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Original Article

## Representations of “The New Woman” in Changes and Our Sister Killjoy by Ama Ata Aidoo

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This study explores the representations of “the new woman” in selected works by Ama Ata Aidoo, namely: *Changes* (1993), *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977), and *Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997). Ama Ata Aidoo addresses the conditions and needs of continental African women (African women who reside on the African continent) and points out key issues relating to discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex and gender objectification, structural and economic inequality, power and oppression and gender roles and stereotypes. It reviews several studies carried out on works by Ama Ata Aidoo thus providing this study with the privilege of filling the gaps that were not addressed. It is finally noted that Aidoo does not agree with the view that the success of a woman should be gauged by her ability to get married and have children as emphasised by African tradition. To her, the success of women does not lie in their ability to reproduce but rather in becoming productive in other aspects that benefit humanity and promote the independence and progress of a nation. Aidoo clearly implies that for any nation to develop effectively the role of a woman must not be ignored. A woman has to join hands with the man in order to see a better nation, it should however be noted that the position of a woman in the contemporary world is still a hustle since it is proven through all the new woman characters that it is hard for women to live as single or divorced without enigma from the society.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ama Ata Aidoo is the author of many works but four out of the numerous numbers of works have been selected for closer analysis and these include; *Changes* (1993) and *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977). Aidoo is a woman writer who demonstrates that women can, irrespective of the unlevelled grounds laid for them in patriarchal societies. Aidoo does not agree with the view that the success of a woman should be gauged by her ability to get married and have children. To her, the success of women does not lie in their ability to reproduce but rather in becoming productive in other aspects that benefit humanity and promote the independence and progress of a nation. She purposefully reiterates the struggles that each of the women is faced with and the severity of these conflicts. The woman whose mission is not only to overcome the limitations imposed on her because she is a woman but goes ahead to actively fight for a new world where women have equal opportunities like men is the one I call a new woman as opposed to the old woman who has accepted all the patriarchal society has assigned to her. In this study therefore, I investigate the key qualities of these new women characters and old woman characters showing how a new woman is in a better position compared to the old woman through her freedom and independence as depicted in four of Aidoo's proposed works.

Ama Ata Aidoo has made significant efforts towards helping other women in her society to rise in power by supporting the expression of their voices through writing. Brookman and Etal (2019) carried out a study on *Education and the assertive Woman in Aidoo's Changes* employing the feminist or womanist theory and the main findings of the study indicated that there have been positive

changes in the roles of women over the years. This change has come about as a result of women's quest to assert themselves through education and contribute towards freeing their families from cultural and societal dogmas in which women were treated to subjugation and marginalisation. A remarkable observation was the intentionality of ascribing to female characters more respectable roles in novels by various writers as the years went by. A conclusion drawn from the study was that education is still a major weapon for enhancing assertiveness in women, but it is not the ultimate. The study above points to the gap that my study explored - education could be one way of redefining the stand of a woman in a patriarchal society, implying that there are other ways the cited study did not look at which was my interest in Ama Ata Aidoo's fiction.

Labo (2013: 23) in his study '*Women self-affirmation, Changes*, discussed heading the socio-politico-economic side with an insistence on women's rights. Through her characters, the novelist succeeded in explaining the impact of patriarchy in traditional Africa and on both male and female characters. Given some of her accomplishments, it is apparent that Aidoo feels strongly about the roles of women in Ghanaian society and their ability to hold powerful positions and express their voices through writing. Important to note is the fact that Aidoo comprehends the plight of women in the African setting and tries to bring out the struggles these women undergo in the different setups. This precisely presents women depicting the different roles they play which stratify them as old and new.

