewed as "something that has been imported into Africa to ruin the nice relationship between African women and African men." (qtd. In Arndt 30)

worried about the situation Esi would find herself in since single women are not positively regarded in the Ghanaian and African community. She reminds Esi that “unlike so many cities abroad, there isn’t much here that a single woman can do to relieve the loneliness and boredom of the long hours between the close of the working day and sleep” (57). It is unheard of for a woman not to be married; that is “women who never managed to marry early enough” (ibid). The situation becomes more pathetic when they are widows or divorcees because they are branded witches and taken through dehumanizing procedures to “cast the witchcraft out”. And, as Opokuya reiterates, “it is easy to see that our societies have had no patience with the unmarried woman. People thought her single state was an insult to the glorious manhood of our men. So they put as much pressure as possible on her” (57). A woman in such a position marries, remarries, or returns to her former husband. Otherwise, she is ostracized and she is left to die of shame and loneliness. It is not yet time for women to have all they want. We also realize that no state is comfortable for the woman, whether single, married, divorced or even educated.

Even though Esi’s independence and courage to take control of her own life is desirable, she receives strong criticism (from her family and Oko’s family) for neglecting her role as a mother since Ghanaian (African) society does not encourage the neglect of biological roles. As Acholonu proposes in *Motherism*, the woman need not neglect her biological roles but rather should focus on healing and protecting the cohesive essence of family culture, something Esi fails to do (). Like the woman’s right over her body or her sexual rights, the woman’s income, etc. the right of the child to parental care and protection from violent and abusive situations is sought. Ogyaanowa is the unfortunate child of Esi and Oko Sekyi. She has to deal with her parents’ habitual quarrels, a situation she should rather be protected from. Ogyaanowa hardly receives any form of motherly concern from her mother, Esi. Aidoo

portrays the changing roles of women and the difficulty they face in combining the emerging changing roles with the traditional ones. Esi's inability to balance her career aspirations and motherhood is unacceptable to her husband and fellow women. However, her attitude suggests a rebellion against society's prescribed roles that a woman should be responsible for training the child. In this case, Ogyaanowa becomes Oko's responsibility. Thus, Ghanaian (African) feminism is not advocating for irresponsible mothers but rather for shared responsibilities when it comes to raising children in the family, unfortunately, Esi fails in this terrain.

After Esi's divorce, she decides after an affair with Ali, to enter into a polygamous marriage because it appears to offer more freedom. She falls in love and marries Ali who already has a family but has the right through religion and tradition to have more than one wife. It is important to note that as compared to the traditional system, the woman has no choice when it comes to her marriage but Esi opts for polygamy on her own. Unfortunately, her attempt at avoiding prejudice and loneliness as a single woman fails since she ends up the same way in the polygamous marriage. In the long run, Ali cannot provide her the attention she needs because he still loves his family and is obligated to them coupled with the fact that he is a philanderer. After a breakdown and care analysis of her situation, Esi redefines her needs and her relationship with Ali after confronting him about it. Though she is still lonely, she comes to terms with the fact that her relationship with Ali "has stopped being a marriage" (197). ". Esi finds partial consolation in the fact that they had "become just good friends who found it convenient once in a while to fall into bed and make love" (197). Esi dissociates herself by stressing the importance of her career to her development, demanding her sexual rights by reacting and finally divorcing her husband, remarrying and eventually living the life of a single woman; she eventually loses the right to her daughter. The results of her actions is

neither a failure nor a success, since there are both good and bad outcomes, the problem however, is that the dilemma of the Ghanaian woman is not resolved.

Esi's best friend Opokuya represents a hybrid of the modern and traditional woman. Opokuya is a compromiser who is willing to play "the fool" in her marriage. That is to say, one of the partners (in a marriage) should sacrifice himself/herself (ambitions, dreams and all) for the other partner. Interestingly, the sacrificing partner is always the woman (59). She has a nursing career and tries very hard to combine it with her role as mother and wife. In spite of the efforts she makes, she receives little support from her husband, especially, when it comes to the use of the car. Transportation becomes a strong source of conflict for Opokuya and her husband. The mother of four, who enjoys her busy career as a state registered nurse and qualified midwife, has yet to convince her husband to purchase a car for her or give her priority when it comes to the use of the car. More than just a luxury, this car would help Opokuya be more self-reliant as well as make it easy for her to run her errands, and her husband's refusal perhaps suggests that if women are truly independent they should be able to buy their own cars instead of relying on their husbands to do so. If she earned enough, Opokuya would buy her own car, especially if the husband could not afford it: but he is required to be reasonable about the use of his car. Aidoo's main concern here is the importance of co-responsibility in the running of the home and children or a compromise that will make the burden light for the woman. Anything short of this is the perpetration of wronged womanhood and social injustice against the woman.

Despite Opokuya's obvious need for the car, Kubi is unsympathetic. He always makes sure that he has the car at his disposal even when he has no use for it. His lame excuse is that "in

most regional offices there was always a place in the car-park, marked out for the surveyor's car. As such, he was convinced that the car should be parked there all day" (22). Kubi would not even arrive on time to pick Opokuya up when he is supposed to. To make matters worse, he shows what little respect he has for Opokuya when he makes a pass at Esi, Opokuya's best-friend. Through his actions (and inactions), Aidoo criticizes men who do not take responsibility for their home and family.

When Opokuya complains to a couple of her friends that her husband does not want to give her the car for the numerous errands she has to run, she is considered spoilt. As far as those friends are concerned "it was Opokuya who was unreasonable or mad.... She should listen to the stories of women who paid for cars which their husbands then took over completely. In some cases, whisking their girlfriends around in them" (23). In their opinion, Opokuya has no right to even ask for the car, since in her case, the car comes with her husband's job and not hers. The behaviour and attitudes of such women make the feminist quest difficult and unfruitful. Opokuya dissociates herself from other women by taking her career as well as family duties seriously, even though; it was very tiring and sometimes unbearable. She is able to argue her views and points out with her husband, something most women will not do. The fact that her friends even think she is mad attest to the fact that she is different especially in thinking as well as her strong will to succeed.

Fusena, the last of the three major female characters being discussed, is closer to the subjugated woman than Opokuya. She abandons her degree and career goals to become a full time wife and mother, which allows her husband more room to focus on his burgeoning career. Fusena runs a shop established by her husband which is a source of income for her.

Burdened with the impossibility of blossoming outside the domestic sphere, she is resigned to accepting her fate. The young Muslim couple live according to tradition and much to Fusena's dismay her husband decides to perpetuate the age-old tradition of polygyny by marrying his mistress, Esi, who is a successful college-graduate. She makes an effort to fight against Ali's second marriage, but having been silent for so long and with the pressure of patriarchal conventions, she settles, once again, on a decision that favours Ali. Fusena's experience is the saddest of the three women: she is the typical example of the wronged woman. Fusena's education does very little for her self-determination and self-realization. Aidoo reveals the ambivalence in Fusena's education as it represents change and stasis at the same time. Fusena is open-minded as a result of her education but that does not make her assertive enough to pursue her career nor prevent her husband from taking a second wife.

Ali represents men who consider women as fragile, sexual beings who need men's protection. Ali pushes his wife Fusena out of her profession and he has no qualms about pursuing other women. Every journey he makes is an opportunity to be unfaithful to his wife. When he meets Esi for the first time, his interest in her is basically sexual. He does not concentrate on the problem with the travel arrangements Esi has come to talk about. When Esi takes her leave, Ali expresses fear that "the threatening storm might sweep that woman (Esi) and her car away. They both looked so frail" (7). What Ali sees is a frail and powerless woman who is in dire need of his protection. Esi becomes an object of beauty and sexual attraction instead of an intelligent, competent government statistician. Besides sexuality and fragility, there are other important things worth noting or considering about a woman; for example, her intelligence, sense of responsibility, and competence in profession. Aidoo further criticizes the objectification of women, particularly as sexual objects.

