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THE LIBERATION OF THE AFRICAN FEMALE MIND: A STUDY OF MABEL DOVE-DANQUAH'S SHORT STORIES

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is the result of my original research, except for references to other studies, which have been accordingly acknowledged, and that no part of it has been published or presented as part of the award of any other degree in any university.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God, my parents, Joseph K. Wiafe and Kate Wiafe, and to my siblings. This thesis is also dedicated to **KWABENA SENYAH**.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates four short stories and other non-narrative texts of Mabel Dove-Danquah in light of her contribution as a feminist liberationist and her attempt to liberate the African female through her works as a writer, journalist and legislator. The main aim of the project is to critically examine the stylistic choices the writer makes in the selected short stories, and how these reflect her radical commitment and agency to the cause of the African female. The Study concludes that using character, theme, narrative perspective and motif, Mabel Dove-Danquah advocates, in a radical way, freedom for women in general and the Ghanaian woman in particular.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Gendered discrimination against women is one phenomenon that defies continental, national, cultural, racial and religious boundaries. It is probably as old as the Earth. Wherever women have lived, they have suffered discrimination in one way or the other. This discrimination has often been given expression in the form of the stereotypical roles that have been forced on women in their various societies–as wives, mothers, homemakers among others.

Consequently, women the world over have over the years developed strategies through which they have fought to free themselves from the yoke of gendered discrimination. One tool that has proven useful in this fight against discrimination is prose fiction. In this regard, Ghanaian feminist writer, Mabel Dove-Danquah hereafter referred to as DD, is relevant. DD made her focus on women very clear. As far as she was concerned, the women of her time needed to be empowered to be bold and assertive to add their quota to national discourse. As Yitah (2013) observes, DD does not only create "…women of reason, knowledge and decisive action", but also, "…portrays subversive, radical, resourceful and strong women who resist attempts by males to define, silence or subdue them." (162) This thesis, therefore, sets out to do a gendered analysis of four selected short stories of DD with a view to exploring how she uses her short stories to advocate freedom for women in general, and the Ghanaian woman in particular.

1.1 Background to the Study

Female writers have always existed side-by-side with their male counterparts anywhere in the world. However, a careful study of their works would reveal that female writers have not enjoyed the same prominence accorded male writers. The female writers and their works are

often relegated to the background. One argument that has often been offered for the lack of critical interest in the works of female writers is that their works do not espouse "universal themes." The case of African female writers is no different. As Brown (1981) correctly notes, "the women writers of Africa are other voices, the unheard voices rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in the repetitive anthologies and the predictably male-oriented studies in this field" (3). Brown's observation only goes to confirm sentiments expressed elsewhere about the lack of interest in the works of female African writers.

During the struggle for independence in Ghana between the 1930s and 1950s, for instance, some writers of the period used their writings to criticise colonial rule. In studies of the colonial period, one observes that nationalist writers like J. B. Danquah, J. E. Casely Hayford, R. E. Obeng among others spoke against the colonialists' denigration of African intellect, traditions and religious practices. However, one woman writer vigorously voiced her displeasure, not only about the colonialists, but also about the treatment of women in write ups around the same period. She was Mabel Dove-Danquah. Even though her male counterparts advocated the need for national liberation, she was radical in her quest, not for only national liberation but also for the liberation of the African woman as well. She registered her displeasure at the subjugation of the African female and used her writings as a platform to challenge the system. The African female mind, as far as DD is concerned, needs to be liberated in the sense that her mind has been pre-occupied with the belief that she is inferior to the man. This mentality, according to her, needs to be changed and the tool to achieve this is formal education–a theme that runs through most of her writings. From all indications, DD was an outspoken figure in her time. Yitah (2013) notes that Mabel Dove-Danquah ''was a very visible person in her time'' (164). Yitah could not have put it any better. DD was very outspoken, especially in her writings and her involvement in

parliamentary affairs where she made several bold speeches in favour of women and their liberation. She literally challenged the status quo that seemed to stifle female expression and fought for the freedom of the African female. The question, then, is if she was that visible, assertive and vibrant as the records show, why is it that today, she appears relatively diminished when compared to her male counterparts? The answer is not far-fetched: it is as a result of subjugation, an attempt by society to silence her and other female writers, rendering them the "…unheard voices rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in the repetitive anthologies and the predictably male-oriented studies…." Brown (1981:3)

In the 1930s and beyond, DD wrote for many newspapers and magazines not only for her Ghanaian reading public but also for other West African countries. Her newspaper articles, the media and her career as a politician were the main platforms through which she propagated her message of the liberation of the African female mind. It is on record that she wrote for *The Times of West Africa* and the *Ladies Corner*, which was later changed to the *Women's Corner*. In spite of the contribution, she still remained largely unknown compared to her male counterparts.

But if female African writers are "…unheard voices rarely discussed'' as stated by Brown (1981:3), African women are even more stereotyped and subjugated in African literature itself. This is, usually, done through the roles assigned them in the works. In most instances, African women are not allowed roles beyond what is traditionally perceived as normal. They are the mistresses of married men; they are the wives in polygamous marriages; they are the mothers whose roles do not go beyond childbirth and housekeeping; and they are the seer-grandmothers and so on. This is exactly the view Pandey (2004) espouses when she states that "…the woman is subordinated in West African Literature," adding that, ''in rare instances, when she is celebrated,

it is for her ability to conform to traditional roles and expectations, such as getting married and bearing children, sons, in particular–for which she is generally rewarded'' (114).

The import of Pandey's observation is that the African woman has been cast into a mould by her patriarchal society, a mould into which she is expected to fit snugly, and she is not allowed to deviate from it. Per this mould, she is expected to play a certain role that essentially complements that of her man: she must be a submissive wife to her husband, she must do the cooking for him, she must do the washing and cleaning for him, and she must bear him children. Her role is thus, predetermined, and she must adhere religiously to it or she is considered a failure. We find a typical example of this in Amu Djoleto's *Money Galore* (1975) in which a successful, independent career woman is presented as one who must beg a married man, Abraham Kofi Kafu, for love. It is as though the fact that the woman is a success at her career is not relevant so long as she is not married or attached to a man in a way.

In "Anticipation", DD presents us with a radical female character who takes a second bride price from her polygamous husband. The radical nature of this female character is seen against the background that it is unusual, even unheard of for a woman whose bride price has already been paid, to use cunning and trickery to obtain a second bride price from the same man. That is exactly what Effua does. In the story, the said husband, chief of Akwasin, Nana Adaku II, already has forty wives and the sheer numbers get him mixed up to the extent that he calls them by other names. During the celebration of his twentieth year of ascension to the throne, the chief, upon spotting a lady dancing, instantly arranges through his linguist to pay in advance half of her dowry. It is only after the lady takes the rest of the money that very night that she discloses her identity as one of the chief's wives, beating him at his own game.

In "Payment", a short story, DD presents a widow who has been deceived by medicine men who claim they can cure her son of his illness. By slapping the last medicine man for extorting a huge sum of money from her, this radical character "violates" traditional roles of conduct for women, and attracts the entire village's attention by her action. The woman's courage surprises the entire village since no woman has had the temerity to attack a man. The woman's victory in this story signals a new phase in the female crusade of subverting established male supremacy.

DD's biography as well as her parliamentary contributions gives us an insight into the stories she wrote and kind of radical female characters she presented. She was known to have encouraged women to "…break with form… and fight for their rights" *Women's Corner* (1931-34). It was no wonder that she herself broke with form and left her marriage to J. B. Danquah, a feat she achieved largely because she was educated and economically empowered.

We find a striking parallel between DD and Mariama Ba as far as literary advocacy is concerned. In Ba's *So Long a Letter* (1981), Ramatoulaye the protagonist, writes a letter to her friend about how she has been able to free herself from the shackles of polygamy by seeking a divorce and going ahead with her life as a teacher. There is no shred of doubt that Ramatoulaye's survival after leaving her husband largely hinges on her education, which makes her economically independent.

The relevance of Ba's story to this study lies in the fact that even though she and DD wrote in different historico-literary time zones, the issues explored are the same. DD proposed education and economic independence as the tools for female emancipation, and we see the same views espoused by Ba in *So Long a Letter*. Again, it is also clear that DD wrote mostly for English West Africa whereas Ba wrote for French West Africa, and yet these differences have not

affected the issues raised in their works. It would, therefore, not be wrong to say that DD's concerns as far as women emancipation is concerned are not diminished by time, geographical location or linguistic differences.

In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), we are presented with women who are virtually counted as part of their husbands' properties. In fact, they belong in the same category as their children, who need to be beaten and controlled. A case in perspective is when Okonkwo, the tragic hero, beats up his last wife during the Week of Peace. What is of significance here is that Okonkwo is fined all right, but it is not because he beats up the woman, but because he does so during the Sacred Week.

Strength and assertiveness, as far as the representation of women in *Things Fall Apart* is concerned, are traits preserved for men only. We are told, for instance, that "During the planting season, Okonkwo worked daily on his farms from cock-crow until the chickens went to roost. He was a very strong man and rarely felt fatigue. But his wives and young children were not as strong, and so they suffered" (11). Strength, as the quotation implies, is an innate quality that men have. It is unusual for women to show that kind of trait. No wonder Okonkwo wishes his daughter, Ezima, were a boy because she shows traits of manliness. "She should have been a boy," he says (51). Any man who shows signs of feebleness is mocked as a woman, and that's how Unoka, Okonwo's father, earns the nickname, Agbala, a name for effeminate men. The text is replete with this kind of representation. After killing Ikemefuna–his adopted son, and being overpowered by fear, Okonkwo asks himself, "Since when did you become a shivering old woman?" (51).

Again, in *Things Fall Apart*, there is a clear distinction between those who could own land and those who could not. Men are the only ones allowed to own parcels of land. There is no instance in the text when a woman makes an attempt to acquire a land, and since farming is the main occupation among the people, it goes without saying that the men are the actual owners of the farms. Even though the women, who are often the wives and daughters, work on these farms, they are no more owners than labourers hired to help with the work are.

A certain trend permeates the texts in which African women are stereotyped and subjugated: the women are either totally illiterate or semi-literate; and it appears their limited education also affects their economic lives, making them depend heavily on their men for sustenance. Consequently, they lose their independence. All these make them easy victims of their male counterparts, who may be illiterate themselves. At least, this is the case in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. What is clear, nonetheless, is that whether the men are illiterate or educated, they are always the perpetrators of the culture of stereotyping and subjugation of the women because it is a systemic thing – almost an unwritten code – and so it appears normal to everybody – to the extent that the women themselves seem to accept it without question.

In Djoleto's *Money Galore*, (1975) the main character, Abraham Kofi Kafu, decides to enter into politics. Realising that the venture is capital intensive, and he does not have the wherewithal, he decides to befriend two Makola market women for his personal gains. The women fund his campaign and also become his sexual partners. One of them, Salamatu, is portrayed as loose, a prostitute. After having an affair with Kafu, we are told she goes further to sleep with father and son, Mr and Dr Mills Blankson. This is all too familiar as far as the representation of women in African literature is concerned.

Odofo, another Makola market woman in *Money Galore*, who is a girlfriend to the politician, Kafu, and supports his political campaign from her own resources, is seen begging for his love. She says, "I want someone who can excuse my money and my body and love me. Someone who finds the totality of me, his conception of me, idea of me inexpungible from his mind" (92). This goes to confirm the earlier claim that it is the man who marries the woman in the African society. It is clear from Odofo's utterances, that she does not seem to see herself completely independent unless she is linked to a man in marriage. It is almost as though the African woman, even if she has money and everything, must have a man in her life; otherwise, she is incomplete, so Odofo begs Kafu for his love.

Women, as portrayed by Djoleto, are either sexually indiscreet, corrupt or both. Female characters like Mercy Mensah, Vida Opia and Lydia are but a few that typify this kind of representation. Even though the men in this novel are also corrupt, a careful study would reveal a veiled attempt to create the impression that it is the corrupt women who influence the men. Kafu's wife, Gloria, for instance, urges her husband to get a house in Accra come what may. She encourages him as follows:

> Kofi, I think what we should do is to have our own house here...
> Your own house can make a world of difference. I'm thinking of a two-storey building, each storey self-contained. If the worse comes, we could let out one floor and live on the other floor. The rent would keep us going (37).

In the case of Mercy Mensah, she is portrayed as a highly immoral woman who introduces Kafu to gambling and other irresponsible acts such as drinking and smoking. Then comes Lydia, who is unashamedly sexually promiscuous. She is initially a girlfriend of Rev. Opia Dan Sese, a "minister of the gospel", who hands her over to Kafu to warm his bed while making a promise to take up responsibility in case she becomes pregnant. After Kafu has had enough of Lydia, he

tells Opia, "...don't forget to give my love to Lydia, you know? She was damn good the other day. Really nice and wholesome. Gosh!" (144). Lydia, as presented here, is totally dehumanised; she is, essentially, a sex object kicked and tossed between the two men.

All the instances cited above seem to confirm Pandey's observation about the stereotypical roles imposed on women in African Literature. It is systemic, something sanctioned by African tradition and culture. The tradition of Patriarchy as portrayed by Achebe where women themselves believe that strength is an attribute of men and the belief that certain jobs are the preserve of men go to confirm this notion. An extension to this patriarchal system is polygamy as portrayed in *Things Fall Apart*, where the man has the absolute right to marry as many women as he can afford because the more wives he has, the more respect he is accorded by society, and this is without the consent of his first wife. This appears to be the norm rather than the exception. It is, therefore, no wonder that Okonkwo is portrayed as a successful man largely because he has at least three wives with the possibility of taking a fourth one! It is a man's world, and men take all the decisions. Women are to only obey. Without formal education and economic independence, it is nearly impossible for the women such as we find in *Things Fall Apart* to break free from the subjugation that they face in their daily lives.