### Justification of the Study

Myths, the media and the position of men in an African society continue to portray life for an African woman as sad in her own society. This is the reason why most women have had to put up with a lot of injustices and oppression towards them just because they were born female. This study serves to use literary sources to present a picture of the life of an African woman in her own society by reflecting on how the new woman differs from the old woman as depicted in Aidoo's works. This makes a significant contribution to the contemporary debate about women's prejudices and injustices and the representation of the new woman which is dominant in Ama Ata Aidoo's fiction

### Significance of the Study

The essay also enriches the appreciation of Ama Ata Aidoo's fiction in regard to the representation of the women characters, particularly the new woman and serves as a reference for further research to be conducted by other scholars. It is a contribution to critical debates on these African texts that engage and stretch the characters' mental and physical abilities while trying to integrate themselves into the African society of the time. By analysing three different works of Ama Ata Aidoo, written at different times -1977, 1993 and 1997, the study provides insights into female African experiences in both the past and present eras reflecting on the success of the trends and successes of the African Woman's Plight. This provides different representations and the much-needed link between the setting and the characters' experiences. This study also conceptualises the trend of illusion metamorphosing into disillusionment in the lives of several female Africans.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Ashley Crossman (2019) who is a feminist, examines feminist theory as a major branch within sociology that shifts its assumptions, analytic lens and topical focus away from the male

viewpoint and experience towards that of women. In doing so, feminist literary theory shines a light on social problems, trends, and issues that are otherwise overlooked or misidentified by the historically dominant male perspective within social theory. African feminism is a type of feminism innovated by African women that specifically addresses the conditions and needs of continental African women (African women who reside on the African continent). He states that feminist theorists point out key issues relating to discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex and gender objectification, structural and economic inequality, power and oppression and gender roles and stereotypes. Ashley further indicates that since the experiences and perspectives of women and girls were historically excluded from social theory and social science, much feminist theory has focused on their interactions and experiences within society to ensure that half the world's population is not left out on how we see and understand social forces, relations, and problems.

Eller's (2000) *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory- Why an Invented Past Will Not Give Women a Future* further avers that the theory part of feminist theory is simply the way that any feminist individual or feminist movement understands how gender inequality is created and perpetuated, and the ideas they have about how to change the status quo. There are as many different kinds of feminist theory as there are ways of understanding how gender differentiations are created.

The feminist theory usually refers to two strains of thought concerning the relations between gender and writing. The first strain is Anglo-American, emerging in the late 1960s and 1970s in correlation with what is called the "women's liberation movement". This strain of feminist literary theory argues that literary studies have always been male-dominated and that our notions of what constitutes good or great literature have always been shaped by male models and male authors. This line of feminist literary theory, best exemplified by Gilbert and

Gubar (1980) in their work *The Madwoman in the Attic*, searches for the works of forgotten female authors and calls for the re-evaluation of writing by women through the development of a female-based or non-gendered standard of literary criticism.

The second strand of feminist literary theory is what Boyce Davies and Adam Graves (1986:8-10) refer to as African feminism. They define this strand of theory as that which recognises a common struggle with African men for the removal of the yokes of foreign domination and European and American exploitation. It is not antagonistic to African men but challenges them to be aware of certain salient aspects of women's subjugation which differ from the generalised oppression of all African people. This theory recognises that certain inequities and limitations existed and still exist in traditional societies and that colonialism reinforced them and introduced others. It acknowledges its affinities with international feminism but delineates specific African feminism with certain specific needs and goals arising out of the concrete realities of women's lives in African societies. It 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 African women's status as mothers but questions obligatory motherhood and the traditional favouring of sons. It respects the African woman's self-reliance and penchant for cooperative work and social organisation. It understands the interconnectedness of race, class, and sexual oppression. Uzoamaka (2019) calls African feminism, which raises not only the issues of sex and gender but also the questions of race and canon formation focusing on how African women writers are seen, read, and by whom. Guy-Sheftall (2003) opines that despite the pervasiveness of western feminist theory in academic discourse, there is a growing body of creative (fiction, visual art, film-), scholarly, and political work by African women which can be placed under the rubric of 'African

feminism'. These discursive, imaginative, and activist projects are important sites of resistance among African women in various cultural contexts and they compel us to reimagine what is meant by 'feminism' in a global context. While a comprehensive examination of African feminism would take into consideration this broad range of work throughout the continent. These studies observe that Aidoo develops very strong African women characters who are conscious of the state and suffering of women in a male-dominated society and who struggle in different ways against this domination. Aidoo is a feminist author that portrays an extremely accurate representation of female characters throughout her writing. For instance, in her novel *Changes*, she focuses on the hardships that accompany the lives of the three female protagonists.