Examining Ali's actions and thoughts from a different angle, Aidoo exposes and critiques the ways in which society has made it difficult for women to admire their bodies and sexuality. A woman who takes pleasure in her body and sexuality is a whore while men can explore their sexuality and that of women. Ali observes (as he watches her dress) that, compared to his wife, Fusena, Esi is relatively at "ease" about her body. As he muses about his experiences with women from different backgrounds, he reveals that modern African women do not take pride in the beauty and uniqueness of their own bodies because "the combination of forces against that had been too overwhelming – traditional shyness and contempt for the biology of women; Islamic suppressive ideas about women; English Victorian prudery and French hypocrisy imported by the colonisers..." (90). All of these have "variously and together wreaked havoc on the mind of modern African women: especially about herself and Fusena is no exception. As far as Ali could tell, he told himself, most women behaved as if the world was full of awful things – beginning with their bodies" (Ibid). Even though Ali's concern is geared towards women exposing their bodies for his pleasure, it voices Aidoo's advocacy for the Ghanaian (African) woman to take pride in her body. By speaking through Ali, Aidoo sends an invitation to men to get involved in gender transformation by thinking through the roles and situations of women as proposed by Nnaemaka in her concept of Negofeminism (which encourages negotiation and complementarity between both genders as important to the achievement of feminist goals).

Throughout the novel, Fusena does not make any efforts to pursue her career nor speak with her husband about his promiscuous behaviour. The only time she makes an effort to fight is when she finds out that Ali is taking a second wife. She however fails at this attempt and is

forced into a polygamous marriage she was not interested in. The polygamous situation Fusena finds herself in is different from the traditional one where all the wives live in the same compound with their husband and take turns with cooking and nuptial responsibilities. Esi has her own house, while Fusena and Ali live together in their matrimonial home. Ali commutes between the two homes. Esi, the second wife, opts for this polygamous situation, which is very different from the traditional one where women were mostly forced into marriage. Both women have a source of income and so any neglect, especially on Ali's part, was more painful emotionally than financially.

When Esi tells her grandmother about her plans to divorce Oko and enter into a polygamous marriage, she is asked if "a woman's time [does not] belong to the husband?" (132). Nana's statement confirms "what Foucault calls a normalized arrangement, which affects sexual politics, and (always) indicates one group's domination over another, domination which is 'organized into a more-or-less coherent ... strategic form...'" (Gyimah 382). It is with this same view in mind that the patriarchs of Nima decided that their wives should be the ones to convince Fusena to accept Ali's proposal to get a second wife. By saying "yes... yes...yes" without any other reaction, the women are filled with pain as they give a despondent response to Fusena's interrogation of patriarchy; "It was a man's world. You only survived if you knew how to live in it as a woman. What shocked the older women though, was obviously how little had changed for their daughters – school and all!" (130). Women have to adapt to their oppressive situation in order to survive. The choice is no longer between monogamy and polygyny, Western, traditional or Islamic marriages, but between oppressive, exploitative and alienating arrangements that serve to socially control any relationship. Aidoo shows the way forward in Nana's answer to Esi's question:

“Do I think it must always be so? Certainly not. It can be changed. It can be better. Life on this earth need not always be some humans being gods and others being sacrificial animals. Indeed, that can be changed. But it would take so much. No, not time. There has always been enough time for anything anyone ever wanted to do. What it would take is a lot of thinking and a great deal of doing. But one wonders whether we are prepared to tire our minds and our bodies that much. Are we human beings even prepared to try? (134)”

Society can change positively if only it is willing to put in all its effort. It is possible for life on earth to be good for us all, both women and men. But for this goal to succeed, society needs to attend to a pressing problem of conformance. For the feminist agenda to succeed, All women (old, young, educated, uneducated, etc.) and men must be willing to change. All women should be conscious of the various oppressive situations and work together to succeed. All must be willing to try.

It can therefore be inferred from the analyses above that Aidoo encourages Ghanaian (African) women to come together to fight for their goals. In other words, feminism should not benefit a certain kind of woman but rather the consciousness of ALL women should be awakened to the need for change. Moreover, since the society is changing, women should make the effort at positive change that will either remove or ease the many burdens they face. Thus, for society to change, Aidoo insists that external revolution must be accompanied by women's personal growth.

In both novels, the main characters are educated women whose attitudes are in opposition to other women. These women do not hesitate to express their views concerning the political, marital, educational and professional settings where women are being oppressed. As such, they are in contrast to the meek, quiet and respectful traditional women. Sissie and Esi

suggest that the Ghanaian woman should be politically conscious like Sissie; she should be concerned about political decisions, imperialism, neo-colonialism and how they affect the development of Ghana and the African continent as a whole: and she should be able to take critical decisions concerning her sexuality, marriage, societal norms and expectations of the woman that does not provide her the comfortable and fulfilling existence she desires.

Aidoo's novel also exposes the experience of the educated woman (such as Esi, Opokuya or Fusena) as she searches and struggles for a point of balance between marriage and profession. She also advocates tolerance and equal respect for the single woman in the society. Aidoo also exposes the inadequacies of men in the society. But at the end of both novels, it is obvious that society is not ready for the assertive, strong-willed, educated woman.

CHAPTER FOUR

FEMINISM IN *BEYOND THE HORIZON* AND *NOT WITHOUT FLOWERS*

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses women as presented in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon (BTH)* and *Not without Flowers (NWF)*. The novels present women of various backgrounds – educated and uneducated, open minded and otherwise – as they deal with oppressive and suppressive situations. In *BTH*, there is Mara, the uneducated and naïve woman from Naka, who is abused and finally sold into prostitution by her husband Akobi; 5th Wife with a history of abortion leading to her sterility and who goes all out to save herself from widowhood rights and subsequent marriage to her late husband's brother; Randa whose quest for revenge leads her to contract HIV/AIDS and a series of women whose actions caused problems and even death for families (Cora to the Ntifors, Aggie to Pa and Ma and Pesewa's second wife to her entire polygamous family). The chapter will also examine the role of MUTE (a name that reflects the silence of society, which translated into the absence of a documentation culture) and the media in exposing and supporting women in oppressive situations. The concerns of the women as well as those of the few men in the novels are considered and, if necessary, related to the various African/Ghanaian feminist theories discussed in the first chapter. The chapter also includes a summary of Darko's contribution to the definition of the Ghanaian feminist novel. In concluding, the chapter compares the techniques of both Aidoo and Darko and how these affect the themes raised in the novels.

4.1 *BEYOND THE HORIZON (BTH)*

The novel tells the story of Mara, an uneducated young woman from the village, who ends up finding herself as a prostitute in Germany. Darko raises many issues in this novel that are central to the feminist ideology that concerns this thesis. These issues can be grouped into five – education (in relation to women), marriage, sexual politics, social vices (prostitution, human trafficking) and the patriarchal system. Darko also subtly mentions the glorification of urban areas and of the west by both urban dwellers and those from the hinterlands. This section of the chapter critically examines Darko's view and perspectives of the state of the woman and how or how not to deal with the egalitarian and oppressive situations they encounter.

Education (of women) is one of the foremost issues on the feminist agenda. This is because education brings with it self-confidence, an awareness of one's rights and economic empowerment. Even though, *BTH* does not overtly make any calls for female education, it is clear that had Mara been educated, her situation would have been very different. The majority of the misfortunes that befall Mara are a result of her lack of education and her general naiveté. Contrasting Mara with Mama Kiosk, who also appears to have no formal education, one can see that the latter has some common sense, which, sadly, Mara seems to lack. It is clear that Mara lacks the 'street-smartness' that one needs to survive in the big city and this is reiterated by the nickname that Mama Kiosk gives to her – greenhorn. Darko suggests that education alone is not the tool for the liberation of the woman but also the consciousness of women to exude self-importance, self-determination and economic independence.