What makes the above-cited texts significant in a study such as this one is the fact that even though each novel comes a couple of decades after feminists like DD had written, they portray women in much the same negative light that DD had attempted to speak against. Our argument here, then, is that the situations that occasioned the feminist fight against the discrimination against and subjugation of women in DD's time have not gone away with the passage of time; they are ever present today. Consequently, the inclusion of the above-named texts in a study that

delves into DD's feminist march against male domination and suppression of women in these parts is justified.

DD saw formal education as an important step toward the liberation of the African female mind. A study of the history of education in Ghana reveals that right from its inception, women were side-lined; they were not a part of the original plan. It was not until the Basel Missionaries came in that women had an opportunity to access some form of education. According Seth Asare-Danso (2017), the Basel Missionaries' resolve to give women education in the then Gold Coast was informed by their "theology of marriage and family".

A closer look at the form of education the girls received from the Missionaries at the time would suggest that it was a bit different from what their male counterparts got. For one thing, while the boys received their education from male missionaries, the girls received instruction from their wives in lessons meant to make them good Christian wives and homemakers. It is on record, for instance, that "In 1844, while Rev. Johan George Windman was teaching the boys at Akropong-Akuapem, his wife, Rosina Windman (Nee Binder), also taught twelve (12) girls lessons in Sewing and Needlework," (Asare-Danso, 2017). This also suggests that the girls at the time did not study the same things with their male counterparts. That, in itself, constituted a form of discrimination against the girls. In the beginning, the girls' education took the form of "apprenticeship" where they were kept in the houses of individual missionaries whose wives taught them domestic duties (Odamttem 1978). As Sill (2010) correctly observes, "the Mission's objective in educating girls was to introduce women to a respected and respectable domestic sphere of proper female activity." Thus, the Mission's idea of educating girls was to restrict them to domestic life. It was based on the "theology of marriage and family."

Viewed against the above-stated backdrop, DD, who has been variously referred to as a "trailblazing author, feminist, politician, activist and journalist," Kwarteng (2015) becomes relevant in the sense that she, herself, was a victim of the system and fought it through her works and yet remains relatively unknown. Compared with her male counterparts with whom she wrote during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries or even those who came much later, one could clearly see that relatively, not much has been written on her. This thesis, therefore, stems from the fact that Mabel Dove-Danquah, a "trailblazer," as far as Ghanaian literary history is concerned, is almost forgotten. The thesis, a gendered literary study, examines four short stories: "Anticipation", "The Torn Veil", "Invisible Scar", and "Payment" as written by DD, with a view to bringing to the fore how she uses various literary strategies in these short stories to question discrimination against and subjugation of women. Successfully done, this thesis not only adds to what is known about one of Ghana's foremost feminist writers; it also extends the frontiers in African feminism and mainstream feminism.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Nationalism, as revealed through texts written by male African writers of 1930s through to the early 50s, was mainly a male affair. Female writers of the period were almost invisible. There was, nonetheless, one female writer, Mabel Dove-Danquah, whose focus was two-fold: she fought for national liberation and for the liberation of the African female mind. Even though she was very visible and made significant contributions to national discourse at the time, not much is known about her works today as most of the critical attention has often been heaped on the male writers of the period. DD herself saw, lived through and fought the imbalance.

Until recently, works of DD were totally lost from the Ghanaian literary canons. In 2008, the Ghana Education Service (GES) introduced a new text book for English Language, at Senior High School Level known as *Gateway* (2008) in which Anticipation, one of DD's short stories was captured. That it took more than four decades to publish a single short story from this legend shows that this pioneer female writer of Africa is not known by many, and that most of her writings remain unfamiliar. A major theme that runs through her short stories is the need for the African female to be liberated from the shackles of tradition and custom. Even though she remains part of the nationalist writers, research into her works is comparatively limited. This research aims to contribute to existing studies on DD and to examine how, through the female characters in her fiction, she achieves her aim of female liberation as it is clearly evident in her speeches in parliament and her publications.

1.3 Objectives

The ultimate objective of this study is to highlight the contributions made by Mabel Dove-Danquah to the liberation of the African female through her fiction. She creates female characters who outwit their male counterparts in their dealings and are defeated by the system. To achieve this objective, the study intends to do the following:

1. explore DD's four selected short stories along the African feminist trajectory,
2. explore the themes DD employs in these works vis-à-vis her style,
3. examine how her characterisation of the radical female (which is a recurring motif), feeds into the agenda of liberating the African female mind.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, the following research questions are posed:

1. What is African feminism, and to what extent do DD's short stories conform to or diverge from it?

2. To what extent do the themes and characters in DD's short stories project her African female liberationist agenda?

3. What stylistic tools does DD use to drive home her message of the liberation of the African female mind?

1.5 Significance of the Study

There is ample evidence to suggest that Mabel Dove-Danquah was an important figure in the nationalist writers' era even though relatively unknown in literary circles. This study, therefore, brings to the fore one of Ghana's foremost female liberationists and draws her works into critical dialogue as far as studies on female liberation are concerned. It also affords contemporary scholars an opportunity to study DD since she contributed her quota to the country in her line of duty as a legislator and journalist, like her male counterparts such as J.B Danquah, Casely Hayford and others, who have so far enjoyed significant critical attention as nationalist writers.

1.6 Methodology

The main argument of the study is that Mabel Dove-Danquah is an African feminist writer whose works have not attracted adequate critical attention. This makes the study essentially a feminist study. To this end, Ruvimbo Goredema's African feminist theory will be used as the backcloth against which the selected short stories will be discussed. The themes, characterisation, diction and motifs will be examined in each of the stories with a view to establishing how they help situate DD's stories within the African feminist context.

Again, Genette's treatise on narratology will be used to explore the kind of perspective the author employs in these stories and how they reflect her African feminist ideals. To this end, we undertake a close reading of four of DD's short stories namely, "Anticipation", "The Invisible Scar", "The Torn Veil", and "Payment".

1.7 Justification of the study

The decision to study four aforementioned texts by the author is entirely informed by the trend that runs through these stories. As stated earlier, studies on DD are not as exhaustive as one would expect. These stories will be critically examined to explore the themes, characters, narrative perspective(s) and other stylistic elements with the view to finding out the relationship they share.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

Goredema's theory of African feminism forms the main theoretical framework of this thesis. The theory mirrors how the female in DD's stories is able to beat the system of male domination. The theory will help the study show how African feminism converges and diverges with main stream feminism. According to Goredema, "African feminism is a feminist epistemology and a form of rhetoric that has provided arguments, which validate the experience of women of Africa and of Africa origin against a mainstream feminist discourse. It is a justice that aims to create a discernible difference between women who were colonised and those who were deemed the colonisers, and a social movement that aims to raise a global consciousness which sympathises with African women's histories, present realities and future expectations". (2010: 34)

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters and organised as follows:

Chapter One: This is labelled introduction and comprises the Background to the Study, the Statement of the Problem and the Objectives of the Study. It also includes the Significance of the Study, Methodology and the Organization of the Study. The chapter lays the foundation to situate DD within the framework of African feminism.

Chapter Two: This chapter reviews literature on African feminism in order to situate the discussion within this context. It also reviews scholarship on Mabel Dove-Danquah. In addition, the Study discusses the biography and the works of DD as a legislator and writer.

Chapter Three: Characters and themes as portrayed in the four selected short stories for this thesis will be analysed. This is done with a view to finding out how DD's projection of her female characters and her use of themes help her bring out the issue of female liberation.

Chapter Four: The chapter examines narrative techniques, diction and motifs employed in the selected short stories. Beyond these, the significance of DD's short stories is discussed and situated within the context of the female liberation movement. The discussion particularly takes into account DD's contribution during the nationalist era as a strong female advocate, one of the earliest female writers of Gold Coast, present-day Ghana, who brings to the discussion table the need for female liberation as far back as 1930 through to independence.

Chapter Five: This is the concluding chapter of the study. It discusses findings and the conclusion made at the end of the research. It also makes some recommendations for further studies to expand the frontiers in studies in African feminism in general while rekindling interest in scholarship on Mabel Dove-Danquah as one of the earliest advocates for female liberation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

As a follow-up from Chapter One, this chapter sets out to do two main things. First, it looks at African feminism. This should help us establish a clear idea of what we mean by the term, African feminism, as against mainstream feminism. In the second part of the chapter, we delve into scholarship on Mabel Dove-Danquah's works. It begins with a brief biography on her. This will be followed by a study of scholarship on her short stories, especially, those that project her feminist ideas. The final part centres on the four short stories selected for this study, namely "Anticipation", "Invisible Scar", "The Torn Veil" and "Payment". A close study of scholarship on these texts should help us properly situate them within the African feminist argument and further fine-tune our discussions.

Oral tradition suggests that African women were once assertive and independent; they did not merely exist as appendages of their male counterparts. As Carole Boyce Davies points out, "revised historical records are indicating that African women in the pre-colonial and in antiquity were competent rulers, warriors and participants in their societies." This, to a large extent, shows that feminism then was a part of women's existence in Africa. However, the formal designation, African feminism, is a relatively recent concept. Its main architects have been, mostly, educated African women, particularly, those who, in one way or the other, have made writing their occupation.

These African female writers, who are, invariably, the torchbearers in the struggle for the liberation of their kind, are concerned with some African traditions that still oppress African

women: the bride-price, polygamy, forced motherhood, widowhood rites among others. Writers such as Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Ba, and Flora Nwapa have all, in their works, dealt with issues affecting women. Paramount amongst them is the subjugation of women in Africa, and the writers have often tried to project, or as it were, create awareness among women on the need to liberate themselves from the traditional systems that oppress them.

2.1 Reflections on Feminism

From the way it is used, the term, feminism, seems to have two broad applications based on context. For the purposes of this study, therefore, it would be necessary to establish a clear dichotomy between these two applications. In a general sense, the term, feminism, has a politico-social or economic dimension while in another sense; the term is a critical tool in literary study and interpretation. Whereas the former refers to attempts to project women's rights and advancement the world over, the latter has a more academic or scholarly application in literary criticism. In its literary application, feminism may be approached from several broad critical perspectives: Gender, Essentialism, Materialism, Marxism, Interdisciplinary Criticism, Utopian Pluralism, etc. In this study, we undertake a Gender Criticism. This is because we are dealing with Mabel Dove-Danquah, one of Ghana's early feminist writers whose works, in our view, have not received as much critical attention as have those of her male compatriots.

The Different Waves of Feminism

The different ways in which the term feminism has been used has given rise to what some critics have designated as the waves of feminism. We can identify at least three different waves of

feminism namely First Wave, Second Wave, and Third Wave feminism. These Waves have come about as a result of the different ways in which critics have interpreted the term.

In her book on feminist theory, *In their Time: A History of Feminism in Western Society*, Marlene LeGates (2011), captures the "fluidity of feminism over time" (1). She does not lose sight of the fact that the utility of feminism defers according to their temporal and spatial setting of the feminists. She identifies two "waves", main waves or historical epochs in feminist history (9). For her, the first wave of feminism was driven by women's right to vote, seeking the removal of all limitations on women's participation in the elections of the United States and elsewhere encompassing the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. The second wave, she intimates, gathered momentum, "beginning in the mid or late 1960s (9). For LeGates (2011), this phase of feminism focused on diverse women's issues relating to abortion rights, marriage, sexuality, gender discrimination by employers among others. This wave, essentially, moved from politics to culture. Feminists, at this point, challenged patriarchal notions of women, both in and outside the public sphere.

The African Feminist Thought

As far as the concept of feminism is concerned, attempts have been made, especially, by female African writers, to define the term from the African perspective in order to distinguish an African brand of feminism from mainstream feminism. This has become necessary because of the different experiences of women in Africa and their counterparts from Euro-western society. Kabira and Burkeywo (2016) define African Feminism as:

> the combination of all the various struggles against social, cultural, political and economic marginalization that have dogged African women. It is the struggle for African women to find their authentic selves, to demand for a new world … and to

> demand for a new world that is created by the experiences, aspirations, skills and knowledge of both men and women (26).

From the above-cited quotation, we see an attempt to clearly show how African feminism differs from the term, "Feminism" as used in Western circles. The struggle against "social, cultural, political and economic marginalization" as alluded to by Kabira and Burkeywo are all references to a certain form of hegemony perpetrated against people of colour, and European women are often a part of this hegemony. It is for this reason that it has become necessary to clearly establish the dichotomy between the African and the mainstream feminism. As correctly pointed out by Kabira and Burkeywo, African women must seek ways in which to liberate themselves from practices, both external and internal, that oppress them. Another important point that the above quotation brings to the fore is that "finding oneself" and "to demand for a new world" does not necessarily call for a utopian world of only women, but rather a world "created by the experiences, aspirations skills and knowledge of both men and women." Kabira and Burkeywo (2016: 26).

Filomina Steady, who is often credited with formulating the only feminist theory for African women, in her introduction to *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, sees African feminism as one that emphasizes female autonomy and cooperation among the women, nature over culture, the centrality of children, multiple mothering and kinship, the use of ridicule in woman's worldview.