The study therefore utilises the feminism aspect to critically interpret the presentations of these two new women- old and new, focusing on at least three of the key issue feminist theorists expound; discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex and gender objectification, structural and economic inequality, power and oppression and gender roles and stereotypes. These key points will interface with the prevalent challenges in both worlds of women characters and how the new brood redefines its status and plight in the selected works by Ama Ata Aidoo. This theory also guided the researcher to show the world that for man and woman to have a beautiful life together and to live in harmony, they must understand each other. It further rules out the biased judgement posed on women by society.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In her novel *Changes*, Ama Ata Aidoo not only writes about the world and how it is, but she writes about how certain characters should be. For instance, in an interview with Ada Uzoamaka Azodo in 1996, she admitted, "I called the book *Changes* because I see a character like Esi, the protagonist primarily, as being a part of those who

are trying to define, or even redefine women as lovers, wives, mothers, daughters, and even granddaughters". This observation implies that Aidoo has crafted some of her characters showing a new perception of what a woman should be, thus the idea of "old" and "new" women phenomenon.

Osaki (2002) acknowledges that there is a moral and intellectual responsibility to understand how and why women lose touch with reality and how this malady can be prevented. In their paper, Osaki and Temu identify patriarchy as a social institution which functions according to the principle that "man shall dominate female" and migrations to new societies as the primary causes of the madness of African women, women who otherwise would have been powerful figures in society. The above reflections indicate that women who choose to spend their lives differently are named mad. These so-called 'mad' are the women this study addresses as new women, particularly because they have defied the "man shall dominate female" principle. This study will therefore situate the estimable qualities of the new woman, which are not explicitly handled in the previous studies on Ama Ata Aidoo fiction.

Cherry (2002:9) in her analysis of Ama's female characters in *Our Sister Killjoy*, denotes that somehow, going to Europe was altogether more like a dress rehearsal for a journey to paradise. But Sissie, the protagonist, is totally different from those who are in living in comfort in Europe. There she was, in spite of her squinted eye, able to see the European intentions behind the scholarship grants and studying abroad. This novel analyses a young girl's ability to withstand the intended whitewashing kind of education and post-colonial ideology. Sissie and many other women characters like her are a replica of the kind of new woman whom several studies have ignored and thus the study intends to explore more on this theme in Ama Ata Aidoo's fiction.

## METHODOLOGY

The study is basically descriptive, employing a qualitative approach and this was used with regard to data collection, interpretation, and analysis. The qualitative approach is used to describe the ways in which the old woman is paralleled against the new woman and analyse the struggles women undergo in male dominant societies and techniques used to establish the different women in all the selected works of Ama Ata Aidoo. This made it possible to clearly describe the data. After attaining the major selected texts, a close reading of the texts and other relevant material like journals, articles, magazines, newspapers, and previous research reports was done alongside note-taking of key events and ideas in each text while collecting data. The main source of information were all works of Ama Ata Aidoo, particularly the two works, relevant journals, research reports, and the internet to complement information lacking in the library.

The key method used to obtain data is a close reading of the texts. The texts included the primary texts of Ama Ata Aidoo on which the study is based and the secondary texts of other scholars.

The study involves the examination of documents guided by a textual checklist as a major research instrument. The checklist comprises aspects that help to internalise the key variable, which is the Representations of the New Woman. The aspects include women as lovers, women as mothers, women as wives and the literary aspects of language, characterisation, and plot, respectively.