The female characters in the novel are all at different social levels – from Mara, the naïve village girl, to Comfort, the educated office worker. Each of them has different fortunes and these fortunes can be linked to the amount of education (formal or picked up on the streets) they have. Mara, who for better part of the novel is the lowest on the scale, suffers the most. Comfort, with her education and office job, is the one who enjoys the most. While Mara suffers abuse, loss of self-worth, dignity and disrespect from Akobi, Comfort experiences the opposite. This situation seems to subtly suggest that the more educated a woman is, the more likely she is to strive for a fulfilling existence in this world of men. Also underscoring this is how Mara changes as she begins to grow wiser in the ways of the world. She learns how to break away from Akobi in Germany and work for herself. Through her new-found ‘education’, she also manages to find a way of getting even with him.

Another important area of concern for feminism that Darko tackles in *Beyond the Horizon* is marriage. In the novel, we are presented with a picture of the kind of marriage which many women are still trapped in today. The entire marital process seems rigged to favour the man. Mara plays no part in deciding whom she marries. In her own words: “... I was given away to this man who paid two white cows, four healthy goats, four lengths of cloth, beads, gold jewellery and two bottles of London Dry Gin to my family...(3).” It is almost as if she is ‘sold’ to the highest bidder. Some feminists have argued that the very practice of bridewealth or dowry is demeaning to the woman, since it suggests that the man is buying her. When her mother comes to tell her of the good news about a husband her father has found for her, Mara is skeptical but she has no choice.

All I did was grin helplessly because I clearly remembered the same good news as this that mother had given my older sister two years before. Found, too by my father. And my sister was now a wreck. Naturally, not all husbands made wrecks of their wives... But father, it appeared, had a different formula for choosing or accepting husbands for his daughters, which took more into consideration the number of cows coming as the bride price than the character of the man. (4)

The tradition of choosing husbands for daughters has marred Mara and her sister. The tradition that allows the father to do this also gives him the opportunity to investigate which family before allowing accepting dowries. Unfortunately for Mara and her sister, the only thing their father is interested in is the money and number of cows; things that help him pay his debt. As Mara states, "Akobi's father bought me off very handsomely" (7) and like anything that is bought, Mara was used till she could no longer recognize herself. Indeed, how many women suffering in abusive marriages have been asked by their husbands to tell them who married whom?

One of the major effects of the type of marital situation Mara finds herself in is that an unscrupulous man can take advantage of his wife (as Akobi does). The man in this marriage feels that the woman is there to be his slave and tend to his every desire. Akobi expects Mara to jump at his every command. In fact, when she fails to satisfy his (sometimes unreasonable) demands, he abuses her physically: "When I didn't bring him the bowl of water and soap in time for washing his hands before and after eating, I received a nasty kick in the knee. When I forgot the chewing stick for his teeth, which he always demanded be placed neatly beside his bowl of served food, I got a slap in the face. And when the napkin was not at hand when he howled for it, I received a knuckle knock on my forehead (19)." It is interesting to note that Akobi's behaviour is radically different when he is married to Gitte, his German wife. He is a totally different person around her – cooking, cleaning and doing all the things that he believes a man should not

do, when he was in Germany. Mara was amazed as she wondered, "...this my very own Akobi it was who, upon his white wife's commands, trotted into the kitchen" (97). Even the way he behaves towards Comfort shows that he just does not see Mara as a human being. As far as he is concerned, she is just a means to an end.

Mara's situation is even more pitiful because her upbringing has partly conditioned her to accept her condition – she sees all the abuse as "normal". Even though she does not like being maltreated, she expects it to happen, likening it to her menstrual pains. Indeed, she had been brought up to worship her husband and not doing so would have made her feel less of a woman. She foolishly declares that "It was natural, too, that when he demanded it, it slept on the concrete floor on just my thin mat while he slept all alone on the large grass mattress, since, after all, mother had taught me that a wife was there for a man for one thing, and that was to ensure his well-being, which included his pleasure. And if demands like that were what would give him pleasure, even momentarily, then it was my duty as his wife to fulfill them (13)." By revealing Mara's thoughts to us, Amma Darko raises awareness on an issue that many people go about their daily business without thinking about – that there are thousands, if not millions, of women who find themselves in Mara's situation. Darko, through her novel, calls for society to pay more attention to the plight of women and to take measures to remedy the situation. Like Aidoo and many other Ghanaian and African feminists, Darko stresses the need for 'education' for the woman.



Another matter that Darko raises in *Beyond the Horizon* is the politics of sex. In many relationships, sex is a question of power. In the novel, it is mainly the men who have control over their sex lives as well as those of their women. Akobi jumps on Mara every time he feels like it and cares not at all about how she feels. The first time the two of them meet in Germany, he has sex with her in the bathroom, while Osey and his wife are in the next room. This is a demeaning experience that makes Mara feel like a “four-penny whore”. Even while in Ghana as a newly married couple, Akobi barely looks at Mara while he has sex with her. It is obvious that it is his own enjoyment that he seeks and not their mutual pleasure.

Also, by telling us Mara’s story, Darko discusses the sexual objectification of women. “Most women see sex as inevitable part of a relationship with a man and feel obliged to have sex with their boyfriends and partners when, and how, the men want them to, even if they themselves feel disinclined” (Ampofo 147). Unfortunately for Mara, the acceptance of this obligation leads to her destruction. She is forced into prostitution and drug addiction by Akobi. She is used by all sorts of men to the point that she loses her dignity and becomes dependent on “snow”; so that Akobi can take care of Comfort. In revealing this situation, Darko reveals the destructive woman to woman dynamics instead of man to woman. Her attempt at liberating herself is a fiasco as she ends up at another brothel where the desire for “exotic body” is high. Mara does not come to this state merely because of lack of knowledge, but because of perceptions of powerlessness. Her passport has been seized and she does not have Mama Kiosk to jolt her conscience except Osey’s wife, who is not in any better condition herself. Even Osey wants to take advantage of her.

Darko subtly comments on the vice of human trafficking. Specifically the traffic in women for the purpose of prostituting them. Akobi illegally transports Comfort and Mara to Germany; one because of love and affirmation of his status and the other, to maintain that status. Many African women are deceived into travelling into foreign lands just to be sold into prostitution. Unfortunately, families back at home are not interested in how these travellers make the money they send home as long as the money is available. This problem is due partly to the glorification and desire for things western. Akobi refuses to go back to the village and help his father in the farm but does all he can to travel to Germany. He even goes to the extent of selling his father's land and borrowing just to make that journey. Even Mara considers herself a modern woman at the prospect of her pending travel to Germany. She says "so dramatically could things change; so magically could Europe work on attitudes...so did it affect my confidence; so much so that I was even able to go for a stroll around the compounds of the Ministries (54)," something she will not have had the courage to do had it not been that she was leaving for Europe. At this stage in her life, she was even ready to confront Comfort if she dared show her face. At the climax of her short-lived prestige she declares, "I, illiterate Mara, had turned into a modern woman, body and soul; a caricature of pseudo-Euro transformation that brought with its caricature pseudo-high feel. I felt a new me (55)." She realizes at the end of the novel that instead of improving on the morally upright, confident and dignified Mara, she is now someone she doesn't know; the irony of "a new me".

In this novel, Darko exposes the ways in which marriage can oppress women and lead them to destruction. She also raises the importance of education, street-wisdom and consciousness to the liberation of women. Issues of the glorification of the west, human trafficking, prostitution and

drug abuse, which are issues confronting not only Ghana but Africa and the world as a whole is also examined by Darko through Mara's experience. Darko also touches on a very sensitive issue that contributed to the enslavement of the African people. Gitte makes a statement while chatting with Mara that "when I first met your brother, Mara, he was very lazy, a very lazy African man. At first I didn't understand, because here we hear always that African people are hard workers and love hard work because God made them specially for the hard work of the world..." (99). Gitte represents the unrepentant racist Europeans who still consider Africans as hard work tools for the world, even in the nineteenth century. To realize that an idea that has caused a lot of pain to Africans through Slavery still exists suggests that Africans should be aware of the oppressive situation in the west and be wary of it. The above issues reflect Darko's contribution to the discussion of issues considered feminist in the researcher's quest of defining the Ghanaian feminist novel.