Steady's view, especially on "nature over culture", is relevant in a sense that most of the subjugation and or suppression suffered by African women stems from cultural practices that sanction the second-place roles that are often forced on women without considering their nature. Such cultural practices would often prescribe what women could do and what they could not do. In other words, African culture does not take into account whether women have the capacity to

do more than is prescribed by culture. It is for this reason that Steady calls for an emphasis of "nature over culture." However, since gender relations do not exist in a vacuum but are offshoots of culture, which is indeed the soil in which the seeds of gender stereotyping are sown, African feminism should target both culture and gender with a view to interrogating those aspects of culture that overlook women's nature so as to call for change in these aspects.

Steady's reference to some practices and traditions in the African culture as tools to subordinate the African woman is crucial. Notable among them are their inability to choose their husbands and when they decide to have babies. Women who are unable to have children become objects of mockery; therefore, African feminists must address these issues. These issues must be the focus of feminists in Africa for their counterparts to appreciate their course. When a woman is unable to bear children in her marriage, it should not take her fellow women-mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law to maltreat her but to rally behind her for the necessary solutions to be taken. Steady is right when she advocates the need for African feminists to make this their focus.

One of the primary African feminist objectives is to influence or guide the liberation of the African woman from her stereotyped and subjugated roles in the society and in literature. This is a reference to socio-political feminism and literary feminism. On the one hand, African feminism seeks to speak to the issues that suppress the African women and to help her fight for and occupy her legitimate place in society; this is the social level of African feminism. On the other hand, this brand of feminism also delves into literature and looks at how both female writers and the characters in their works are represented and call for change. This is literary feminism. This second function of African feminism is the focus of this study, for we seek to examine DD as an African feminist and how she uses her female characters in the selected short stories to champion the cause of her African womenfolk.

Goredema (2010) asserts that, "African feminism is a feminist epistemology and a form of rhetoric that has provided arguments which validate the experience of women of Africa and of African origin against a mainstream feminist discourse."(34)

She believes that the discussion on African Feminism has not been exhausted because most of the women who are championing the cause are products of western education. By this extension, they are unable to address the issues affecting the African women without recourse to the western lifestyle.

Ama Ata Aidoo, an author and a feminist opines:

> I should go on to insist that every man and every woman should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives and the burden of African development. It is not possible to advocate independence of African development without also believing that African women must have the best that the environment can offer. For some of us this is the crucial element in our feminism (1998:47).

Aidoo is right because African women are the ones discriminated against, and it is believed that the system, as well as the men, is the worst culprit; and therefore the African woman should be encouraged to be in charge of her own emancipation process.

Mikell as cited in Goredema (2010) also describes African feminism as a kind of feminism that focuses on "women first and foremost as human rather than sexual beings" (36).This argument is valid because women are considered weak and consequently cannot compete with the men in terms of economic, academic and social spheres. However, when the women are seen as human beings just like their male counterparts, it will strengthen the women front and eliminate the issues of female oppression in the African continent.

Kolawole (2002) also believes that feminism existed before the continent was colonised by the Westerners. She says:

> Although many African languages have no synonym for feminism as it is defined by the West, the concept of group action by women, based on common welfare in social, cultural, economic, religious and political matters is indigenous and familiar to a majority of these women (31).

This view is largely correct because DD wrote in the earliest days of colonisation when the fight was that of independence, she was vociferous in the era about the treatment meted out to women by men and advocated the need for freedom from male domination in terms of jobs and education. Female writers were reluctant to be called feminists even though the subject of women liberation dominated in their write ups.

Nwapa, on her part, maintains that African women should not be called feminists and should not call themselves feminists either. In her own words she says, "I don't think that I am a radical feminist. I don't even accept that I am a feminist. I accept that I'm an ordinary woman who is writing about what she knows." (98)

Is it the case of fear of victimization that makes Nwapa take such a stand? Her claim here tends to betray the quest for freedom from the African society and traditions that oppress the women because in her works, especially *Efuru* (1966), the heroine is seen as independent and prosperous even without a husband and children and was respected in the society. If so, why couldn't she boldly come out as a feminist who is advocating female liberation?

Another of such comments is attributed to Buchi Emecheta. In an interview at George Town University, she is quite emphatic when she says:

> I have never called myself a feminist. Now if you choose to call me a feminist, that is your business; but I don't subscribe to the feminist idea that all men are brutal and repressive and we must reject them. Some of these are my brothers and fathers and sons. Am I to reject them too? (1995:21)

Emecheta's view as cited above goes to affirm views expressed elsewhere that African feminism is not necessarily antagonistic towards men, for it seeks to advocate a world in which both men and women exist side by side playing their complementary roles. However, her argument that men are fathers, brothers and sons does not negate the fact that they are often the willing agents in subjugation and suppression of women.

Whereas Emecheta's claim above does not give a clear picture of what African feminism is, Carol Boyce Davies brings us much closer to understanding the concept. In her article, "Feminist Consciousness and African Literary Criticism" which appears in *Ngambika* (1986) she summarises the concept of African feminism as follows:

Firstly, it recognises a common struggle with African men for the removal of the yokes of foreign domination and European/ American exploitation. It is not antagonistic to African men but it challenges them to be aware of certain salient aspects of women's subjugation which differ from the generalized oppression of all African people.

Secondly, an African feminist consciousness recognises that certain inequalities and limitations existed / exist in traditional societies and that colonialism reinforced them and introduced others. As such, it acknowledges its affinities with international feminism, but delineates a specific African feminism with certain specific needs and goals arising out of the concrete realities of women's lives in African societies.

Thirdly, it recognises that African societies are ancient societies, so logically; African women must have addressed the problems of women's position in society historically. In this regard there already exist, in some societies, structures which give women equality.

Fourthly, African feminism examines African societies for institutions which are of value to women and rejects those which work to their detriment and does not simply import Western women's agendas. Thus, it respects the African woman's status as mother but questions obligatory motherhood and the traditional favouring of sons. (8-9)

One of the critics of Achebe, Stratton (94), opines that the story, *Things Fall Apart*, is set to dignify Africa and to condemn colonialism. She articulates the negative impact of colonialism on the African but explains that, Achebe's projection of the African is gender biased since in his own work, women are maltreated and enslaved. She writes:

> The status of women in Umuofia is very low: they are mere objects articulated among their menfolk, willed for example, by a father to a son as part of an estate, or traded for a bag full of cowries… Women are systematically excluded from the political, economic, the judicial and even the discourse life of the community. This is inculcated not only through the composition of the governing council of elders, the *ndichie*, or the membership of the powerful egwugwu cult which is, in both cases, all male. (25)

Pandey (2004) in "Language and Representation" has also pointed out that, "…the woman is subordinated in West African Literature (Anita Pandey, Woman Palava). In rare instances when she is celebrated, it is for her ability to conform to traditional roles and expectations such as getting married and bearing children, sons in particular for which she is generally rewarded" (114).

A careful reading of Pandey's article reveals that African women as represented in African literature, are denied respect and dignity unless they go according to the norms and traditions of

the society. What is expected of them is to succumb to their husbands' wishes and take care of the children at home. If the assertion that literature mirrors society is anything to go by, then the negative representation of African women in literature is a clear reflection of the African society.

Kirima Phyllis, in her critique of Wachege's work on *African Women Liberation*, describes what women oppression and liberation entails. She says:

> women oppression is a distorted way of life in which women are dehumanized, marginalized and subjugated by being denied their rights as real persons, being treated and mistreated as inferior beings and deprived of growth into authenticity and self-fulfilment. She identifies various forms of oppression which include Traditional, Social, Political, Economic, Sexual, Intellectual oppression (15).

This statement is important to this study in the sense that, it brings to the fore some of the issues the study seeks to explore in the selected short stories. For example, the study delves into how DD brings into critical dialogue "traditional, social, political, economic, sexual and intellectual oppression", and the solutions, if any, that she offers.

Carol Boyce Davies, in her article, "Feminist Consciousness and the African Literary Criticism" asserts that, "African written literature has traditionally been the preserve of male writers' and critics" (x). This statement seems to suggest that the males were considered to be intellectually superior to undertake such a career. Davies, however, acknowledges that, the trend has changed: "Today, however, accompanying an ever- growing corpus of literature by African women writers, a new generation of critics, most of them women, is impacting on this male-dominated area."(1)

She argues that though "the first African writers to achieve prominence were male."(2) There were certain preconditions that made that happen in the colonial period in Africa. She states:

> …the sex role distinctions common to many African societies supported the notion that western education was a barrier to a woman as wife and mother and an impediment to her success in these traditional modes of acquiring status. With few exceptions, girls were kept away from formal and especially higher education. (2)

Davies' observation as noted above was relevant then and is relevant even now. Today, women who have formal education and are economically independent are more likely to be tagged arrogant, unmarriageable and a bad influence. DD herself, was not spared; and it is therefore, not surprising that she sought to fight this stereotyping by projecting strong and assertive women in her short stories.

2.2 Biography of Mabel Dove-Danquah

As editors of "Mabel Dove: Selected Writings of a Pioneer West African Feminist," Newell and Gadzekpo (2004) write in their introduction, "As the political winds gathered force in West Africa for the start of the stormy nineteen-thirties, a witty, educated and self-confident female voice burst onto the pages of a new daily newspaper, the *West African Times*, in Accra." That voice was that of DD. The following is a brief biography of DD as presented by Manuh (2006).

Mabel Dove-Danquah also known as Dede Awula Abla was a Gold Coast-born journalist, a political activist and a creative writer, one of the earliest women in West Africa to work in these fields. As Kofigah (1996) asserts, "before the emergence of such strong exponents of literary feminism as Efua T. Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo, there was Mabel Dove, the trail-blazing feminist." Mabel Dove was born on 18th April, 1905 in Accra to Mr Francis Thomas Dove, a lawyer and a "father of sports" who became the first president of the Gold Coast Bar and Eva Buckman, a business woman of Berekusu and Osu. At the age of six, she was taken to her

father's sister in Freetown, Sierra Leone. DD received most of her education in her aunt's private school, Mrs. Rice School for Girls. She continued at Annie Walsh Memorial School in Sierra Leone. Her favourite subjects were history and literature and she enjoyed reading.

After a year, she was sent to the United Kingdom where she sent to an Anglican Convent in the Bury St. Edmunds and St. Michael's college. DD was happy in England when she says:

> the most exciting day of my life in England was when I woke up one winter morning and the world was bathed in virgin-white; so this was the snow I had read about but never seen. I could hardly believe my eyes. I ran down to the grounds of the school and the girls were throwing snow balls at each other (UM).

DD in her autobiography says,

> After fifteen years sojourn in Freetown, Sierra Leone, including three years in England, I returned to the country of my birth, then known as Gold Coast....
>
> How bored I was and how happy I was to return to the simple life with my aunts Aunties T.D., Auntie Rice, and Auntie Clarice, and I went out to work finally returned to the Elder Dempster Shipping Lines, a United Kingdom Company as a shorthand-typist at age 21 (UM).

DD's stay outside must have, to a large extent, influenced her perspective on issues affecting women in general, and her African feminist ideology. This is because, it did not take long after her return before she started writing on issues concerning the identities of women, writings she got published in newspapers in and outside the country.

While writing for popular West African newspapers such as African Morning Post, The Nigerian Daily Times, The Daily Graphic, and The Accra Evening News, DD assumes the identities of Marjorie Mensah, Dama Dumas, Alakija Ebun, and Akosua Dzatsui. Bearing a pseudonym helped her to address different issues affecting the identities of the various women she represented. Apart from her writing finesse, DD gained popularity after her marriage to Dr J. B. Danquah.

Busby (1992) writes, "Entering politics the 1950s before Ghana's independence, she became the first woman to be elected a member of the African legislative assembly" (223).

It is clear from the above quotation that women were very active in politics even then. Women, to a large extent contributed their quota to national development. On women's instrumentality in Gold Coast politics, LaRay (1987) writes: "Women activists, such as Evelyn Mansah Amarteifio and Mabel Ellen Dove-Danquah, travelled to England for high education to pick political position" (442). Dove, together with other women campaigned vigorously to see her political party come to power.

According to Abass and Döşkaya (2017), women were at the fore front of the struggle for self government. They say, "as part of the editorial of Nkrumah's newspaper, the *Accra Evening News* were Mabel Ellen Dove, Akua Asabea Ayisi, and other women, who wrote articles in support of the independence struggle and criticized the British administration" (152). This assertion goes to confirm LaRay's view that the women were poised for liberation, hence their activism. DD and her female counterparts were not only on the campaign but through their publications, fought for independence from the whites.

As the women devoted themselves to politics, they mounted political platform to rally support for Nkrumah. Through their vigorous campaign and activism, Nkrumah won the 1951 elections for the CPP. DD was indeed pivotal in the liberation of her country and the female gender in particular.

2.3 Mabel Dove-Danquah the Legislator

When DD was elected to the Legislative Assembly, she was seen and heard on the floor of parliament contributing to the discussion on national development. Her first statement on the floor of parliament was received with an uproar. On the 8th of November 1954, she recounted

how the Akan system of inheritance was an affront to the development of the Ghanaian woman. She protested against the law governing the Akan System of inheritance and called for it to be reviewed for the betterment of the Akan woman. She says:

I beg to move *''That this House deplores the existing Akan law of inheritance and places on record its view that a woman married according to Akan customary law should inherit, for herself and the children of the marriage, two-thirds of the property of her husband in the event of his dying intestate.''* (480)

During the period, the system of inheritance being practiced by the Akans was ''uncle inheritance'' whereby the man's nephew inherited the property of his uncle when he died. The system was very bad to her since the woman had to struggle to cater for herself and the children after the death of the husband. She believed that, the uncle inheritance system had outlived its usefulness hence the need to amend the law. She says:

> Intelligent fathers and husbands now demand that their wife or wives and children should inherit the properties which they acquired by their service and help (481).