## DISCUSSION

This essay explores the representations of women in the selected works by Ama Ata Aidoo, positioning these women characters into strands of old and new. The chapter considered women characters who accept the roles their patriarchal society has assigned to them, for example, women as subservient wives and women that embrace motherhood as the old type of women. The new

women characters are those who have become conscious of their state and suffering in a male-dominated society and struggle in different ways against this domination. This chapter bases all its argument on the feminist theory, which sees the uneven power balance between the two sexes of man and woman in the family, workplace, politics, religion, and economy as being a consequence of the patriarchal ideology.

*Changes a Love story* tells the story of Esi, a self-empowered, strong-willed statistician with a Master's degree, employed in a lucrative job at the Department of Urban Statistics. She is unhappily married to her husband, Oko, with whom she has a young daughter. Esi and Oko often dispute over their assumed gender roles within the relationship, such as Esi's refusal to cook for the family or bear any more children. During one argument, Oko rapes his wife in an angry fit. The assault leaves Esi devastated and isolated from friends and family, as marital rape is not a widely accepted concept within her culture. Although marital rape does occur, the patriarchal culture does not recognise the act as violent but rather as a husband's right. After divorcing Oko, Esi enters a polygamous marriage with a charismatic travel agent, Ali. Ali's first wife, Fusena accepts Esi as second wife but reveals her jealousy when she learns that Esi holds a university degree and a career.

Araba (2010) postulates that in *Changes*, Aidoo's main concern is with the modern educated woman and how her situation has "improved" with her education. Aidoo portrays two main categories of women in her novel; the conventional woman (represented by Oko's mother and sisters, the wives of the patriarchs of Nima, and Nana, Esi's mother), and the modern educated woman (represented by Esi, Opokuya and Fusena). Her feminist attack is mainly against patriarchal conventions such as stereotypes regarding desire, control, education, and marriage, and the conventional woman who does not see the need for change but rather frustrates the efforts of other women who are ready for change.

Examples of such women are Oko's sisters and mother. The Ghanaian woman is traditionally and conventionally expected to play the role of wife and mother. She is expected to be available to her husband and children at all times. She is responsible for her home, while her husband goes to work and provides for the family. With the introduction of formal education for girls and women and the rise in women's rights advocacy, the role women play in society continues to change.

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

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

Also, Esi Sekyi has to deal with antagonistic men who try to "put her in her place". For these men, "she was unwelcome, and a burden they did not know what to do with". As far as they are concerned, it is hard enough to deal with over-qualified men, "but to have to cope with an over-

qualified woman in any situation is a complete misfortune". Aidoo encourages a rebellion against social conventions that define specific spaces for women in various professions. Jones (2013) remarks that one of the most pivotal issues in Ama Ata Aidoo's novel *Changes* is its female characters' struggle with an actualising identity outside the cultural gender norms. Within the first pages of the novel, the right to self-identify and control one's own body is brought into conflict and continues as a theme throughout the book.

In *Changes*, Aidoo does not pretend to represent all West African women, nor even all working women in Accra. Her main characters are clearly middle-class. She introduces us to three different characters within that stratum: the secular, divorced professional; the wife/mother/nurse/midwife, also secular; and the contemporary Muslim, veiled, running a successful business, and extremely bitter about polygamy. The three women are equally important for Aidoo's discussion of the various aspects of women's lives.

Opokuya cannot really comprehend a woman who complains of a husband being "too loving." Yet she also realises that she has long envied Esi's "freedom of movement," her independence. A nurturing, maternal type, Opokuya struggles to successfully combine her duties as a wife and a mother of four with her job as a nurse and midwife, a double shift that finds her still weary in the morning and breathless at the end of the day. Yet Opokuya in no way typifies the traditional submissive wife. Tired of depending on her husband's goodwill for rides, for example, she proposes to buy Esi's old car, thus asserting her physical and financial independence from Kubi, as well as her desire for greater freedom of movement.

Nevertheless, the conversations they have, as Esi sips a beer and Opokuya a cup of tea, shed light on the differences in their personal circumstances: Esi has a beer and Opokuya has tea.