4.2 NOT WITHOUT FLOWERS (NWF)

In this novel, Darko discusses the situation of women in the 21st century Ghanaian society. She raises issues on family crises both in polygamous and monogamous marriages: childlessness, promiscuity, the sexual objectification of women and its related health risks. Darko discusses these issues in relation with mystical beliefs in witchcraft, superstition, and dreams. She also raises issues of human rights violations, the importance of the media in exposing societal evil as well as helping the victims of these evils. Darko also encourages the formation of women groups (e.g. MUTE) with the aim of researching and documenting the experiences of women as well as

supporting them. This section of the chapter discusses the feminist themes in the novel and states the novel's contribution to the description and definition of the Ghanaian feminist novel.

One of the issues that Darko examines in the novel is Marriage – a very important social institution to the Ghanaian community. The contracting of marriage and the marriage itself are taken very seriously. Therefore, families of the couple are researched in order to make sure that they are worth the association. Another factor that plays an important role in marriage is the status of the family; that is, whether there is royalty involved or not. Nana Afful's family refused his marriage and relationship with Cora because of her father's suicide. According to them, "they were royals and it was a taboo that Nana Afful would marry a woman of a family with the history of suicide" (123).

To make matters worse for Cora, Ma's mental illness in addition to Pa's suicide disqualifies her and her family from any marital relations with the Affuls. The rumours of Cora toeing the mother's line after the break-up with Nana Afful were cruel and painful. Unfortunately, Cora suffers most as a result of this history. Kwaku is married with two children and Randa has a fiancée. It is not really clear why Darko makes this distinction obvious but from a narrow feminist perspective, the women, Cora and Randa suffer most. Cora loses a man she loves leading to "a gruesome and emotional suicide" (124). Randa loses a happy childhood that makes her "blunt, square and dead" and she has never given "a smile from her heart" and certainly not "a good hearty laughter (45)."

Examining the marriage theme further, Darko gives examples of both polygamous and monogamous marriages as well as exposes the associated forms of oppression and risks for the woman. On one hand, Darko shows how the polygamous marriage of Ntifor and his wives (Penyin and Kakraba) solves an important problem for the family: childlessness. Since one of the rules in polygamy is that children of such a union belong to all the wives, the inability of one wife to conceive is concealed and she rejoices in the children of her co-wives. This was made known to Mena Penyin by Kakraba anytime the two discussed their marriage:

“Do you harbour any hatred for me after all these decades as co-wives?”

“Oh Kakraba, No,” she begged... “may the gods forbid. And may such words not reach the ears of ancestors. Hatred for you? No. Kakraba. No. A little jealousy, yes. Even till today. I am human, Kakraba. You are the mother of all his children. And if...”

“Our children, Penyin. The children I bore with him belong to us all. Our children, Penyin.” (159-160)

Thus, despite the polygamous situation, the family of Ntifor was closely knit with both wives supporting each other. Also, the children treat both mothers equally and this goes a long way to make both mothers happy. The children accept that both women are their mothers and, hence, do not discriminate against Mena Penyin.

On the other side of the divide is the more true to life polygamous marriage of Pesewa and his five wives. This marriage is not without problems. Pesewa, the wealthy man, is famous for his faithfulness to all his five wives and his refusal of sex until marriage. Yet, the unfaithfulness of one of his wives costs him and four of his wives their lives, when they contract HIV. However, it

can be argued that Pesewa is partly responsible for this situation because the unfaithfulness arises because the time he spends on each wife reduces as the number of wives increases.

Knowing she could not give birth as a result of a past mistake, the 5th wife's decision to enter a polygamous family, where she would not have the sole responsibility of bearing children, is the best that could happen to her. Why should she enter a monogamous marriage with all the expectations of children, when she knows the truth about herself? Besides, there were the added advantages of emotional and financial security. In spite of the advantages of the polygamous marriage, Darko is quick to point out the high risk associated with such marriages in an era where sexually transmitted diseases are serious health issues the society is dealing with.

However, Darko does not fail to acknowledge that it is not only polygamous marriages that hold risks for women. For instance, even though Idan and Aggie had a monogamous marriage, they both were infected with this deadly disease. This is because, Idan engages in an extra-marital affair with a girl who was also in a relationship with a man who had multiple 'sugar' mummies. The love circles show how HIV travels and how fast it can affect an entire population. Thus, what Darko seems to suggest is that mere polygamy or monogamy is not the key to happiness in marriage; happiness in marriage is the duty of the players in that marriage. Carole Boyce Davies, in *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature* (1986), states that African feminism "sees utility in the positive aspects of the extended family and polygamy with respect to child care and the sharing of household responsibility, traditions which are compatible with modern working women's lives and the problems of child care but which were distorted with colonialism and

continue to be distorted in the urban environment (9).” It is this position that Amma Darko seems to be supporting.

Closely linked to the institution of marriage is the issue of childbearing and Darko discusses it in the novel. For many people, the social importance of a human being depends on the number of children he or (more often) she has. In certain societies, childlessness is even unacceptable in the ancestral world. For many African feminist theorists, motherhood is a central part of the African woman and society as a whole but it is Acholonu (1991) who clearly states it by suggesting the term Motherism (denoting motherhood, nature and nurture). Carole Boyce Davies (1986) supports the importance of motherhood to African feminism but “questions obligatory motherhood and the traditional favoring of sons (9).” For a reason, which is yet to be established, women always take the blame and abuse for childlessness in the family. Consequently, women have to develop strategies for avoiding this stigma. This is exemplified by 5th Wife’s statement:

‘I mentioned emotional security as being one of my reasons for marrying my late husband. That was it. It alleviated the misery of unfulfilled expectancy with a younger man looking forward to having children (95).’

Aggie, on the other hand, is unable to use the same strategy to save face since she is in a monogamous marriage. Subsequently, the couple’s inability to have children puts a strain on the marriage. When Aggie insists that Idan takes fertility tests, he refuses because he wants to save himself the disgrace of knowing that he cannot have children. However, as Dina of MUTE explains during the GMG show, the woman suffers most. She says:

‘Had I known beforehand that I was barren, I would have spared myself the years of misery and anxiety I contended with while I was married to my ex-husband. I don’t wish for any woman to ever go that way. It was emotional suicide. To know you cannot conceive a child is bad enough. When you don’t know you cannot conceive a child and believing you can, you go through heaven and hell trying to, under intense watchful eyes of your husband and his family and your family, all to no avail; you live your whole life, daily dreading the sign, any little sign, which pointed to an oncoming menstruation. The waiting, the hoping, that no drop of blood would show its head. And then it does and continues to, month after month. It leaves you in emotional tatters (95).’

Even Idan’s mother, who as a woman should know better and support Aggie in this trying time, refuses because of the shame that comes with being labelled the mother of an “incomplete man, a man whose ability to inseminate his wife was being called into question; an insult to his manhood and to the womb that carried him for nine months (41).” Thus, Aggie alone suffers the shame in order to preserve her husband’s dignity. The stigma that comes with bareness is a main source of destruction of the woman. Aggie’s mothers are blamed for her childlessness: “Her grandmothers blamed us for it. That is the worst part. They concluded that our daughter’s inability to conceive was due to the many books she studied at the university. Do you know that because of our daughter, two women in the family house are dissuading their daughters from studying up to university level? They fear their daughters will also fail to bear them grandchildren”(159). Here, Darko seems to be drawing attention to the fact that it is women who are always blamed for childlessness in the home.

Another issue of concern to Darko, as portrayed by the characters in the novel, is the sexual and reproductive rights of women. This comes to the fore when 5th Wife reveals to the public that she had been using condoms with her late husband. A man in the crowd in front of the radio station becomes angry after hearing this and retorts that “I tell you, all the wahala in the world today, is

because women have ceased to be women. They want to be both men and women. You want to have your marital right with her, and she goes ordering you to wear a condom. For that alone, I refuse many times. The very fact that it was her who ordered me to wear it (99).” This chauvinist has conveniently forgotten about the rights of the woman and her desire to be treated with respect and not just as the property of a man to do with her as he pleases. Through this character, Darko exposes the thoughts of many other men who believe that women have no say in sexual and reproductive matters. She also suggests, implicitly, that it is perhaps time for such men to rethink their position.