She believed that, most of the married women in Gold Coast were house wives, and therefore, if the nephews continued to take what belonged to the widow and her children, the consequences on the family would be grave. She recounted meeting with the opinion leaders of the Asante kingdom to explain the plight of the African woman after the death of her husband. She laments,

After my talk to the Gold Coast Women's Association, in which I mentioned the Akan Law of Inheritance, the Asanteman Council at Kumasi passed a resolution that wives and children should get one-third of the inheritance of the deceased husband and father. This is indeed a great beginning, it is a writing on the wall, the Akan law of nephew inheritance must die a natural death and wives and children should enter into their inheritance. (482)

On November 18, 1955 there was a motion on the floor discussing the education of women. Her question to the minister of education was,

Miss Mabel Dove (C.P.P. – Ga): I beg to move "*that in the opinion of this house the percentage of educated women in this country is low and should be raised.*" (688)

Her question was to draw the attention of the education minister and the entire government to the fact that more women were to be given the chance to enrol in the schools to enable them acquire knowledge for the betterment of the country. She further quotes the words of an Indonesian woman to buttress her point:

…I should like to quote the words of a great Indonesian woman, Raden Adjeng Kartine who did a great deal for the women of her country:

Is one seriously going to be civilised? Then the intellectual and the moral development should go hand in hand. And who is able to do most for the latter, to contribute most to the elevation of the moral standard of mankind? It is the woman, the mother, because on the lap of woman, man receives his education first of all. There it is the child learns for the first time to feel, to think, to talk. And the earliest education is not without meaning for the whole life. (689)

She explains her point by indicating that, "…it is the woman that civilizes man. Without a woman there can be no civilization. We should also remember the words of our illustrious Dr. Aggrey: 'Educate a man and you educate an individual; educate a woman and you educate a family; educate a family and you educate a nation." (689)

The above statement by Dove shows that, the level of educated women in the country around that period was very low and she believed that, to have a nation developing, more women needed to get educated to contribute to the decision making of the country. She lamented the few number of girls' schools in the country as compared to boys' schools. She says,

Let us take Accra as a case in point. In James Town there is a Government Junior Boys' School but there is no Government Junior Girls' School. …there is only one Government Girls' School in Accra. Let us take some of the big towns. There is only one Girls' School in Kumasi, one at Cape Coast, one at Tamale and none in. (689)

Dove saw this trend as discriminatory because Government should give equal rights to both boys and girls as far as education was concerned. If the Government decided to build more boys school than that of girls, it reiterates her believe that the state was prioritizing boys education over girls. She also criticized the missions in the country who were supposed to treat boys and girls equally as stipulated in the Bible. She opines:

> If we turn to the Mission Schools, we shall find that they are following the Government's example. For many years the Basel Mission, now the Presbyterian Mission, has established Boys' Schools at Christianborg and throughout the Eastern Province, but it has not thought it fit to establish schools for girls as well… though Christ believed in equality and spoke to women as his intellectual equals, the Missionaries are following the example of the Government and are treating women as inferiors. (689)

Her earlier complaint was on junior schools, but she went on to establish that the senior schools were no exception. Girls' schools in the country were as few as the junior ones. She laments,"…it is surprising that there is not one secondary Girl's School in Accra. The other day when I asked the Ministerial Secretary to the Ministry of Education whether he would consider building a Girl's secondary school in Accra and he said no."(690)

The response from the Minister of Education became clear that, the Government, for that matter the minister of Education, did not see the need to establish a Girls' secondary school in Accra and even in other parts of the country. Dove considered the trend as a sad situation because it was clear that most of the mothers and wives of her male counterparts in the house were illiterates. She admonished the Minister to do his best by establishing more Girls' schools in the country. Even though she acknowledged that, the co-educational schools like Achimota School,

Accra High School and O' Reilly have contributed to the education of Girls, she advocated the need for more Girls' schools in the country.

Mabel Dove asserts that, "The Gold Coast woman is very attractive and intelligent." Though most of these women are uneducated, they have succeeded very much in the field of social, economic and cultural activities. Dove might argue that, given the opportunity, the women could out-class the men. Dove again showed in her contribution that, there were fewer women in the Government Sector compared to males. She commented on the number of women in higher positions in the country. She says, "…at present we have only a few African women graduates; two doctors, two barristers, one dentist and one optician." (690)

She advocated the need for more African women holding high positions in government. She questioned in parliament why expatriate women were holding sensitive positions at the expense of the African woman. She says,

> The other day, when I stated in this Assembly that in our Ministries only expatriate women are found in responsible positions, I was told that there was one African lady in a responsible position in the Ministry of Trade and Labour. It is not enough to have only one African lady holding a responsible post in the whole Government Service. We need more African women in high positions in the Ministries. (691)

On the 28th March, 1956, Dove asked the Minister of the Interior on the floor of Parliament "whether he will review the conditions of service of women Police Officers to make it possible for them to marry and remain in the force."(275)

The conversation arose when a male legislator, Mr Krobo Edusei asked the Minister whether or not women in the police force were allowed to marry and remain in the service. Dove saw this question as discriminatory because the women officers, like their counterparts in the other public sector, should enjoy equal rights and privileges as far as marriage and childbearing was

concerned. Mr Nylander, assured the house that, women officers were allowed to marry but on condition. He responded, "…Women Police Officers are not debarred from marrying; and the second stated that though they are not debarred from marrying, they are under orders, and orders must be obeyed by all Police Officers whether they be men or women." (276)

Mabel Dove believed that, women in the police force should be given the opportunity to enjoy maternity leave up to three months and not be discriminated against by the Police Force.

2.4 Mabel Dove-Danquah the Writer/ Journalist

Newell and Gadzekpo describe Mabel Dove as the female voice that dominated the Ghanaian media during the struggle for independence. They acknowledge Dove as "a witty, educated and self- confident female" (vi). As a literary scholar, Dove wrote for the *West African Times* from 1931 to 34. Her writings were considered extraordinary because some male readers questioned whether the author was male or female. Writing under the pseudonym Marjorie Mensah, DD stirred a lot of argument among readers, especially her male readers, who were surprised at her prowess and were constantly trying to ascertain her true identity.

During that period, Gold Coast women who had formal education were few and not considered as intelligent as their male counterparts. Only a handful was employed under the colonial regime. One male reader of the newspaper, Asuana Quartey wrote to question the gender of the columnist and remarked:

> I have been following closely the many interesting letters under the pen of Miss Marjorie Mensah since your paper made its first appearance in the journalistic arena. The nature of the letters, the diction, the firm grip of the writer, tend to arouse my suspicions, and probably those many readers; and confirm me in the conviction as to the identity of the writer being a man. It is very unusual that West African Ladies (even those with a superior European education) could be induced to take an intelligent interest in the affairs of the country in the same breath as your lady correspondent is doing. (ix)

The above quotation further confirms the belief that for the educated African women, when even she was alive in flesh and blood, her very existence was denied as in the case of Dove. Otherwise, how could her existence as a woman writer be questioned simply because her writing was thought to be a quality only men could possess? No wonder this researcher practically struggled to find enough scholarship on Dove even though there was evidence that she really lived and contributed more than is supported by literature.

Dove proved to her critic in her response that she knew other women who had taken to writing in that era apart from herself. She replied another man, Dr. Des Bordes who was also sceptical about the gender of the writer. She retorted

> I don't think you are serious when you give your explanation of my being a man the fact of my being able to contribute daily to the *West African Times* and express a few ideas in English…What do you think about us after all? You, and a good many others like you, have the most peculiar notions of women-especially Gold Coast women- that I have ever heard of? Do you really think that none of us is capable of writing up a column in a newspaper? (x)

Dove's penmanship was not restricted to Ghana. Even in Nigeria, she made a name for herself. In the *Nigerian Daily Times*, she wrote an article to encourage women to pursue carriers in journalism so they could champion the course of women through writing. She says: "Women in Africa have not had the opportunity given to men except in few instances; but the days." (x)

The assertion above reiterates the fact that African women were discriminated against in terms of education, employment among others. She advocates that women take up jobs that are perceived as male. Dove is of the view that women should upgrade themselves in academia so as to compete with the men.

Kathleen Hewitt in her forward to her collections of Marjorie Mensah asserts that there is the need for women's column because that was the only avenue for them to express themselves. She writes:

> The columns, produced by multiple personas of Mabel Dove, engaged directly with readers on specific topics, sometimes with mixed messages, instructing them on what to read, how to improve themselves, how to perform their defined roles in society and at the same time how to defy the norm and claim more gender equality (xii).

DD in her articles in the *Nigerian Daily Times* in 1936, under the pseudonym 'Ebun Alakija' encouraged women to take up the task and challenge the status quo:

> Today, African women should not be satisfied with the intellectual crumbs doled out to us, but we should strive to be on the same plane as our men if we want to have a niche for women in Africa (xiii).

On April 15 1931, Dove in her article laments the fact that "apart from the post office, telephone exchange, the printing office, a counter clerk at a store or a clerk in charge of a few files in one of the government offices, we do very little and our activity in the bustle and din of trade or business falls rather flat. In Europe, where many of us have been, we have observed women competing with men in nearly every walk of life."(3)

On May 1, in the same newspaper, she admonishes women to be self-dependent and rise up to the task. She warns them of the tricks of the men to lure them into marriage. She cautions:

> It is exceedingly mean and cowardly for an individual calling himself a man and take undue liberty of the generous and unsuspicious disposition of any woman and then turn round and throw it in her face back again (14).

In order to justify the subject matter in her writings, Dove makes her readers aware of the impact her crusade has made on young women. She says,

For your information, although I hate to trouble you, let me tell you that since I started with the *West African Times*, four other girls have taken up writing; two write under their own names and two have chosen to remain unknown like myself. So you see, you are simply a nuisance, a bundle of inquisitiveness and a pest! (7)

On July 10 – 11, she encourages women to go out there in their numbers to vote for the women who have contested in the Legislative Council Elections. It is unusual to see women give up themselves for contests.

There are many of us entitled to vote or in other words qualified to vote; such as Mrs. Hansen Sackey: Mrs Floura Vanderpuye; Mrs Bampo and quite a score of others too numerous to name here. They all come within the category of ratepayers and property owners and naturally their votes are of some weight and may materially assist to either equalise the balance or turn it entirely. We cannot stand still and leave it all to the men. This is, indeed, a new age. Everyone seems to have realised the consciousness of her right. Given the same opportunities, the women of the world, and in this country – have proved that we are capable of drawing level with the men in practically every walk of life (7).

In another article published on the 14th of July, 1931, Dove questions whether or not women are advancing in their fields of endeavour. She puts it thus:

> I have often asked myself this old question, are we really advancing? ... I mean, we women of this country. There is indeed a suggestion that we are, but whether we are in actual fact, is another part of the question that is unsolved (8).

By this assertion, DD is trying to admonish the women to forge ahead so as to reach the top in terms of academics, social, economic among other endeavours. She goes on the say:

> This establishes one view and that is that there has been a steady increase in the number of girls that have passed through the schools in recent years and there are still more in the passing who will soon be qualified to take their places in society and augment their growing tide (9).

To assess whether or not she has been able to impart positively, Dove visits women clubs to have first-hand information for herself. She indicates:

> I was a guest of one of the Literary Clubs in town and I was so thrilled to see the number of ladies at the meeting expressing their views and debating young men there. This is indeed, another march forward; and a march in the right direction. I have seen over and over again the keen interest that all of our women are taken in the different vocations and also in sport (9).

The above claim is an indication that, there has been an improvement on building the confidence among the womenfolk. The girls are out there debating their male counterparts, which had not been the case years back.

In April 1932, Dove challenges the men on the notion that women cannot compete with them on any platform and she boldly refutes that claim, saying:

> There is a feeling among most of the menfolk of this country that we women are not really capable of doing anything, that our capacity is rigidly limited and that we cannot hope to aspire to be equal of our male friends in the different spheres of labour for at least another twenty or more years (14).

Dove draws inspiration from the advancement of white women holding top positions as their male counterpart. She writes:

> In England and other progressive countries, women can be found in every branch of life; from the office, the managerial desk, to driving an omnibus … And as I have said, they have been found to be efficient, capable and more satisfactory that most men (14).

She therefore encourages African women to take their education seriously to be able to occupy the above-mentioned positions in their societies. Mabel Dove advocates the establishment of a Ladies' Debating Club like that of the male counterparts to be able to discuss matters affecting women in the society. In her publication on 2nd June, 1932, she posits:

> It is a great pity that we have no Ladies' Debating Club, similar to the 'Young People's', the La Improvement Literary Club or the Osu Debating Club; and really it is about time that we had something of the sort … to discuss matters of local importance, that interest women to exchange views on current matters … In these clubs, we would be able to demonstrate our ability in many things and prove beyond doubt whether we read or not (19).

Between1936–1966, DD on 'Higher Education', tends to celebrate the achievement of one of the African women who has excelled academically. She says:

> We women are proud of the achievements of Mrs. Kofo Moore B. A., she has set a blazing trail for the ambitious and when she comes and advocates with fervour and sincerity for Higher Education for African womanhood would feel that the future is bright with hope … She gave us an idea of what we should expect from this brilliant woman pioneer of education (91).

She further encourages women to take their education seriously to achieve greater heights so that they can equally occupy top positions at their workplace. Women were given inferior roles in government agencies hence the need for them to work hard. She opines:

> The role that the African woman has to play in the present and future is great, so great that unless she is imbued with the highest ideals and the love of her country and race. She is bound to meet with pitfalls by the way, but education is the beacon that should guide her to the goal of success (91).