*... She insisted that alcohol relaxed her so much that if she took a sip of anything alcoholic, the first thing she would want to do even that early in the evening would be to look for her bed... How could she, Opokuya Dakwa, sleep any time she felt like it? With a fully-grown man, a young growing woman, and three growing boisterous boys to feed? (Aidoo 34)*

Opokuya is a nurse and midwife at the busy state hospital, working very long hours, yet, she says, the children and their father refuse to organise even their already-cooked supper when she is around.

*... You'd think that with me being away on duty at such odd hours they would have taught themselves some self-reliance. But no. When I'm home, they try to squeeze me dry to make up for all the times they have to do without me (Aidoo 34)*

In Aidoo's novel, the physical body is as much a victim of patriarchal ideals as the mind. Both are compromised by a social order that favours male masculinities and attempts to disempower women.

Fusena and Esi represent two parts of the ideal woman: domestic and subservient, as Fusena, and educated and determined, as in Esi. This, in turn, creates a gendered hierarchy in which men are allotted certain privileges that women are denied. While Esi is allowed physical freedom to orient herself as she pleases, Fusena is limited both corporeally and intellectually in the role assigned to her by Ali. Fusena and Esi seem to be exact opposites in terms of assigned gender roles, as Fusena gives up her dreams of an education and career to appease her husband. Esi, on the other hand, is unrelenting in her pursuit of success in the professional realm, to the point that it destroys her initial marriage to Oko. It is clear in *Changes* that Fusena resents her restricted role in her polygamous marriage but maintains an obedient demeanour that is mandated by patriarchal social conventions. Her discontent in the marriage brings irony to Esi's own

situation finds her unhappy, despite her freedom and ability to pursue her career. This communicates a resounding message: because the women are unable to make choices without the disdain of their husbands, families, and society, they cannot achieve true freedom and contentment in their social and familial roles- Esi's defiance does end the novel on a hopeful note, as it potentially foreshadows a discovery that she does not need a male presence in her life in order to be fulfilled and actualise her potential.

In *Our Sister Killjoy*, Aidoo is concerned mostly with the estrangement of the African-educated class. Sissy, the main character, is offered a grant to receive a European education. Her journey into the west chronicles different aspects of her resistance to the overriding ideological hostilities that bring down Africa and African people. The novel is divided into four parts. "Into a Bad Dream" relates Sissie's travel experience to Germany. She is secure in her racial background, and only progressively over the itineraries of her 'westbound mobility' does she become conscious of her colour complexion. In "The Plums", Sissie discovers Marija, a new German friend. Marija is entangled in boredom and immediately gets attracted to a black student. In the course of their friendship, Sissie finds out about Marija's perverted behaviours, rejects her lesbianism and leaves her in frustration and total disillusionment. (Simour, 2010)

In "From *Our Sister Killjoy*", Sissie moves to London, the colonial capital which brings back into her mind the whole tale about the British colonial experience in Ghana. She appears to be extremely disappointed at the tragic social reality and marginalisation of black African immigrants. In the epistolary section of a "Love Letter", Sissie is engaged in a mock conversation with a lover, using an extremely sarcastic style to assert her identity through the experiences she went through.

This study set forth to identify the old and new woman characters in the selected texts by Ama Ata

Aidoo by describing what makes them belong to that given brand. A careful study of *Our Sister Killjoy* observes that Aidoo celebrates Sissie for making it in life irrespective of the fact that she is a woman. In the first place, she challenges the traditional bias put against females for being unable to excel in anything when she wins herself a grant to travel to Europe. Right away from the start of the narrative, Aidoo presents Sissie as a very special girl- the kind who is not bound by any notions of patriarchal beliefs and thus the new woman as ascribed by this study (Aidoo: 1997a:8)

Her journey must have had something to do with a people's efforts to make a good gain because right away from the beginning the embassy had shown a lot of interest. The minute her name had been submitted, they came to campus looking for her in a black Mercedes-Benz, its flag furled. They pulled strings for her to obtain her passport in a week instead of three months.