Another of the man’s comments echoes one of the negative perceptions of feminism; that is, any attempt by the Ghanaian woman to insist on her rights is seen as an influence of western feminism on her. As far as the man in the crowd is concerned, “this is all the fault of those too known white women in Europe and America. All they need are a few crazy educated Ghanaian women who think more white than black in their black skins. But I don’t blame them. It’s the very white people ...Ei! What is the world coming to (99)?”. For this man (and, by implication, men like him) the world is full of problems and coming to an end because the woman is conscious of her rights as a woman and as a human being. Here, Darko shows that (some) men are yet to understand the need for the woman to liberate herself sexually. However, African/Ghanaian women do not copy from European or American women but as Aidoo says, “the women’s movement has definitely reinforced one’s (Ghanaian and African women) conviction about the need to push in whatever way we can for the development of women (qtd. in Arndt 2002),” while still holding on to useful culture and traditions.

In their quest to assert themselves sexually, some of the female characters in the novel use sex as a tool to achieve economic freedom. For example, Aggie and her roommate in college were only interested in making money in spite of the consequences of contracting a sexually transmitted diseases or the emotional trauma suffered by the man's family. Eventually, Aggie's desire for wealth leads to Pa's suicide and Ma's mental illness. The trail of disaster does not end there but affects Cora's chances for marriage because "at thirty-five, she should be someone's wife and mother to a couple of yelling kids (21)" and Randa's childhood.

Other female characters see sex as a way of reversing the power roles in relationships. In other words, they use their partners' desire for them to control them. Flower, for example, is able to make Pa sell all he has in order to make her happy. He even sacrifices his family for those few moments of pleasure. Far from feeling remorseful, she revels in the power she wields over him:

"To be desired by a married man meant that the man had found his wife guilty in her inability to nourish his sexual hunger...It meant that his emotions were now in disharmony with that of his wife and that the man now preferred to depend on her to nourish his sexual demands. And that was overwhelmingly pleasing and deliciously powerful. (328)

Unfortunately for her, when she eventually gets married, her husband finds himself in a similar relationship with Randa. He spends anxious hours waiting by the phone for her to call. Randa affects him emotionally; that is, "he wasn't feeling in control. And that was scary (110)." Randa was always the one who decided when they could be together. Idan was overwhelmed by her to the extent that he wondered who Randa was. It is just plain control and power play: when Randa called, he went running. The parting words from Randa are painful and cut to the core. It is all a game. Randa confesses:

And let me repeat this to you for the last time. I am not your girlfriend. I was never your girlfriend. It was a little necessary game I played on you. The game is finished, and so leave me alone.

The sexual see-saw between Randa, Idan and Aggie; Randa, Dam and his sugar mummies (including one of Pesewa's wives), only leads to a long chain of misfortunes: Pa and Pesewa commit suicide; Ma gets mentally ill; Idan, Aggie, Dam and Pesewa's four wives all contract HIV.

The consequences of the characters' actions seem to suggest that even though it is desirable that women take control of their sexuality, the extent to which that liberation is exercised is very important. In other words, women should be aware of the possible dangers that they face. This is foreshadowed by Darko's quote from Edna Buchanan:

Sex gets people killed; put in jail; beaten up; bankrupted and disgraced; to say nothing of ruined – personally, politically and professionally. Looking for sex can lead to misfortune and if you get lucky to find it, it can leave you maimed, infected or dead. Other than that, it is swell (20).

One can say, therefore, that as far as Darko is concerned, women should be careful with their sexual power since there are far-reaching consequences – both physically and emotionally.

Another issue that Darko raises in the novel is that of women being their own enemies. In staging revenge from the broken family of Ma, Darko describes a feminism that does not blame the problems of women solely on men and patriarchal systems but also on women. Aggie experiences the same emotional trauma she puts Ma through:

Find her. She must understand the price. So that when I look into her eyes, what I see in there should be deep and sincere and complete. Because only then I can give it to her. And only then can she redeem herself and find her peace. Then when I depart this earth to be with my Maker, you, my children will also be free of any fear of having a funeral like the world has come to know it for me. (21)

In addition to suffering the unfortunate fate of childlessness and a past that comes back to haunt her, she has to contend with losing her man to another woman. When she observes Idan's routine of waiting by the phone for Randa to call, she experiences the "first bout of excruciating pain inside her chest (104)." What was most heart breaking was the fact that this was taking place in their "matrimonial bedroom (105)." For Aggie, the pain was maddening (106); the same pain that led to Ma's mental illness. Using the example of Ma and Aggie, Darko reveals the emotional trauma that women can inflict on one another.

Darko also raises the issue of human rights abuse by the so called religious institutions such as the WCS, who capitalize on the plight of disturbed and frustrated families to make money. The unfortunate ones are the women who are believed to be witches or possessed by evil spirits who give mental illness. The terrible experience Ma and other women suffer at the hands of some of these false prophets and healing churches is bluntly mentioned by Darko.

To give us a view of the situation at WCS, Darko introduces an old woman who has been "a regular observer of many similarly frustrated and helpless sons and daughters who had made the mistake of bringing their mothers, grandmothers and aunts there (27)." With the help of the old farmer and his son, the three siblings are able to save their mother from the mental, emotional and physical abuse she experienced in the camp that "Whips to Conquer Satan." "The idea of

subjecting the person to the entire whipping is to make the physical body an uncomfortable abode for the evil spirit to continue its occupation. Which, it is hoped, will force it out (31).” The extent of the abuse of the women in these camps is described into detail when Kwaku and the old man go to steal Ma from WCS. They observe;

“On the floor, where the farmer’s son had pointed, was a figure. She was frail and huddled on a mat on the bare floor, fast asleep. There was no pillow for her head...She was about sixty, with skeletal features, and completely bald, the hair on her head having been shaved off. Around each of her ankles, was an iron ring linked to a thick iron chain. Kwaku’s eyes followed the length of the chain to its opposite end. It was hooked through a hole in a huge blunt iron rod buried halfway into the concrete floor in the center of the hut. There were other metal hooks in the hole from the other chained ankles. No wonder the wooden door was never locked. There was no need to (27).”

Kwaku, Cora and Randa are able to save their mother from such inhumane act but how many other families can do the same? Unfortunately, the story was not reported in the papers as suggested by the presence of the reporter, Beam. Sadly also, these false religious institutions receive more publicity than those that question their ethics and procedure for exorcising the devil. According to the old farmer, “they (WCS) have employed people who do a wonderful public relations job for them all over. Some operate around the psychiatric hospitals and target visitors seen to be well-to-do. They adopt all kinds of ways to convince these people that they are wasting their time and money at the hospital and recommend the camp (31).” As a form of creating awareness and drawing attention to the plight of women who are branded witches and mad, Darko’s exposure should have included the media discussion as with 5th wife’s.

Darko suggests that the media and non-governmental organizations have a role to play in the feminist struggle in the country. She does this by re-employing MUTE, the non-governmental

organization which appears in her third novel, *Faceless*. The organization provides support for women in various situations while gathering information on various experiences of women. The media's role in supporting women in their struggle is also demonstrated by the role of Sylv Po and Muff. Darko suggests MUTE and/or other NGO's and the media as alternative interventions to the state and international aid. When 5th Wife contacts Muff, Sylv Po's producer, MUTE is invited to be a part of the process. Their role is to document and to a large extent support 5th Wife in dealing with the situation of her abuse through widowhood rites and its follow up marriage to her husband's brother. When Destine decides to embark on a research on "widow inheritance," She goes to MUTE to facilitate her work. Even though she has another project of revenge on her mind, her trust in the NGO reinforces Darko's need to draw attention to the undocumented struggles of the abandoned and discarded in society.