She contests the idea that educated women become bossy in society and when they ascend to higher positions in the society, they would oppose the dictates of males. She points out that:

> There are many old fashioned people and even highly educated persons, especially men who think that the educated woman is a nuisance, that she is hectoring and domineering and masculine in her ideas. This, if you will excuse me, good readers, is mere balderdash, I should say pure fiction, that being a more feminine expression
>
> (91-92).

In the February 24th edition of the *Nigerian Daily Times*, Dove eulogises one woman who has excelled in academics. The woman rises as the first lady barrister in West Africa. She writes

> We glow with pride and pleasure of the achievement of men, but when a woman makes a bold bid for the laurels of men and succeeds them. We feel indeed that the day is dawning when the women of Africa will take their rightful place by the side of the men (93).

Dove further admonishes African women not to be discouraged about the systems in place but challenge the status quo and make a mark.

> Today, African women should not be satisfied with the intellectual crumbs doled out to us, but we should strive to be on the same plane as our men if we want to carve out a niche for the women of Africa (93).

Dove advances her theme of emancipation of the African women in her August edition entitled *Women and Journalism,* when she insists that African women have been relegated to the background for far too long, therefore, they should rise up to the occasion by taking up Journalism. She says,

> Journalism has a great part to play in the future development of Africa and I think the sooner women take an active interest in it, the better. It is said that though men come to their conclusion through logic women come to theirs through intuition and that is the reason why women should come out with their views now and again (94).

Commenting on the issue of women taking to writing, she reiterates these facts in the words below:

> Women in Africa have not had the opportunities given to the men except in few instances; but the day would soon be here when our men would realise that women need education just as the men … It is true Journalism is not such a paying concern at the moment in West Africa but the activities of some of our women ought to be written in letters of flame just as an encouragement to other women and that is why women with the flair for writing should not hide their talents under a bushel (94).

DD further argues that women should rise up and work to the top. They should equally break themselves from the shackles of male oppression. She is emphatic:

> Women of Ghana, women of other lands had to fight hard for a place to dream, think, work and to vote. They were beaten with truncheons by policemen, they were cast into

> prison, they refused to eat (hunger strike). They showed men they were serious and wanted freedom to live as human beings on the same footing as the supposed laws of creation (101).

The above review brings to the fore how radical DD was in her advocacy for women's emancipation even though her works remain largely unpublished. Her militant, polemical voice was all too clear to anyone who read her writings. So a study of DD as an African feminist is a step in the right direction as it would help us extend the frontiers on the study of African feminism.

Critical Voices on Mabel Dove-Danquah

Even though criticism on DD's works is relatively subdued, there are still, few voices that have spoken to her works. Among these are Gadzekpo (2001), Opoku-Agyemang (2008), Yitah (2018), Denzer among others.

Audrey Gadzekpo's *Mabel Dove-Danquah and Others* FROM THE "WOMEN'S COLUMN" is a good point to start from. In this essay, Gadzekpo refers to a designated page, the "Women's Column" of the Accra Evening News, a newspaper launched on September 3, 1948, by Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first President and Prime Minister, emphasizing the role DD played in the paper as a writer.

In her 'Hard-headed and masculine hearted women: Female Subjectivity in Mabel Dove-Danquah's Fiction,' Yitah (2018) asserts that even though DD wrote during an era usually referred to as the 'nationalist literature' period, her writings did not simply focus on liberationist ideology as was the pre-occupation of her male contemporaries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. DD, as Yitah points out, "also called into question the male orientation that

held sway in her time." (162) This observation clearly depicts the double-edged nature of DD's writings as both a nationalist writer and as a feminist who ensured that her voice was heard clearly on what she believed on the role of women in society. She did this mostly through the strong and assertive female characters that peopled her fiction. "In her fiction," Yitah observes, "she overturns contemporary society's firmly held though sometimes illogical beliefs and assumptions about women, by depicting women of reason, knowledge and decisive action." (162)

Yitah could not have put it any better, for there are always to be found in DD's fiction "subversive, radical, and resourceful and strong women who resist attempts by males to define, silence or subdue them." (162)

Another equally important observation by Yitah is the fact that "Much of Dove's literary output remains unpublished, although some of her stories have appeared in anthologies of literature around the world – in Great Britain, the USA, the Netherlands and Sweden." Back home, very little is known about DD's literary works 'except for a few essays published on some of her stories by Newell and Naana Opoku-Agyemang.

These observations are profound and make it even more compelling for us to delve more deeply into DD's fictional works as such a venture would provide us a better insight into her works and enrich our discussions on gender and literature.

It is worthy of note, however, that not all critics of DD's works agree on her portrayal of women in her works. Opoku-Agyemang, for instance, seems to bemoan DD's pre-occupation with showing strong assertive women capable of doing what society sees as a preserve for men at the expense of fully developed and humanised women in her stories. Opoku-Agyemang (1995:76)

points out that "the didactic impulse overrides the development of characters so that generally, her characters serve clearly defined roles instead of existing as fully realized people who are faced with the complexities of life."

The Opoku-Agyemang view herein alluded to is a clear point of divergence from what Yitah (2013) earlier referred to would say as far as the characterisation of women in DD's works is concerned. Whereas Yitah sees DD's "hard-headed and masculine hearted" female characters in a more favourable light, Opoku-Agyemang suggests that the seemingly over emphasis overshadows the need to create fully developed and complex beings capable of facing the challenges that life presents.

DD is, nevertheless, not the only writer criticised for creating overly simple female characters. Ayi Kwei Armah, for instance, has often been attacked for his one-dimensional characters, especially in his Two Thousand Seasons. In her "Parasites and Prophets: The Use of Women in Ayi Kwei Armah's Novels," (Ngambika 1986: 102) Abena P. A. Busia, while agreeing that the women in Armah's Two Thousand Seasons are significantly different – and positively so – from what pertains in other works from the same author in terms of bravery, assertiveness and initiative, also criticises Armah for presenting characters who ". . . seem to be simply female voices detached from their bodies and sexuality." What is of significance here is that Armah is neither a woman nor a feminist, and yet he is not spared for creating some of the most assertive and bold characters ever known in literary history. The inference we draw from all these is that these writers are simply using a stylistic tool to help them create characters appropriate to propagate the message they want to put across, and this is not altogether a bad idea. What the above review has shown is that DD is indeed a towering figure as far as Ghanaian literary

feminism is concerned and therefore, a study of this nature, if successful, would contribute significantly to feminism in general and literary feminism in particular.

CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTERISATION AND THEME IN THE SELECTED SHORT STORIES

3.0 Introduction

The Short Story and Mabel Dove Danquah's Feminist Agenda

This chapter briefly looks at the short story as a literary genre and why DD opted for it instead of other literary forms. Beyond this, the chapter also undertakes a critical study of character and theme in the four selected short stories. An analysis such as this should help us establish the similarities and or differences in DD's characterization and how she uses these to advance her feminist agenda.

3.1 The Short Story as a Literary Genre

As a literary genre, the short story is a relatively recent concept that began in the nineteenth century. This is by no means to suggest that before then people did not tell, and or enjoy story-telling. In fact, story-telling is said to be one of the enduring ways in which man had given expression to his daily experiences or adventures. William Boyd (2006) puts it thus:

> "The short story had always existed as an informal oral tradition, but until the mass-middle class literacy of the 19th Century arrived in the West, the magazine and periodical market was invented to service the new reading public's desires and preferences, there had been no real publishing forum for a piece of short fiction in the 5 to 50 page range."

The above quotation goes to confirm that long before the short story was popularized as a literary form, people had recollected their daily experiences in the form of stories. The short story is often attributed to Edgar Allan Poe, whose criticism in which he spells out the defining features of the short story has served as a seminary text in critical studies of the genre for years.

3.2 Characteristics of the Short Story

From Poe's treatise on the short story as a literary genre, certain enduring features come up: "brevity" and a "single effect." According to Poe, a short story must be short enough to be read or told at a sitting, and this is in reference to brevity as a defining feature of the short story. What Poe means by this is that the short story writer should endeavour to cover fully the topic intended for the reader and within the short space of the short story. He argues that an extended work of fiction may have "worldly interests intervening during the pauses of perusal" and these interferences have the potential to "modify, annul or contract in a greater or less degree, the impressions of the book." Thus, the element of brevity is to ensure that the influence of external factors are kept at the barest minimum or eliminated completely during the reading of a short story.

The second important defining feature of the short story, according to Poe, is what he calls a "single effect." What this also means is that the writer should ensure that the reader's attention is fully engaged by the story during that short, uninterrupted reading, so that by the end of it all, the message intended is clear enough to the reader.

3.3 Why Mabel Dove-Danquah Opts for the Short Story

As a writer, DD never offered any easy explanation for choosing the short story over other literary genres as a mode of communicating her feminist thoughts to the rest of the world. However, a careful study of who she was, what she stood for, and the passion with which she worked would suggest certain underpinnings of her works.

As her biography reveals, DD herself, had been a victim of suppression and subjugation. First, her own biological father attempted to define her future by trying to dictate what kind of education she should benefit from, a situation that brought her into conflict with her father because she had resisted some of her father's attempt to suppress her. Second, her later married life was not all smooth as it ended barely a year after the marriage had been consummated. This followed her husband's travel and overstay abroad while she still remained his wife. Obviously, she rejected such a marriage as it indicated neglect so she moved out. Finally, DD found an avenue for expressing her views on female subjugation and suppression as a journalist and a parliamentarian, and she did these with great passion and in a way that was clear for all to see.

From the above short analysis, it is clear that DD had a story to tell and needed to do so in a brief and direct manner for her women counterparts and the rest of society to have a quick and easy access to the message behind her story. It is therefore, our conviction that DD opted for the short story as it offered her "brevity" and a "single effect" as against an extended work of fiction that comes with all the disadvantages pointed out by Poe.

3.4 Summary of Selected Short Stories

In the first story, "Anticipation", a polygamous husband attempts to take a forty-first wife but is outwitted when his intended bride takes the bride price only to reveal her identity as a wife of the same man married two years earlier. In other words, the polygamous man has been forced to pay the bride price twice for the same woman. The second story, "The Invisible Scar," tells of a man who deliberately maltreats his wife: tells lies about her, denies her support and forces her out of her matrimonial home. Out of "shock and malnutrition," the woman dies only for the ex-husband to spend lavishly on her funeral. Finally, the woman's ghost haunts the man until he confesses his guilt against her.

Our third story, "The Torn Veil," presents us with a man who divorces his illiterate wife for an educated one. Traumatized by the divorce, the woman dies, unknown to the husband. On his wedding night with another woman, the late wife' ghost appears. Enticed by its radiance, he follows it to his death. The fourth and final story, "Payment," tells of a woman who falls victim to charlatans when her only son falls sick. Having been deceived by the quacks for so long, she confronts the last medicine man, slapping him in the process when he attempts to dupe her even though the son he claims to have cured is already dead.

3.5 Characterisation and Theme in the Four Selected Short Stories

A careful reading of DD's short stories, especially the four selected ones for this study, reveals two main categories of characters. This classification is based on the characters' actions, and or inaction, and how this either helps to entrench female subjugation or question the status quo. We may call the first category *pro female subjugation*, and it is either made up of men, or both men and women whose behaviour and temperament work to reinforce female subjugation. The second category we may call *anti-female subjugation*. The members of this group are mainly women who by their very nature seek to challenge the system that subjugates them.

As far as theme in the four selected short stories is concerned, two main themes run through all of them. There is the theme of subjugation of women, and the perpetrators are, invariably, male characters in the stories. This theme is mainly explored through marital relationships and other related issues such as motherhood and associated challenges. Closely related to female subjugation in the selected stories is the theme of liberation of women from the yoke of socio-cultural subjugation and suppression. The main actors here are women who use various means to fight the system. In this way, the two themes appear to share a cause and effect relationship where the existence of one necessitates the other.

3.6 "Anticipation"

"Anticipation," the first of our four selected stories, perfectly exemplifies for us the two main categories of characters DD presents us with in her stories, namely *pro female subjugation* and *anti-female subjugation*. All the other thirty-nine wives of the Omanhene of Akwasin, Nana Adaku II, Nana himself as well as his linguist, constitute the *pro female subjugation* group. All of them behave in ways that directly or indirectly enhance the subservient position of women in the story.

A close study of the above-named characters, however, reveals that the women play a different role from that of the men even though the effect is the same. The women, as DD portrays them in the story, are docile, passive, uncomplaining; they do not seem to find anything untoward with the way they have all been lumped up together around one man. In a way, the women, by their loud silence, have allowed themselves to be reduced to mere objects owned by their all-powerful husband. The narrator emphasizes this thus:

> Desire again turned fiercely in his veins: he was bored with his forty wives. He usually got mixed up among them lately; he kept on calling them by the wrong names. His new wife cried bitterly when he called her Oda, the name of an old ugly wife. (Unpublished Manuscript)

From the above-cited quotation, what we see is a group of women who seem to be completely compliant with their situation even though it is demeaning to them. When one cries, it is merely to protest against an "ugly" co-wife's name being mistakenly used to address her. The significance of this representation by DD is to show how women can sometimes be complicit in the very system that negates their existence.