Simour (2009) articulates that '*Our Sister Killjoy*' tries to demonstrate how Sissie assumes authority and voice in an act that destabilises the traditionally established modes of western representation of educated African women acting as surrogates of the western cultural attitude and beliefs. So, the author right away makes her heroine stand out making it clear that a woman can be educated, travel to Europe and stays uncorrupted by their way of life. Everything with her is uniquely done and in a special way. Later, when she is almost ready to leave for Europe, the ambassador invites her for dinner and the same ambassador is present at the airport to ensure she has gone safely. This kind of attention is intended by Aidoo to tell the world that Sissie is not a simple girl to be deceived by such simple trivial gestures. She knows her stand on this and she will not be compromised by the conduct of the ambassador. While on the journey, she is presented as a polished black girl with no difficulty in associating with strangers and having the confidence of even trying to stroll around when they are given an hour before their train can leave in a



land she has never been to. She assures their guide that she cannot wander away. *Therefore, Sissie felt like strolling around instead of sitting on one spot. The official was worried. However, Sissie assured him that she would not wander away* (Aidoo: 11-12). This demonstrates Sissie as a carefree girl with no traces of inferiority presumed by Europeans of an African girl. Even before this incident, she is encouraged by the air hostess to join two young Nigerian men going for the same programme which she accepts out of civility because she had not met them before, but for courtesy's sake, she accepts. (Aidoo: 10)

*“You want to join your friends at the back, yes?”*

*“My two friends?” wondered Sissie.*

*She raised her eyes and following the direction of the hostess's finger, saw two faces. She was about to say she had not met them before...*

*Something told her to cool it.*

*She went to join them.*

This gesture of Sissie's complying with the hostess's suggestion does not only portray Sissie as a civilised girl but also carefree which is the kind of attitude the new woman should exhibit. She does not exhibit any blemishes that would make others point fingers at her gender and later on her background. It should not go unnoticed though that the hostess' action entails undertones of racism which possibly an old type of woman would sneer at and refuse to adhere to after all, she was sitting in her rightful place.

Later at the Bavarian camps, Sissie quickly becomes a celebrity. (Aidoo: 43)

*In lower Bavaria, Sissie was something of a crowd-getter. It seemed as if any open function that was organised for the volunteers became a success if she was present. Since for those*

*natives, the mere fact of the presence of the African girl was phenomenal*

The author has intended to raise Sissie higher above the historical notions of looking at a woman and particularly an African one as inferior and inarticulate. Aidoo explicitly makes Sissie display no deficiencies that would otherwise be blamed on her gender. *Everyone would come to see this phenomenal African girl; her charm is irresistible and considered to be the reason the functions succeed.* It is also noted that most of the African students that would always go to Germany were men (Aidoo: 43).

*African students always turned out to be men and fairly fluent speakers of German. Whereas Our Sister was not only female but also spoke no German. As for African Miss...h...h...h... look at her costume. How charming. And they gaped at her pointing at her smile. Her nose. Her lips, their own eyes shining. Not expecting her to feel embarrassed.*

Aidoo idealises Sissie as the kind of woman she would wish to associate with. She spoke no German like the male students used to do, but she received the glorification of the moment more than any in her company. Her beauty is unquestionable, as reflected in the way the crowds are awed at her gait, her smile and even her African nose and lips. It is clear that Aidoo deliberately paints this picture because that is the kind of ideal woman she advocates for. She is completely against the notions of looking at African women as shy and without esteem in the way the traditional patriarchal strongholds. I therefore concur with Simour who postulates that Aidoo's works feature strong female protagonists who are faced with institutionalised and personal sexist attitudes on a daily basis. Like Essie in *Changes a Love Story* who her male counterparts at the office expect her to stand in for the secretary just because she is a woman like the secretary irrespective of her status at the office.