Darko discusses all these issues in the light of belief in dreams, superstition, curses, as well as the humour that comes with the Ghanaian society. In fact, most of these beliefs become the vehicle that moves the plot in the novel. The revenge procedure began as a result of the unsettling dreams of Cora:

"Cora started having a haunting, vivid dream, in which Ma had died and had been buried. We held a funeral for her but her spirit remained restless, hovering the earth and shedding tears because of what we, her children had done." (35)

Cora's dream is Ma's message to her children to save her life while making theirs better. Dreams become a medium of sending messages to people. Aggie has dreams about her wedding day, the heavy rain that fell and the child who died on that day as a result of lightening. In the epilogue, Ma gives an explanation to Aggie's sad wedding day. A revelation that shocks Aggie:

Do you know what prayer I prayed?...That thunder would rumble and roar after every flash of lightning and bring down my drops of tears as heavy falling rain upon your head. That whenever you looked back upon your special day, it wouldn't be the joys it brought with it that you would recall, but the tears and sorrows. Did it rain heavily on your wedding day? (368)

Amidst these superstitions and the humour of the listeners that gathered in front of Harvest FM, Darko lightens the depth of depressive reaction of the reader as she examines the oppressive state of women in Ghana.

In *NWF*, Darko suggests that women's liberation from oppression should be relevant, not only to the educated or "street-wise" women, but also the uneducated and naïve in the society. Therefore, Darko complements Aidoo's "Academic feminism"¹ by exploring social feminism. It can be surmised from Darko's novels that the Ghanaian feminist novel considers uneducated women in the society and how they deal with issues of marriage, sex and economic dependence. Feminism in Ghana also portrays women who know their sexual rights and are ready, and confident enough, to demand it – as the example of 5th Wife, who takes advantage of this right and saves herself from HIV, shows.

In addition, even though Darko portrays women who have sexual power over their men, she also subtly comments on the misapplication of women's sexual freedom. Women (Flower/Aggie and her roommate, Randa) are degrading themselves with this opportunity for sexual equality instead

¹ Academic feminism is one that focuses on women with academic backgrounds or those in advantageous institutional designations such as media women, entertainers, non-academic professionals, women in politics, union leaders etc. For further reading: Stacey, Judith. "Is academic feminism an oxymoron?" in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. The university of Chicago Press: 2000, Vol 25, No. 4. 1189-1194
Leffler, Gillespie and Ratner. *Academic Feminists and the Women's Movement*. Ann Leffler, Dair L. Gillespie and Elinor Lerner Ratner: 1973.

of using it as a tool for liberation, when it is needed; for example, in the situation in which Mara found herself. In short, Darko seems to be saying that sexual rights do not mean prostitution, especially, in the era of STDS.

Darko includes, in the Ghanaian feminist novel, discussions on issues of human trafficking; especially, the traffic in women for prostitution and the glorification of the West. She also includes the effects of patriarchal norms and belief in witchcraft, superstition and dreams on women in their day to day experiences. Darko briefly mentions the issue of widowhood rites in relation to Pesewa's wives especially 5th Wife. A fascinating aspect of Darko's feminism is the role humour plays in the discussion of the various social issues she raises. In spite of the situation and problems of women, there is room for humour, which soothes. Her use of humour will be discussed in the next section of the chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: DEFINING THE GHANAIA FEMINIST NOVEL

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the description of the Ghanaian feminist novel. It describes the characters that recur in the genre, the situations they encounter, the decisions they take and outcomes. It also looks at the conflicts in the novel, the kinds of men and the themes that are characteristic to the genre. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further study into the genre.

From the analysis of the four novels, the Ghanaian Feminist Novel is a genre based on the premise that the emancipation of Ghanaian women is paramount to the development of the nation. It examines the various social institutions and their effects on the development and liberation of women and expresses aims of raising consciousness, revealing the woman's concern about issues of development in the country and her role in that development; all of which is geared toward societal transformation.

The issue of culture and change is the main source of conflict in the Ghanaian Feminist Novel. The genre exposes the problem of reconciling the changing roles of women in the society with the traditionally accepted ones. As more and more women get educated, their roles and perceptions in their various communities continue to change. However, it is obvious from the novels that men are finding it difficult to understand and accept these changes leading to the constant conflicts between the men and the women in the Ghanaian feminist novel. The conflicts

differ depending on the situation the women and men are in. The woman's situation also determines her reaction to the problems she encounters.

5.1 CHARACTERS IN THE GHANAIAN FEMINIST NOVEL

The major characters in the Ghanaian Feminist Novel are usually women. These women, especially the protagonists, are predominantly educated. The female characters can be grouped into two main categories: Educated and Uneducated.

The educated women category can be further divided into two. The first is the Educated-conscious-fighters who are ready to challenge social norms notwithstanding society's disapproval and criticism. Examples of such characters are Sissie, Esi, Cora, Randa, and 5th Wife. The second category consists of women who try to combine the modern/changing roles of women with the traditionally accepted roles. However, they encounter challenges either in the pursuance of achieving a balanced combination of traditional and modern roles. They are placed in the Hybridized educated women group in which Opokuya and Fusena belong.

The uneducated female characters in the Ghanaian feminist novel can also be identified under two sub categories. One identifies women who are not educated and not conscious of any rights or the need to protect and defend themselves in the face of oppression. Examples are Mara and Ma who play major character roles in *Beyond The Horizon* and *Not Without Flowers* respectively. The second category – uneducated but street-wised women– consists of women

such as Mama Kiosk, who are not educated but have gained a high level of consciousness about their roles and place as women through difficult street life experiences. Included in this category are women who have various forms of informal/traditional education and experience in the issues faced by the educated ones. One can name characters like Esi's grandmother and mother, Oko's mother and sisters, Mara's mother, Panyin and Kakraba Nti for, and Pesewa's other four wives.

The characters in the Ghanaian Feminist Novel also include women's groups who play crucial roles depending on the problems encountered by the major characters. Two women's groups are notable: the wives of the patriarchs of Nima and MUTE. The former's role is to make sure that culture and traditions are upheld especially by the younger generation. The wives of the patriarchs of Nima convince Fusena to allow, Ali to take a second wife mainly because their religion gives him the right to do so. They, however, sympathize with the younger generation on the lack of change in the status and position of women in spite of education. The latter is a women's organization whose crucial role is documenting the experiences of women as well as supporting them in every way they can. MUTE, unlike the Nima wives, makes sure that women are not subjected to inhuman treatment in the name of tradition but also to document it for posterity and statistics.

Also noteworthy in the Ghanaian feminist novel is the manner in which male characters are portrayed. The male characters in the genre can be grouped into two: the traditional chauvinist/sexist men and the modern considerate ones, who realize that society (including

women) is changing and have therefore made adjustment for those changes. However, the latter is hardly found in the Ghanaian feminist novel, while the former can be identified in all four novels. Examining the men in all four novels, only two fall under the modern considerate category. These men are found in *Not Without Flowers*. Ntifor and Kwaku can be considered responsible, caring, respectful and faithful to their wives and families.

Meanwhile, the traditional chauvinist/sexist men abound in the Ghanaian feminist novel because the genre focuses on exposing societal norms that give men the leverage to oppress women. In *OSK*, Sissie encounters men who try to shut her up as she challenges their ideas and perceptions about Africa and Europe. To these men, Sissie is not an African woman because she is outspoken and has considerable knowledge about the issues confronting Africa and is not afraid to challenge these men in any discussion.

Contributing to the characterization of men in the Ghanaian Feminist Novel, *Changes* presents Oke, who is quite tolerant of Esi's lifestyle. But it is obvious that he never really understands his wife when he rapes her in a bid to regain his position as the man and head of his family. He complains about Esi's refusal to have more children and the fact that she does not have time for him and their daughter. To assert himself, he rapes Esi. Despite his shortcomings, he is more tolerant of the changing roles of women in the Ghanaian society as compared to Kubi and Ali.