The other half of the *pro female subjugation* group constituted by Nana Adaku II and his linguist plays a more active role in the story. Nana is portrayed as the main architect of suppression of

the women in the story. It is he that sets the whole idea of taking a forty-first wife in motion. Nana's total disregard for his wives may be summed up in the following quotation:

> Nana Adaku was a fast worker. He was no different from men all over the world when they are stirred by feminine charm; sometimes, it is the shape of a leg, eye but whatever it is, the male species become greatly personified. Many of them go through this sort of mania regularly until they get to their dotage. (UM)

It may be deduced from the above quotation that Nana's attachment to women has nothing to do with their personalities as worthy wives who are capable of holding their own. Rather, it is all based on their physical attraction, which is impermanent, and as soon as they lose their charm, he gets tired of them and begins to look elsewhere for more. The linguist is a mere tool in the hands of the chief. As an errand boy of the chief, he works to ensure that his master's desires are met. Thus, the characters under the *pro female subjugation* group, whether actively or passively, act in ways that reinforce male domination of women.

In direct contrast to the *pro female subjugation* group is the *anti-female subjugation* group. This group is constituted by a lone member, Effua, the Omanhene's fortieth wife, whom he mistakes for a young unmarried woman fit for his advances. Unlike her other thirty-nine co-wives, Effua does not simply accept her fate as another addition to Nana's numerous wives. She decides to turn her predicament into an advantage. This advantage lies in her accepting a second bride prize from the same man she is already a wife to. The narrator could not have put it any better:

> Women, on the other hand, use quite a lot of common sense. They are not particularly thrilled by the physical charms of a man; if their pockets are heavy and their income sure, they are good matrimonial make. But there is evolving a new type of modern woman; hard-headed and masculine hearted. She insists on the perfect lover as well as the income and other necessaries, or stays forever from the marriage. (UM)

Effua is a representation of DD's "modern woman" who defies or rejects the status quo. It may be argued that Effua's behaviour is unethical, but if that were the case, then so would Nana's, for

he already has forty wives but is still looking for more. In a sense, Effua's boldness signifies victory over male domination because she outsmarts her greedy, polygamous husband whose idea of marriage is only based on his ability to pay a bride price and not because he really loves the woman involved. By this single act, Effua has beaten her husband at his own game.

DD's portrayal of Effua as a lone voice against male domination in the story is significant to understanding her feminist agenda. All over the world, whenever and wherever women are maltreated, subjugated and suppressed, the vast majority of them, like Effua's co-wives, keep quiet, accepting their fate. The agents of change among such womenfolk–those who rise against the system, are often in the minority. DD's message is all too clear: those who cause massive changes for the benefit of larger society are often in the minority. It is in this light we make sense of why Effua is portrayed as the lone voice fighting a system them affects not only her but all women.

3.7 "The Invisible Scar"

DD's characterisation in this short story is no different from what we see in "Anticipation." There are clearly two main categories of characters: those who support female subjugation and those who stand up against it. In this story, Allotey, the husband of a nameless but educated woman is obviously the one DD uses to represent the perpetrators of female subjugation. It is revealing when Allotey tells us thus:

> I must confess that a great many of us men in this part of the world do not marry women unless they are first lovers. It has become more or less a custom and many of us make it a point to honour that at least, there must be signs of a coming child. There are, of course, exceptions; but the idea of marriage to the average man means the services of a woman and the bearing of children. (UM)

Our quotation above gives a clear idea of the African man's idea of marriage, and Allotey, by his actions, perfects this idea. Allotey is in fact an archetype of the African man who lives up to his

true identity; he believes that the main purpose of marriage is to keep a woman at home for domestic purposes and to bear him children. As the story reveals, Allotey deliberately maltreats the woman he calls a wife, accusing her of masterminding an accident he knows she is innocent of. The fact that he is able to bribe an editor of a newspaper, *The Daily View*, to publish false stories about his wife and do other wicked things to her until she packs out of her matrimonial home, all go to support our earlier argument that he falls within the category of perpetrators of female subjugation. Like Nana Adaku II in "Anticipation", Allotey shows no affection for his wife who he sees as a mere object to be toyed with and discarded at will.

On the other hand, Allotey's wife, as presented by DD, works to question the system. As a true wife, who is fully humanized, she gives Allotey a chance to change. It is for this reason she does not complain initially in the hope that things would change for the better. Allotey himself admits thus, "My wife never complained. I did what I liked. I kept mistresses, I had children with them. I allowed my relatives to have as they liked in our house." (UM) However, when all her efforts fail, she then decides to call it quits, so she packs out. Even though her packing out may appear as a sign of weakness, DD uses another technique to show strength as the woman's ghost comes back to finish what she is unable to finish. Having died as a result of "shock and malnutrition" from her husband, she comes back as a ghost to force him to confess his evil deeds. What is of significance here then, is that the woman is stronger in death than she is in life. Of equal importance is the fact that this woman does not have a name. Like Effua in "Anticipation", she is a lone voice up against a deep seated culture of suppression of women.

3.8 "The Torn Veil"

Our third story "The Torn Veil" follows in much the same path as far as characterisation and theme are concerned. First, the dichotomy between the perpetrators of female subjugation and its

opponents is stark. Kwame Asante and Martha easily fit the former while Akosua, his wife, fits the latter. That Kwame Asante discards Akosua, his wife of ten years for Martha because Akosua is not educated enough, constitutes suppression and subjugation of women. This is because Kwame Asante's behaviour is the cause of Akosua's broken heartedness that finally kills her. Kwame Asante's behaviour is similar to Nana Adaku II in *Anticipation* and Allotey in *The Invisible Scar*. The following quotation confirms Kwame Asante's total lack of respect and affection for Akosua, his first wife. "Er …Akosua…er…I want to tell you I'm going to marry a lady. You'll be paid off with a hundred pounds…a frock-lady …umm…er…of course you can read and write Ga and Twi, but my friends will call you an illiterate woman." (UM)

Not only do Kwame's utterances quoted above portray him as extremely disrespectful to Akosua; it also reveals his lack of affection and his wrong perception about marriage. To him, marriage is all about convenience and the man's ability to pay. He boasts, "How many men in this country will pay a woman off with one hundred pounds? You are only entitled to twenty-five pounds, and here I am, out of kindness, offering you a hundred. Show some gratitude, Akosua." (UM) The woman's worth as a person and her emotions mean absolutely nothing to him. In fact, Kwame's disrespect and lack of appreciation for the woman he has been married to for ten years is beyond compare:

> If you dare to disgrace me by leaving the house before I am ready for you to go, there will be trouble. I do not intend to put up with a willful woman. What is my sin, after all? I only want to become decent and respectable. If you leave this house without my knowledge and permission, I shall claim every penny I have spent on you since I married and lived with you these ten years. (UM)

To make matters worse, Martha, Kwame's preferred woman, is an accomplice in this subjugation and suppression of her fellow woman. Thus, she is a willing collaborator in the pro-female subjugation scheme.

Then there is the anti-female subjugation camp, and here, the lone Akosua faces it all alone. Throughout the entire story, Akosua appears calm, uncomplaining and submissive, but all to no avail. Kwame must have his way, and he has his way. However, Akosua does not remain weak to the end; in death, she takes her pound of flesh from Kwame by appearing as a ghost on his wedding night, enticing him to his death.

3.9 Payment

"Payment" our final selected story does not deviate from the trend we have already established in first three stories. The characters, as usual, are divided in a black and white fashion: we have those whose actions go to suppress women and those whose actions tend to oppose the culture of impunity against women. In this story, Soriba obviously comes under stress as a result of her sick child. As already observed, women in all four stories encounter challenges as a result of their marriages to men and associated challenges such as motherhood. Thus, this lone woman is grappling with issues of her sick child because she is a mother. She is a widow, but her not being attached to any man does not prevent her from fighting on. In her fight for her sick child, she falls prey to charlatans in the name of "medicine men."

> The woman pays any charge she is asked to pay because she wants her son to live. She becomes gullible, all to save her son's life. She agrees with the hope that her son will be healed. For three years, the medicine men and diviners had fooled and robbed her. One after another, they had promised to heal her child. (UM)

But like her counterparts in the other stories, she rises to the occasion and slaps the last "medicine man" who attempts duping her under the pretense of healing her sick child who is, in reality dead but unknown to the charlatan.

The "medicine men" together with the silent majority of women constitute the *pro female subjugation* group in the story while the brave, militant Soriba is that lone voice representing the

pro female subjugation class. The women by their silence indirectly support the system that negates their existence while the "medicine men" cash in on the unstable emotional state of the widow to extort money from her. It is in this way they both work for the same end.

3.9.0 Points of Convergence and Divergence in Selected Short Stories

In general terms, all our four selected stories share similarities in ways that cannot be overlooked. In terms of characterization, the stories present us with two categories of characters whose actions and inactions drive the plot in the stories. As earlier pointed out, there is the class of perpetrators and accomplices of female subjugation in the stories. The main architects of this category are men and they are supported by women, directly or indirectly.

3.9.1 Points of Convergence in Selected Short Stories

In "Anticipation", we have Nana Adaku II and his linguist who directly suppress women and the thirty-nine silent co-wives of the chief who merely help entrench the system by their silence and the acceptance of their fate. In sharp contrast to the perpetrators and supporters of female subjugation are those who rise up against the system. Effua is the lone voice in this group.

"The Invisible Scar" follows the trend in a striking manner. In this story, Allotey the perpetrator of female subjugation does everything in his power to make life unbearable for his wife. In this, he courts the assistance of another man, the editor of a newspaper to spread falsehood about his wife, all in an attempt to get her out of his house and he succeeds, leading to the death of the woman. Allotey's behaviour is foiled by that of his wife, the nameless woman who in spite of her seemingly weak and submissive disposition comes back stronger as a ghost to teach him a lesson.

As we engage "The Torn Veil", we realize the characters in this story are no different from the first two already discussed. Every action and every utterance of Kwame Asante prove that he is a man who takes delight in making women's lives miserable. And like the women in "Anticipation", Martha, Kwame's preferred woman helps him to succeed in his suppression and oppression of his wife, all the way till she packs out and finally dies. Then in direct contrast, his otherwise quiet and submissive wife comes back, after her death, stronger and determined to make him pay for every single tear he made her shed.

Finally, we read "Payment" and realize nothing has changed in terms of the sharp contrast between good and evil as afar as the characters are concerned. The "medicine men" who use every trick to extort money from a widow struggling to find healing for her sick child, clearly suggest that they endorse the suffering of women. That the woman they are trying to dupe is already saddled by the burden of a sick child does not strike a chord in them in any way. But true to DD's intentions, this abused woman will not allow herself be fooled forever; she attacks the last of the tricksters by giving him slaps that daze and send him running for his dear life.

As far as theme in the four short stories is concerned, DD's message is unmistaken: there is injustice out there against women and it will take only women to fight it. DD shows that even though the battle is huge, the fighters are few. This is clearly demonstrated throughout all four stories. In "Anticipation", Effua stands all alone in a fight that affects her and other thirty nine co-wives who appear oblivious of their predicament. "The Invisible Scar" follows in much the same way; the nameless wife of the abusive Allotey is presented as a lone fighter but she makes sure Allotey pays for all his negative actions against her. When we come to "The Torn Veil", we meet Akosua, another lone ranger who makes sure she takes her revenge on the man who has caused her so much suffering. So, in this story too, we see DD's message of the fighting woman

being propagated. “Payment” our last story aptly completes DD’s message of the militant woman who must take up her destiny in her own hands and face all the oddities of life. Soriba’s boldness is both surprising and admirable. This is a woman who slaps a man full in the face to teach him a lesson for deceiving and attempting to dupe her. It is no wonder that her fellow women are surprised at her boldness.

3.9.2 Points of Divergence in Selected Short Stories

There are clearly ways in which our selected stories diverge. This divergence is seen in the way in which the female characters fight the system that subjugates them. Analyzing “Anticipation” and “Payment” on the one hand, and “The Invisible Scar” and “The Torn Veil” on the other, we see the divergence more clearly.

In “Anticipation” and “Payment”, the women who try to fight the system that subjugates them do so physically. They face their male counterparts in a bold and direct manner, as full fleshed and blooded human beings. Effua in “Anticipation” and Soriba in “Payment” exemplify this. DD presents the women in these stories as people who equally match their male counterparts either in wisdom or physical strength. Effua in “Anticipation” beats Nana Adaku II based on her intellect and wisdom. She reckons that her husband is taking advantage of wealth and influence to abuse women. While she has no such wealth and power, she definitely has intellect and wisdom which she uses to her advantage. In “Payment”, the approach is slightly different. There is every indication that Soriba is never a weak person. She only conceals her physical strength just for the sake of her sick child. But when all fails, she shows her assailants her true colours by slapping a full grown man who is unable to fight back but runs away in shame.

However, when we examine "The Invisible Scar" and "The Torn Veil" on the other hand, we observe that the women, who rise in opposition to the system that subjugates them, do so in the form of ghosts. In both stories, the women are overwhelmed by some physical challenge or other which eventually causes their death. But in death, they do not give up. They become even stronger and consequently, take a revenge on their male counterparts. No wonder they both succeed, achieving in death what their counterparts achieve in life.

From the foregoing, it is reasonable to conclude that DD has an urgent message to send across to her readers in general and the African woman in particular. It is a message steeped in the liberation of the African woman from age old traditions and customs that deny her, her rightful place in society. However, the urgency with which this message ought to be sent out influences her selection of the short story over the novel. As we have already pointed out, the short story has the advantage of being brief and providing the needed effect at a sitting. Following the tradition of the short story, DD creates very radical and decisive female characters who drive the theme of female liberation in the four selected stories. And by the time we finish reading each of them, we get DD's message loud and clear: the African woman must stand out and be counted; she must break away from the shackles of tradition and custom and be who she wants to be.

CHAPTER FOUR

NARRATIVE PEESPECTIVE, DICTION AND MOTIFS IN THE SELECTED SHORT STORIES

4.0 Introduction

Chapter three discusses the theme and character in the selected short stories of DD. The stories, "Anticipation," "The Invisible Scar", "The Torn Veil" and "Payment" are analyzed to ascertain whether the female characters are able to use their experiences to liberate themselves from the systems that subjugate them.