Although Sissie never mails the letter, she is able to carry on her dialogue about the things that mean the most to her—“the importance of language . . . group survival and . . . reconstructing the future. The final part of the text, [the letter] celebrates Sissy’s strength as a woman but mourns what she has lost as a result of her newly defined womanhood” (Chetin: 157). The image of the African woman that Sissie personifies is that of whose identification of her own voice leads to her acceptance of her African home and rejection of migration or “exile”. Her travels, in fact, reinforce her developing voice. She puts the restoration of home—nationhood—above romance

The study paralleled the old woman characters alongside the new woman characters, spelling out all that is distinctive about each of these types of women in terms of the roles they are expected to play by society and what they do in response to these ascribed roles. The study also delved into the analysis of the apt dialogues of the characters, the point of view, juxtaposition, and characterisation among others, on their effectiveness in the depiction of the two women characters pertinent to the study. A conclusion was drawn to justify whether the phenomenon of the new woman character is consequential in an African setup. The study was based on the feminist theory which points out key issues relating to discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex and gender objectification, structural and economic inequality, power and oppression and gender roles and stereotypes.

This essay presents the difference between the old and new woman characters in selected fiction by Ama Ata Aidoo. In *Changes, a love story*, Esi Sekyi and Opokuya are the new women characters because of what they believe their education and occupations compel them to exercise an elevated level of freedom and analysis of life like the feminist theory which embraces motherhood but calls for shared responsibility in the raising of the children. These women are both married, but one is struggling to balance marriage and personal career;

the other finds it too hard to bear her husband and so she divorces her husband Oko but sadly marries a man with another woman. This implies that women hardly find life easy outside marriage and possibly women empowerment should be a joint responsibility for both men and women. While Fusena, Esi’s mother and grandmother, as well as Oko’, sisters and mother are the old woman kind because they ascribe to patriarchal tendencies of celebrating men and cordially accepting their duties of being wives and mothers.

In *Our Sister Killjoy*, Sissie is the new woman because she ascribes to the belief that women must be liberated from traditional as well as colonial prejudices. She too is well educated and refuses to be compromised by euro-centrism. She dispels the tendency of mimicking the whites in order to get favours and does not find it necessary to stay abroad. She strongly believes that she can liberate herself and Africa as well while at home. She I not like Marija who thinks that her contribution to her country is to be a good wife and later on be a good mother. She takes motherhood as an obligatory female responsibility and therefore carries her son Adolf everywhere she goes but feels guilty for leaving him alone at home and for desiring to be alone.

## CONCLUSION

To sum it up, the new woman as portrayed in the selected work is more at peace because she has her freedom and independence. She does not accept to be defined by the patriarchal society. She does not give in to be enslaved by marriage, motherhood, and society. The new woman seeks harmony and wants to use her ability to change the world. Well, as we see the old woman is engraved in agony because she is silenced and defined by society. The old woman thinks that she needs to be submissive. This has left her sad, tortured and oppressed.

According to how the two women (new and old) are presented in the research, it clearly shows that the

new woman is at peace and more relaxed than the old woman because she is economically independent and not a slave to anything hence self-confidence and self-realisation. The new woman can afford to balance all roles as an independent working woman and mother and still be a submissive wife who runs her home than being put in the kitchen.

### Recommendations

The study analyses the representations of the old and new women, particularly looking at the differences between these two breeds of women and how Aidoo effectively depicts these women characters, but it is true that there are several other literary concerns that can be explored. Therefore, I make the following two recommendations.

I recommend that the National Curriculum Development Centre should include women artists in the set books at both O and A-levels to make the learners appreciate the works accomplished by women; this may slowly but steadily reduce the biases of looking at women as humans with lesser abilities socially economically and in the world of academia.

Also, the Minister of Gender and Justice should come up with a workshop that is meant to teach young girls and mothers how to be independent economically and socially as well as design workshops in the country sensitising men about the need to treat females in the right way and to demonstrate to the nation in different subtle ways that development of a nation requires the contribution of all humanity irrespective of gender.

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