Kubi is disrespectful to his wife and would not share in the responsibility of picking up their three children from school, in spite of the backbreaking job she does at the hospital and the lack of easily accessible transportation. He even attempts to sleep with Esi at a time when she is most vulnerable. On his part, Ali hardly spends anytime at home with his family. Always on the road, he has no qualms about having sexual affairs with other women. In essence, he is the representation of sexist men in the society, who consider women as nothing but sexual objects.

The list of chauvinist/ sexist men continues in NWF where we meet Pa, Dam and Idan. Pa is a good and responsible husband until he meets Flower. He basically abandons his family over his obsession with Flower and finally commits suicide. Dam prostitutes himself to elderly women, contracts HIV and finally ends up infecting other people. Idan commits adultery with Randa and is infected by the HIV virus and Pesewa dies of AIDS.

Akobi is the most chauvinist and insensitive of all the men in these novels. His disrespect for the woman is at a more degrading and painful level. Akobi abuses Mara sexually, verbally, emotionally and physically. He even goes as far as selling her into prostitution and getting her hooked on cocaine. In addition, he uses Gitte to get his citizenship papers in Germany and spends Mara's hard-earned money on Comfort, the love of his life. Thus, it can be said that the Ghanaian Feminist Novel portrays oppressive and chauvinist men.

5.2 CONFLICTS IN THE GHANAIAN FEMINIST NOVEL

In examining the conflicts in the genre, two categories will be used. These are the Fighters and the Passive Accepters. The Fighters are those who find ways of dealing with their problems in spite of the consequences. This category includes Sissie, who is in conflict with the men around her because she has considerable and growing knowledge about her continent and the western world and will not hesitate to speak her mind. In fact, the whole novel is her perception of the world and her bid to challenge the men for the various decisions. This behavior is rather strange to African men who expect women to be silent, submissive and modest and since Sissie is anything but that. As a result of this, Sissie is not considered as an African woman by the men she encounters on her journey, including her “lover”.

Esi is from *Changes* and she is also a fighter. While Sissie battles with men over political issues and third world knowledge, Esi encounters marital, professional and social conflicts. She is in conflict with her husband who wants her to have more children and spend time with him and be at his disposal when he needs her, instead of spending her time and energy building her career. She is also in conflict with the men in her profession who feel she is invading their territory. These, coupled with the fact that she accuses her husband of rape and then finally divorces him. Her mother and grandmother are quick to point it out to her that women in the Ghanaian society do not behave in that manner. In spite of their advice, Esi does not relent on pursuing her aspirations to self-realization. Esi's identity as an African woman is questioned by Oko's family, Oko's friends and the society. Unfortunately for Esi, her second marriage to Ali leaves her lonely and unhappy but she is forced to live with it.



Like Esi, Opokuya has problems in her marriage but over an entirely different issue. Opokuya's conflict with her husband is over the issue of the use of his car. Kubi refuses to share his car with her even when she needs to run a lot of errands and this becomes the main source of contention in their marriage. Kubi also rejects the idea of buying her a car. Fortunately for the couple, they have a chance at building a stronger marriage when Esi solves their car conflict by giving her old car to Opokuya.

The last fighter is Pesewa's 5th Wife, who is in conflict with her co-wives and Peswa's family. She refuses to subject herself to their widowhood rites and also refuses to marry Pesewa's younger brother. Her decision causes a rift between her and her in-laws leaving her unsafe and on the run. She even has to wear a disguise before she can visit Muff and also attend the GMG radio show. 5th Wife's discussion of contraceptive use exposes an ongoing conflict between men and women about who should make the decisions concerning sexual intercourse. The issue is not really settled by the end of the programme but the idea is that both sexes have the right to decide.

Passive Accepters are those who are indifferent about their situations or those who accept societal prescriptions without questioning. Mara follows to the latter, the prescription of a woman by the society and she suffers dearly for it. Instead of rejecting Akobi's abuse, she sees it as a process of refinement, which will make her a true and responsible Ghanaian woman. Unfortunately for Mara, her passive acceptance of her state spells her doom. The only foreseeable future for her is further degradation and death.

Also, Fusena passively accepts her husband's infidelity including his decision to take a second wife. She, however, makes an attempt at preventing Ali's second marriage but is unsuccessful because their religion and society gives Ali the leverage to do so. Ma passively accepts Pa's extra-marital affair until he commits suicide and she loses her mind. And finally, Aggie (Flower) suffers the same fate when her husband starts an affair with Randa.

Conflicts in the Ghanaian Feminist Novel arise from the situations in which the characters find themselves. Therefore in defining the Ghanaian Feminist Novel, one must describe and define the characters that recur and the exact situations in which they are. Thus, the nature of the character and the situation in which they are placed determine their reaction that could lead to either a conflict or a passive acceptance.

5.3 THE SITUATIONS OF WOMEN IN THE GHANAIAAN FEMINIST NOVEL

The women in these novels are generally financially independent. However, Mara presents the exception to the general situation of financial independence in the Ghanaian Feminist Novel. Her character and situation was developed with the purpose of exposing the maltreatment of women in certain homes by their husbands. Mara needed a lot of things: clothes, shoes and other basic things a woman needs but lacks them because she has a husband who does not care about her. And she does not have any job that provides her with money; except for a few foodstuffs she gets from Mama Kiosk for helping her. She, however, begins to earn money for her own upkeep and that of her family when she is able to free herself from Akobi's bondage. It is important to note that all of Darko's novels are replete with women who are crippled economically. In *Faceless*,

Maa Tsuru forces her daughter, Fofo, to leave home to fend for herself and to allow her mother raise her younger sister Baby T. However, the same poverty forces their mother again, to give Baby T away to fend for herself in Agbogbloshie. In *The Housemaid*, Darko again addresses the dilemma women face when they try to establish economic independence. She depicts women who turn against and manipulate each other, largely because of the lack of education and opportunities afforded them by a patriarchal society.

From a feminist perspective, a woman's financial independence is very important in building confidence in her ability to survive without the support of a man. Financial independence gives the woman considerable courage to resist oppressions especially from their husbands. The following women; Esi, Opokuya, Fusena, Mama Kiosk, Comfort, Cora and the Mute women all have a source of income that makes them financially independent. Esi is a government statistician, Opokuya is a nurse, Fusena, Mama Kiosk and Cora run shops but Cora is also a teacher and Comfort works at the ministries. Throughout *OSK* and *NWF*, Sissie, Randa and 5th Wife live comfortably without any financial problems. Sissie is a student who travels to Europe on a scholarship, while Randa is a student who is provided for by her brother and sister.

Unfortunately, the financial independence of the professional does not save her from patriarchal prejudice. For example, Sissie battles with her male counterparts on issues of colonialism and neo-colonialism, imperialism, racism, and other political issues that affect the country even though society expects her to be seen and not heard. Esi also suffers discrimination and insults from her male counterparts, especially because she has permeated a male dominated profession.

Whether monogamous or polygamous, Marriage is another source of anguish for women. Mara suffers the worst form of oppression in her marriage. She finds herself in an abusive (emotionally, sexually, physically and verbally) marriage but continues to stay on because she believes that as a woman, she is obliged to obey societal prescription concerning the role of the woman. Coupled with that is the fact that she thinks she has nowhere to go. Therefore, in assuming that Akobi will make her a “proper woman”, she gives Akobi the mandate to destroy her and he does. Darko also takes a look at women who avoid marriage and its complications. In *The Housemaid*, Tika does not get married but keeps a number of men for her use when she needs them.

However, in *Changes*, Esi, Opokuya and Fusena encounter different situations. Esi is in a monogamous marriage with a man she does not love. Instead of devoting her time and energy to her husband, as society expects, Esi would rather spend more time on her job than with her husband and daughter. She also has to deal with the issue of marital rape and divorce. Unfortunately for her, her shift to polygamy was also not successful. Opokuya is in a marriage where there is a daily argument about who should use the car at their disposal. Fusena is in a seemingly peaceful relationship with her promiscuous husband until he decides to take a second wife.