In this chapter, we explore some stylistic features in DD's short stories. The chapter specifically examines how DD uses narrative technique that allows her to chip in her authorial comments to expose female subjugation in the African society. Diction and motif she uses are also explored. The intention is to find out how these help her bring out the issues of female subjugation and liberation in the selected stories.

4.1 Narrative Perspective and Motif in Selected Short Stories

The term, narrative perspective, refers to the vantage point from which a story is told. This is what Genette calls focalization, arguing that it helps us make a distinction between the focalizer or mood, which refers to the one who sees what is narrated and the voice or narrator, which is the one who actually tells the story. The 1st Person and the 3rd Person narrative perspectives are well-known. These are equivalent to Genette's internal focalization and external focalization respectively. Of these, the 1st Person and the 3rd Person are more common than the 2nd Person. The question then is, what specific narrative perspective(s) does DD use in her four selected short stories, and why?

4.1.1 Narrative Perspective in "Anticipation"

In this short story, the narrative perspective that DD uses is clearly that of the 3rd Person. The first few lines of the story confirm this for us: "Nana Adaku II, Omanhene of Akwasin was celebrating the twentieth anniversary of his accession to the stool of Akwasin…it was in the height of the cocoa season, too; money was circulating freely and farmers were spending to their hearts' content." (UM) A careful study of the narrative, however, reveals that this narrator is not omniscient at all; at times, claims made by the narrator could be at best, speculations. "He must have dozed", says the narrator; with a heavy uncertainty as to whether Nana Adaku II had slept off or not at the time Effua went to meet him in his palace at night. This statement clearly shows that the narrator is not sure about the chief's state at the time Effua enters. But why does DD employ a limited omniscience?

The use of the limited omniscience helps DD achieve a certain liberty to chip in her authorial comments. The following quotation is clearly an example of an authorial comment from DD to emphasize her predominantly feminine perspective on the character of men as compared to that of women. The narrator tells us:

> Nana Adaku II was a fast worker. He was no different from men all over the world when they are stirred by feminine charm; sometimes, it is the shape of a leg, or the flash of an eye, or the quaver of a nostril, or the timbre of a voice. But whatever it is, the male species becomes greatly personified. Many of them go through this sort of mania regularly until they get to their dotage. The cynics among them treat women with a little flattery, bland tolerance and take fine care not to be seriously …(UM)

However, immediately after the above-quoted material, the narrator seems to go silent as the author takes over the narration. The following quotation clearly shows an authorial intrusion and this is significant to the overall understanding of the issues:

> Women, on the other hand, use quite a lot of common sense. They are not particularly thrilled by the physical charms of a man; if their pockets are heavy and their incomes sure, they are good matrimonial make. But there is evolving a new type of modern woman; hard-headed and masculine hearted. She insists on the perfect lover as well as the income and other necessaries, or stays forever from the marriage. (UM)

Obviously, the above quotation is not a part of the narrative flow. It is rather an authorial comment. Consequently, it makes no mention of any of the central characters in the story. Instead, it comments on women in general. The import of this comment, however, is that it seeks to make a comparison between men and women in general. But in all of this, the feminine agenda of DD is loud and clear: men are bad; women are good. It is, therefore, no wonder that the narration returns to the narrator, and this is announced as follows: "But let us return to Nana Adaku II who was getting bored with the whole assembly, and would be very glad to get into his palanquin again at 6:00pm." (UM) It is at this point the narrator resumes the full account of what is going on at the durbar grounds.

4.1.2 Narrative Perspective in "The Invisible Scar"

"Good morning, Dr. Young." (UM)

Unlike "Anticipation", this story, "The Invisible Scar", begins with a direct quotation, and at that point, the narrator is silent. It is only after the short dialogue that the narrator takes over: "The great specialist turned from the tiny glass tube he was contemplating and gazed at the owner of the rich musical voice," (UM) and continues the narration for the most of the story. From the two quotations cited above, we can conclude that the predominant narrative perspective DD employs in this story is also a 3rd Person perspective. But here, again, the narrator does not seem to know so much about the events being narrated. This is because the narrator, in Genette's terms, is not the "focalizer." In other words, someone else sees and feels what is being narrated by another person who is not part of the unfolding events. Why does DD choose this narrative style?

One major reason why the author adopts the limited omniscience is to allow for dialogue as this helps bring out the feelings of the characters who are actually involved in the events. We observe this in the dialogue that occurs between Dr. Young and his visitor at the beginning of the story, and this gives us some insight into the inner thoughts of the characters. This helps to enhance the element of objectivity in the story. We are more likely to believe the story because it is not just the narrator telling us but more importantly, the character who according to Genette is the one who sees and feels what is going on in the story.

A more compelling reason for DD's use of the limited omniscience in "The Invisible Scar" is that it allows for self-disclosure by characters. This is depicted by the letter from Allotey to his lawyer, disclosing all the ills he has committed against his wife. Much of the story is made up of Allotey's letter, which is actually a confession of his bad deeds against his wife – deeds that send the woman to an early grave. This style by DD appears a skillful way of getting her male character to tell his own story of abuse and injustice against his wife. This is not surprising since in all her short stories, she has an agenda, which is to establish a "man – villain, woman – victim" dichotomy, a feat she successfully achieves.

4.1.3 Narrative Perspective in "The Torn Veil"

As far as narrative perspective is concerned, "The Torn Veil" is similar to "Anticipation" and "The Invisible Scar" in that it is a 3rd Person narrative voice. The opening sentence reads, "Unscrupulous as he was, Kwame Asante had a qualm as he looked at the woman sitting on the African stool near the bed. He had called her, and yet when she came, he did not quite know how to begin the conversation."(UM) This is, obviously, a 3rd Person narrative voice. What is different in this story, however, is that we have an omniscient narrator. In other words, the narrator in this story sees and knows more than any other character at any given time in the

unfolding events. This is called zero focalization or internal focalization, Genette (189). In this kind of perspective, the narrator not only tells the story but also comments on the emotions and thoughts of the characters. This is exactly what we see in "The Torn Veil." After Kwame Asante's unsuccessful attempt to bribe his wife into allowing him take a second wife in the person of Martha Aryeetey, the narrator, commenting on Akosua's thoughts, tells us, "Is he trying to get rid of me?" adding that "she thrust the thought away from her." (UM) This is clearly a comment on what Akosua is thinking.

Again, while commenting Kwame's thought or what Kwame is thinking, the narrator says, "He thought; I have brought her to her senses. What is the world coming to when a cloth -woman begins to get indignant because a Christian gentleman and scholar wants to marry a frock lady in church?" (UM)

That the above quotation is introduced by the clause, "He thought," is an indication that the narrator is not only telling the story but it is also able to get into the mind of Kwame Asante to comment on what he is thinking or what he is likely to think. The next quotation is also an example of the narrator's comment on a character's thought.

> He thought better of the matter the next day. Akosua is but a woman, and women are always weak. After marriage I can soon coax her around. I can then have one wife in Akwapim and another in Accra. I always thought monogamy was humbug...there is a ratio of about eight women to one man: when I marry one and keep to her alone what happens to the other seven? (UM).

However, a careful analysis of the entire story reveals a major reason why DD decides to use an omniscient narrator. Getting to the end of the story, Akosua's ghost, dresses in a wedding gown, visits Kwame Asante on his wedding night. And accordingly, she never speaks throughout the entire encounter with Asante since ghost are not known to speak in human voice. Eventually,

Kwame also dies becoming another ghost. For a story full of ghosts, it becomes more meaningful to us why the author employs an omniscient narrator who knows everything about the characters – even beyond their death.

4.1.4 Narrative Perspective in "Payment"

Like the first three stories already discussed, "Payment" has a third person narrative perspective. This is clearly announced by the opening paragraph of the story:

> The mother slowly and tenderly covered the face of her child with a white sheet and knelt by the bed side. In four years she had spent nearly all her savings to cure her fifteen year old child. He had been taken to the specialist at Connaught Hospital; he had stayed there for six months. The doctors were baffled.

However, the narrator in this story is omniscient, knows everything including the thought of the characters. For example, the narrator is able to comment on Soriba's thoughts. "…she looked almost hopeful…Soriba thought." (UM) This quotation indicates that the narrator is able to tell us what is going on in Soriba's mind. Nonetheless, there is a departure regarding how DD uses omniscience in this story. It appears the omniscient narrator is able to see into only Soriba's thought, but not any other character's. Consequently, it takes the full conversation between the woman and the fake medicine man to reveal the latter's corrupt nature as a liar who takes advantage of others in their moment of need to amass wealth for himself. For instance, the quack medicine man tells the woman whose son is already dead, "your son will become strong and happy…the spirit says it…he will become a great man in the country." (UM)

The revelation of the duplicitous character of the medicine man only through the dialogue quoted above makes it difficult to understand why DD employs omniscient narrator in this story. This is because it has become increasingly clear that her choice of narrative perspective is tied into how

much information can be revealed by the narrator. This therefore presents a certain level of inconsistency regarding the author's choice of a narrator.

4.1.5 Diction in the Selected Stories

"Anticipation"

Mabel Dove-Danquah's choice of words in "Anticipation" is remarkably simple and makes comprehension of the story very easy. An outstanding feature of the story, however, is how the author, through diction, attempts to establish a dichotomy between her male characters on the one hand, and the female characters on the other. This distinction may be best described as "men – bad, women – good." The male characters, represented by the Omanhene of Akwasin, Nana Adaku II, are portrayed as people who are quite vain and lecherous in their outlook. DD's diction in the story makes her intensions quite clear.

DD describes Nana Adaku II and indeed "men all over the world…" in such derogatory terms: "species, mania, dotage." The word, **species,** refers to a class of plants or animals whose members have the same main characteristics and are able to breed with each other. By this reference, Nana Adaku II, and by extension, all men – are denied their humanity. And having lost their humanity, these men are often aroused by "feminine charm: sometimes, it is the shape of a leg or the flash of an eye or the quiver of a nostril or the timbre of a voice." (UM)

But DD's male characters are not only species; they also suffer from a "mania." A **mania** is an obsession for something; a mental condition that makes the sufferer too occupied with an activity of a sort, one that cannot be controlled. As we can see, these men have not only lost being human; they have also lost their sanity.

Worst of all, DD's male characters' insanity knows no end. "Many of them go through his sort of mania regularly until they get to their dotage." (UM) The word **dotage**, as used here, refers to that very old age at which one is weak and almost helpless. DD's male *species* continue with their *mania* well into their *dotage*. People are expected to grow out of certain negative habits with time; the men herein described are denied this normal human attribute, and that shows how depraved and degenerate they have become.

Conversely, the female characters in this story are fully humanized; and the author's choice of words makes this quite obvious. First, they are "women," not "species" like their male counterparts. To be a **woman** is to be an *adult female human being*. They are not associated with any animal-like tendencies. It is no wonder then that "common sense" is a characteristic of these women. We are told that "women" apply "a lot of common sense." A person who has **common sense** has the *ability to make good judgment and behave in a practical and sensible manner*.

Imbued with such glittering attributes, DD's women are very thoughtful in their actions: "They are not particularly thrilled by the physical charms of a man…" They know better than that! That is why they consider the size and weight of the man's "pocket" while ensuring that the source of "income" is secure before they consider him for their "matrimonial make." It should not be lost on us that DD, in her characterization of the male characters, mentions nothing about matrimony. The men are just wasteful and lecherous beings moved by sight. Thus, through appropriate choice of words, the author successfully distinguishes between male and female characters in the story, leaving the reader in no doubt as to how the two categories of human beings should be seen.

4.1.6 "The Invisible Scar"

Simplicity of diction seems a feature of DD's writing in general. "The Invisible Scar" continues on the same path. But if the author uses simple diction to set her work apart, she also uses same to distinguish her male characters from the females. Here in this story, too, DD perfectly carves the image of her male and female characters, using the tool she knows how to use best: diction. And just as she does with "Anticipation," the male characters, represented in this story by the sculptor, Quarcoo Asare Allotey, are presented as very backward, even despicable, while the women, mainly represented by his wife who later dies, are as usual, the good, calm and loving ones who almost always become the victims of the men.

What is of significant in this story, however, is that Allotey himself is the one who reveals his character and that of his wife through his choice of words. These words are contained in the letter to his lawyer, in which he confesses what did to his wife, who is now dead.

Allotey's letter contains the word "wrong" used as a noun. A **wrong** is an *unfair or immoral act committed against another person.* By stating that he wants to "atone for the great wrong" he has done against his wife, now dead, Allotey is indirectly confessing that he is both unfair and immoral. We get to understand him better for using such words on himself when he further tells us that he wants to remove the "slur" he has brought on his own child through the lies he once concocted about his wife. Since a **slur** is an *insulting word capable of damaging another person's reputation,* we realize that Allotey, per his own confessions, does not destroy only his late wife's reputation but also, that of his own son. Again, Allotey says that his late wife "thought" he, Allotey, was the most "wonderful man in the world…" To say that the woman **thought** he "was" is to admit that he is not what he was thought to be. A duplicitous character he is then. Thus, by careful selection of words, DD has again succeeded in making her male

character in this story come out as a villain who together with other male characters in the story, abuse and eventually destroy his own wife.

DD is quite skillful in how she uses Allotey's own words to show what a great woman his late wife was. The following words: innocent, sincerity, truthfulness, are what Allotey uses to paint in glowing colors the very woman he himself destroyed. *To say a person is **innocent** of an act is to say the person is not guilty.* Allotey's late wife is innocent of any wrongdoing even though she is wrongfully and deliberately accused of all manner of things – a situation that obviously causes her death eventually.

Her innocence apart, Allotey's late wife is also portrayed as one who is sincere and truthful. Allotey himself tells us so. **Sincerity** is a virtue, and whoever has it is commended for always meaning what they say. Allotey's wife had it all and died for it – according to his own letter to his lawyer. But innocence and sincerity are not the only virtues this rare woman exudes; she is also an embodiment of "truthfulness." *When people are accorded the virtue of truthfulness, it means they are honest in their dealings with others and do not tell lies*. Allotey's late wife is that kind of a woman. She is the direct opposite of the man she marries.

It is, thus, clear that DD's distinction between her male and female characters is unmistaken; the men are bad and the woman are good as the two stories discussed above portray. The reader is thus given a reason why the women are called to liberate themselves from relationship with such men.

4.1.7 "The Torn Veil"

Like the two stories discussed above, "The Torn Veil" is no different. The story opens with the description of the male character, Kwame Asante. "Unscrupulous as he was, Kwame Asante…".

(UM) DD continues on the same tangent by using such words to describe the male characters. Kwame Asante decides to marry another woman because she is "illiterate". **"Unscrupulous"** means *not honest or fair, doing things that are wrong, dishonest or illegal.* This is the description given to the main character. He is ready to "pay off" his wife for no wrong done but to be able to get a second wife. Akosua has done nothing wrong to warrant this treatment from the man she has been married to for ten years but he intentionally makes up his mind to get a literate wife.

Another word that is striking is when she describes him as **"indignant".** Used as an adjective, it means *feeling or showing anger because of something unjust or unworthy***.** Asante gets annoyed because his wife questions his decision. Every woman is expected to behave like Akosua-by asking her husband for explanation when he breaks the news of his intention to take a second wife. Akosua does not shout or attack her husband. Rather, she asks for the reason why he wants to marry a second wife. He goes ahead to threaten Akosua if she dares packs to her father's house. And when she packs out of the marriage, Asante "claims" back the money he has spent on his wife since he married her. This goes to show how cruel Kwame Asante is because he married Akosua for ten years and had three children with her. If she has packed out, he should not write to get all he has spent on her back.

Akosua on the other hand, is described as a nice, calm woman. "Black as ebony, with the fine features peculiar to the girls of Akwapim hill, she looked exceedingly graceful in her brown and red designed cloth and the lovely silk head-tie wrapped round her head". (UM) The description given to Akosua shows that she is a beautiful woman by all standards. When Kwame Asante breaks the news to her, he uses words such as "goodwife, gentle, quite refined, decent and respectable". **"Gentle"** means *having or showing a kind and quiet nature or not harsh or violent.*

"Refined" as used to describe Akosua means *free from moral imperfection*. Whoever is described as "refined" is an asset; therefore, Akosua is a perfect woman for every level headed man. Martha Aryeetey, Kwame Asante's second wife, is equally described with such words like "pleasant looking girl, plump and cheerful and extremely proud." She is also good looking like Akosua.

By this, DD successfully uses diction to show the dichotomy between the male characters as against the females. She uses diction to achieve her motive of male-bad and female-good mantra.

4.1.8 "Payment"

DD presents a woman with words such as **"slow, tender and dignified".** The adjective **tender** *means very loving and gentle, showing affection and love for someone or something.* She is a woman who shows so much love towards her dying son. She tries all her might to get a cure for her son. The woman is described as "dignified" which means *serious and somewhat formal.* She shows seriousness in her quest to get son cured. As a widow, she tries very hard by taking her son to the best hospitals and seeks the help of medicine men. She also takes what she is told seriously by the medicine men and diviners: "she had slaughtered a sheep and given it to a medicine man to bury. She had parted with a goat to another; another of the sages for Saraka. She had given two expensive Nigerian cloths to yet a third to be burnt in ritual." (UM)

The medicine men and diviners are described by using words such as **"lies, deceit, fooled and robbed''**. Such words show clearly that the, men are bad to deceive the woman into believing they are going to cure her son of his sickness. When someone **lies**, *he makes an untrue statement with the intent to deceive.*

Deceit is *an attempt to deceive and to* **rob** *is to take money or property from a person illegally*. DD employs diction to show how cunning and bad the medicine men are. The last medicine man also demands a high amount as his fee but the woman decides to expose him by giving him a few slaps. This is to show that the men who approach the woman to save her dying son are deceitful and liars. DD's use of diction is crafted to project her female characters as good and paint a gloomy picture about their male counterparts.

4.1.9 Motif in the Selected Short Stories

A motif is a recurring salient element usually of thematic value in a work of art. One motif that runs through all four selected short stories of DD is that of the beautiful African woman. Consistently, DD has presented us with the African woman as a symbol of beauty and attraction endowed with intelligence. This beauty is usually a combination of natural comeliness, costume, jewelry and other personal effects used for the enhancement of beauty. In "Anticipation", for instance, the women, represented by Effua the Omanhene's wife is described in glittering and glowing terms. She is described as, "enchanting in her green and blue square kente…" Her movement is described as one done with a "… charming grace of a wild woodland creature." (UM) No wonder the chief is unable to control himself upon seeing her and begins throwing money around in his wild excitement. She uses her intelligence to outwit her polygamous husband. This shows that DD creates women characters not only with beauty but also with so much intelligence to beat the system.

In "The Invisible Scar", the picture is no different. In Allotey's letter to his lawyer, he gives an idea about the physical attraction of the woman who later becomes his wife. In this description, the woman is not accorded any real, natural beauty. However, there is enough information to conclude that the woman has taken time to adorn herself for the occasion: "she had on a blue,

gold and white kente cloth, a white blouse, gold scandals and a gold band encircling her head." (UM). The idea is obvious; this nameless woman leaves nothing to chance as far as her outward appearance is concerned. Like Effua in "Anticipation", she makes sure her presence is felt.

The beautiful and intelligent African woman motif is sustained as we read "The Torn Veil." The woman accorded all the accolades of beauty is Akosua. She is described as follows:

> Black as ebony, with the fine features peculiar to the girls of the Akwapim hills, she looked exceedingly graceful in her red designed cloth and the lovely silk head- tie wrapped round her head…she looked radiant from her curly hair to the toes of her feet shod in spitfire sandals. She was good to feast the eyes upon. Her tiny ears were pierced by the golden earring called Abongo. (UM)

In the above quotation, one thing is clear; there is no attempt on the part of the character to embellish herself with ornament but there is every effort by the author to make comments about her natural beauty and attraction.

As far as the motif of the African woman as a symbol of beauty and intelligence is concerned, DD's "Payment" makes not departure from the other stories earlier discussed. What is different in this story, though, is that the description of the beautiful woman is not extended. All the same the intention is clear. Though a woman who is going through a lot of challenges to get a cure for her dying son, she is still… "a tall dignified–looking woman of Sierra Leone in a brown printed voluminous gown. Wrapped round her head is a stripped cotton head kerchief, and on her feet, home-made carpet slippers." (UM) Thus, her description in this story confirms our argument that there is an attempt by DD to project the African woman as an object of beauty, intelligence and strength.

Last but not least, we cannot discuss motif in DD's selected short stories without looking at the motif of the lone voice. Right from "Anticipation" through "The Invisible Scar" and "The Torn

Veil" all the way to "Payment", there is this lone female voice fighting a bad system that subjugates her and her entire womenfolk. Effua in 'Anticipation" is lone voice speaking for and on behalf of her thirty-nine co-wives and indeed for all women. "The Invisible Scar" presents us with a lone, nameless voice, that even in death, stands up for rights of all women. When we get to "The Torn Veil", Akosua, Kwame Asante's wife, is that lone female voice that takes up the challenge of speaking up against the unjust system subjugating her and other women. Like Allotey's wife, the nameless woman, Akosua pursues justice in death and gets it. With the same regularity, Soriba in "Payment" repeats the single voice motif that DD employs throughout all four short stories.

A critical reading of the four selected stories however, would reveal that DD's use of the motif of the lone voice is not merely for its own sake. It is to support a reality in the real world: wherever women have been subjugated, suppressed or abused in the world, it almost always takes the bravery and courage of a few to cause the much needed change. DD, by employing this motif, tells her womenfolk that the battle against male dominance is real but it would take a courageous few like those represented in her stories to stem the tide.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations for further Studies

5.0 Introduction

This thesis sought to ascertain whether or not Mabel Dove-Danquah is a female liberationist, and to what extent her short stories help to extend the fight for the liberation of women, particularly the African woman. A systematic study of the biography of DD was done to establish her objective as a feminist and how far her major characters, all females, live up to her standard of liberation from male dominance. In doing so, the study used close reading of each of the primary texts: "Anticipation", "The Invisible Scar", "The Torn Veil" and "Payment" in the light of character and theme. Also, the narrative perspective and motif she used were critically analysed.

5.1 Findings

From the analysis, all four short stories appear to project a "triumphant female"- women who seem to try to overpower or outwit their male counterparts. The stories are based on the premise that the liberation of the African female mind is central to the development of the country. It is, however, clear that some social, cultural and political practices still oppress the women. Such practices like polygamy, illiteracy, bride price among others have negative effects on women but her characters exhibited courage and agency to free themselves from these traditions and practices.

As far as the four short stories are concerned, Effua in "Anticipation" clearly anticipates that her polygamous husband is about to throw away cash in the name of marrying a forty-first wife. Consequently, she falls the weapons at her disposal: her beauty, intellect and bravery as a tool to

beat Nana Adaku II, the Omanhene of Akwasin at his own game. She takes twice her bride price to outwit her polygamous husband. DD presents a woman who takes charge of the situation. She takes a radical stance when she assumes the role of "Kwaku Ananse" by cunningly beating the system. She takes the "hundred pounds" to enrich herself.

DD sheds more light on the fact that women should rise up against any form of oppression which is evident in the patriarchal society. She capitalizes on the chief's weakness to enrich herself.

The nameless woman in "The Invisible Scar" who is educated leaves her abusive husband. Like the nameless woman in "The Invisible Scar", Akosua in "The Torn Veil" also leaves her polygamous husband for good. The women die at the end but their ghosts come to haunt their husbands. These women, even in death, become successful in their quest to make their husbands pay for their crimes. They take a radical stance, like the nameless woman who makes sure her husband writes to his lawyer to confess his sins against his wife. The educated woman leaves the marriage when she realizes her husband is cheating on her. DD presents an assertive woman who does not want to conform to the tradition of polygamy like Effua's co-wives, she rather packs out with her child. This is an educated woman, who also works as a reporter, and therefore, economically independent. The nameless woman represents DD's "strong headed and masculine-hearted woman" who fights for her liberation out of an abusive marriage. There is evidence that what she calls marriage is an abusive one. The man maltreats her and levels unfounded allegations against her. He says,

> I thought my wife would be more cowed if I could frighten her so I wrote her a twenty-page letter. I gave my wife as many lovers as I could think of, both black and white. I made some infamous allegations which I am now too ashamed to repeat on paper-misleading statements, distorted facts and deliberate falsehood. (UM)

She eventually packs out of her husband's house with the child. To DD, education is a tool for female liberation, so she gets herself another job after she has left her husband. She is only another female voice representing the suffering women being dogged by the patriarchal system.

Akosua in the "The Torn Veil," also decides to pack out when her husband tells her of his intention to marry a second wife. With three children, she shows radicalism by not staying in the marriage but leaving even though Kwame Asante proposes a compensation for her. He later threatens her if she dares pack out of their matrimonial home but Akosua becomes aware of the consequences and leaves Kwame Asante.

In the last story, the Sierra Leonean woman avenges the death of her son by giving the last medicine man heavy slaps. She vents her anger on him because other medicine men and diviners have promised to cure her son by taking huge sums of money from her but to no avail.

The study has revealed that DD's vision to liberate the African woman, through her characters, is successful. We are told Effua uses her beauty to enrich herself. She capitalizes on the chief's womanizing tendencies to break the tradition of taking a second bride price. The educated woman uses her education and career as far as her liberation is concerned. She eventually dies but makes sure her husband confesses. Akosua packs out of her marriage and dies on the night her husband gets married to a new wife. Kwame Asante goes to marry an educated woman but Akosua does not allow him to consummate his marriage. Her ghost torments him which eventually leads to his death. She pays him back in his own coin. Even though Martha is educated and is employed as a teacher, she takes an allowance of "three hundred pounds" monthly from Kwame Asante to supplement her monthly salary. Like the woman in "Payment", she avenges the death of her son in her approach for liberation. She challenges the medicine man

by giving him heavy slaps which surprises the entire village. She shows her strength and radicalism in dealing with the fake medicine man.

5.2 Conclusion

It is evident that all four short stories establish that DD's female characters really liberated themselves from the systems that oppressed them. The radical and liberated women were present in the stories. This, therefore, makes DD's claim as a feminist even clear as shown in her speeches and writings. The "hard- headed and masculine hearted women" in the stories took charge by liberating themselves from patriarchy.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

As far as this research is concerned, literature on the first female to be elected to the Legislative Assembly, Mabel Dove-Danquah, is limited. Also, her stories are missing from the canon of Ghanaian literature. It would be appropriate for scholars to research further into her stories to project her as one of the earliest female writers of Ghana and Africa as a whole.

Studies of DD would also give us the opportunity to examine how far her works have contributed to the emancipation of African women and the changes that have occurred since her time.

Finally, further studies on DD would in no small way give her the prominence she deserves and accord her a place side by side with her male nationalist counterparts.

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