NWF portrays various marital situations that go sour. Ma and Pa’s marriage is plagued by adultery and ends in suicide and mental illness. Pesewa and his four wives are infected with HIV except for his 5th wife who is being forced into marriage with Pesewa’s brother. Aggie and Idan

suffer an unhappy marriage because they could not have children and then Idan starts an affair with Randa. In a bid to solve that problem, she suggests that Idan takes a fertility test but he refuses, even though he knows that Aggie would be blamed for their inability to have children. The only family that sticks together in spite of all the difficulties are the Ntifors who have managed to build strong relations in their polygamous situation.

The Ghanaian Feminist Novel also portrays women in political situations. Among all the women in the four novels selected for this thesis, it is only Sissie who gets involved in political issues and argument. She becomes the political mouthpiece of feminism as portrayed in these novels. The difficulties she encounters in a bid to be heard expose male domination in politics. Also, the fact that she is the only woman in all four novels to focus on politics reflects the low representation of women in Ghanaian politics. Therefore, Sissie's political presence exposes Ghanaian feminists desire for more women to get involved in political activities and discussions.

There are only a few women in the genre who encounter difficulties because of their religion. In *Changes*, Fusena is forced into a polygamous marriage because the Muslim religion allows the man to have more than one wife. In *Not Without Flowers*, religion is used by people to infringe on the human right of women considered to be witches or possessed by Satan. The religious organization, WCS (Whip to Conquer Satan) continues to physically abuse women in the pretext of freeing them from the satanic spirit that possesses them.

The Ghanaian Feminist Novel also portrays women in various sexual relations, some of which are very complicated. For instance, Sissie is confronted with the issue of lesbianism during her

stay in Germany. Though she refuses Marija's advances, she wonders how she gets to that point and wishes she were a man. Marital rape also takes center stage when Esi is raped by Oko. This experience, coupled with other marital problems they were facing, totally extinguishes Esi's already waning interest in the marriage and leads to their divorce. In *BTH*, Mara is sexually abused and sold into prostitution in Germany by Akobi. She also has to witness her husband's sexual episodes with Gitte, Akobi's German wife. *NWF* presents an interesting sexual cycle. Flower has sexual relations with Pa that leads to his suicide, and then Randa sets out on a revenge that threatens all involved. Dam sleeps with Pesewa's second wife and other elderly women; then with his girlfriend, Randa. Second wife sleeps with Pesewa and Pesewa with his other four wives. Randa has sex with Idan and Idan with his wife. Apart from 5th Wife, who insisted on the use of a condom during intercourse, all involved in this cycle contract HIV/AIDS.

To conclude, it is important to mention that the decision and choices made by these women and their outcomes depend mainly on their level of education and consciousness of the traditional as well as the changing roles of women in their societies.

5.4 THEMES OF THE GHANAIAN FEMINIST NOVEL

A number of themes emerge from the Ghanaian Feminist Novel. These include the following:

The Ghanaian Feminist Novel advocates the importance of education in building Ghanaian women's consciousness. It also stresses on the need for women to support each other by building each other's consciousness through informal and formal avenues. The essence of educating the

woman extends to importance of the woman recognizing her role as her own spokesperson and agent as she reveals the validity of women's own interpretation of their experiences and acknowledges their struggle asserting their status in the society in relation to men.

Marriage and motherhood also receive a lot of attention in the Ghanaian Feminist Novel. It exhibits discomfort at the institutionalized injustice towards women such as the brutality of polygamy and monogamy, domestic violence and widowhood rites. It also insists on women's right to decide which marriage they want, how they want it to be and whether to fight or leave when the marriage institution becomes too oppressive. The Ghanaian Feminist Novel raises the importance of childbearing and responsible motherhood to the Ghanaian feminist. However, it also stresses the need for women to assert their reproductive rights in determining when they should have children or whether they should in the first place.

Closely related to the above is the issue of sexuality. The Ghanaian Feminist Novel stresses the importance of women's sexual self-determination as well as sexual equity and sexual responsibility in the era of HIV/AIDS. It protests sexual objectification of women, prostitution and marital rape. The Ghanaian Feminist Novel also suggests that sexual liberation should not lead to sexual promiscuity. Women should learn to exercise their sexual rights in a dignified manner.

Again, the genre raises concern about the controversy surrounding the changing roles and positions of women in the Ghanaian society. The Ghanaian Feminist Novel suggests that the status of the woman will improve if she is socially and economically empowered. Thus, it emphasizes the need for women to be socially and economically independent and self-reliant instead of being dependent on men. It also exhibits the dilemma of the modern Ghanaian woman about feminist ideas and attitudes as well as the right channels to take and decisions to make in the quest for the liberation of women. Also crucial to the liberation of the Ghanaian woman is the genre's identification of women's own contribution to their oppression by giving instances of conflict between women.

The concerns of the Ghanaian Feminist Novel also include political issues and social vices. It introduces women as thinkers and commentators on political issues. Women in the Ghanaian feminist novel have aims of reducing the effects of neocolonialism that is evident in the negative impact of economic globalization, the continuing economic decline, rising levels of poverty, aid dependency and foreign domination of economic decision-making in Ghana and other African countries. Women in the genre are also concerned about issues of racism and the glorification of the west. The Ghanaian Feminist Novel raises a protest against the trafficking in women and children.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Aidoo and Darko realize that some of the traditional customary practices that work against the advancement of females are difficult to abandon. The failures of the women in the selected

novels reveal the strong grip patriarchy has on the society. Aidoo suggests that the educated Ghanaian and professional Ghanaian woman face a two-sided struggle that reduces her choices in the situations she encounters instead of increasing those choices. Darko also implies that attention should be paid to the experiences of the uneducated and semi-educated women in the country. One can conclude, then, those women's "voices" are still not being heard clearly because of the patriarchal nature of the Ghanaian society, which drowns those "voices." In effect, suppressing women appears to be the norm in most communities. What, then, is the way forward for the Ghanaian woman?

In examining the novels in the light of Ogundipe-Leslie's "*Female writer and Her Commitment*" and Showalter's "*The Feminist Poetics*," the following were discovered. Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* best encapsulates the concerns that Ogundipe-Leslie requires of the feminist writer in Africa. However, Aidoo's second novel, *Changes*, and Amma Darko's two novels expresses varied concerns that can be identified with those commitments. On the other hand, all four novels meet the Feminist and the Female criteria of Showalter's classifications. The novels do not fall under the Feminine phase because rather than focusing on equaling the intellectual achievements of the male culture, the writers set out to protest male standards by exposing female experiences.

The definition of the "Ghanaian Feminist Novel" provides information on the existence of feminist novels in Ghanaian literature and what constitute the Ghanaian concept of feminism in relation to the characters, situations, conflicts and themes in the novels. The themes and

characters suggest that feminism in Ghanaian fiction reflects the social situation in the country but also reveals its uniqueness in the form of liberation that is desired for the Ghanaian woman. The relevance of the definition to the Ghanaian society is also evident in the fact that most of the themes discussed in the novels are major issues of concern listed in *The Women's Manifesto for Ghana* (2004). The results imply that there are regional variations in feminism and even further variations can be identified in one particular region, in this case, Africa. It can be stated that the criteria for identifying the Ghanaian feminist novel can be used in feminist examinations of other African novels but one expects variations in the way the characters and themes are developed and discussed.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Throughout this research, feminist theories have suggested that the depictions of African women in literature by African women writers differ from images presented by their male counterparts. They suggest that women do not play major roles in male authored novels unless their roles are related to the development of major male characters. Also, women in male authored novels often are either prostitutes or obedient subservient wife and mother. Generally, it is suggested that women in such novels do not have a face, a voice and an identity. It would be interesting, therefore, to undertake a comparative study on the representation of women in a Ghanaian male authored and the Ghanaian female authored novel. It would also be worthwhile to make a comparative study of the Ghanaian feminist novel with the African-American feminist novel which will help in establishing the link or otherwise between either Black or African American feminism and African feminism.

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