

## FIGHTING TWO COLONIALISMS IN AMA ATA AIDOO'S CHANGES

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### Abstract

This article discusses the development of the status of the African woman in contemporary society. Colonialism and its aftermaths pervade the male-dominated literary tradition produced and disseminated about the experience of Africans in their own environment. Within the sociopolitical and economic complexities of these realities, the African woman is said to be “doubly colonised” in the light of her multiple and complicated burdens. The Ghanaian novelist Ama Ata Aidoo’s pronouncement has it that women are first dominated by imperial power and second by the national traditional patriarchal ideologies. In this sense, they are imprisoned by authoritative phalluses that encompass their daily experience in modern society; thereby, negating their authentic images and newfound statuses. Like the colonizing nations which dominated the colonized countries, women too are dominated over by men in colonized and post colonial settings. With her novel, *Changes-A love Story* (1991), Aidoo critically points out that marginalisation and subjugation of colonial subjects whose voices and actions are drastically muted; and the act of resisting them are all male centered. From her own perspective, her female characters are compelled to negotiate new sites for survival in a society where tradition is all-pervasive. My study here is, specifically, on one such predicament. Viewed from the African perspective, this concept is very challenging and intriguing because it holds a unique place in the history of post-colonial as well as womanist/feminist discourse.

**Keywords:** status, experience, woman, doubly colonised, burdens, authoritative phalluses, colonised and post colonial settings, sites.

### *Introduction:*

John McLeod (2010:199) holds the view that “imbalances of power” and the “struggle for change” involves the contestation of patriarchal authority which refers to those systems-political, material and imaginative-which invest power in men and marginalize women. Given the fact that colonialism and its corollaries were male-centered and euro-centric in nature, it labeled all foreign women alien subalterns. In contemporary African societies such as the one portrayed by the Ghanaian female novelist Ama Ata Aidoo, women are minority groups who are unfairly

defined by the male gaze which is a characteristic of both patriarchy and colonialism. In this case, women have been reduced to stereotypes and for that matter denied identity by the social structure system. The fact that colonial oppression has affected the lives of women, both socially and economically, makes gender issues an integral part of the debates post-colonial writers and critics; women as well as men are interested in. Many literary texts that are written from a feminist as well as post-colonial standpoint used to shed light on the aesthetics of aggression as well as resistance as values of post-colonial writing.

With *Changes-A Love Story*(1991), Ama Ata Aidoo the Ghanaian novelist, feels ugliness about domination and subjugation and expresses the need for re-structuring colonial discourses of which almost all the first generation of writers have provided about women's denigrative entrapment in the sacrament of marriage. A thorough reading of early male authored novels reveals the subjugation, exploitation and deception men subjected their womenfolk to. The novelist presents in her text female characters like Esi Sekyi, Opokuya Dakwa and Fusena Alhassan Kondeh as modern liberated women who suffer from rejection and ostracism in the patriarchal setting they live and assume with difficulty their traditional duty as housewives. Through the characters of these modern educated or better, career women, Aidoo satirises the traditionally subordinate role of women in history and believes that writing can be one of the most powerful ways by which women can inscribe themselves into history in the male-dominated mainstream. Through the portrayal of her female characters in relation with their husbands, the novelist enables the reader to understand that colonialism is essentially a form of patriarchy that diminishes totally any modicum opportunity for a positive identity formation in its subjects. The crisis experienced by these wedded educated women hinge on frustrating gender constraints engendered by their newly acquired social status. This situation highlights their sense of justice in the narrative setting where they are labelled rebels, deviants and dissenters because of their disrespectful and wayward attitude to tradition. This implies, of course, that the husbands of these women namely Ali, Oko and Kubi, attach much importance to the dictates of their patriarchal society and are not ready to envision these women's new identity. For these macho men, women are called upon to be mothers and wives no matter their newly acquired social status. In other words, they are expected to be "nurturing, unaggressive and emotional" (Gamble and Gamble, 1996). From Aidoo's own female experience, she decides to write a sympathetic counter-narrative from the classic or indigenous perspective where women are portrayed as bloody stereotypes to satisfy the needs of phallogocentric paradigms often used to marginalize women in man's bid to perpetuate hegemony. Aidoo's women in this novel are suffering from dissatisfaction, disillusionment and frustration coupled with disenchantment although the education they have had could have liberated them from subjugation. The reason why they cannot resist or withstand the system can be found within culture since men are seen as privileged beings herein. Her canonical novel highlights her critical assertion as well as her position and thereby showcases her originality and resourcefulness.

Despite the fact that Ama Ata Aidoo tries to re-envision and to re-write her post-colonial text, she ends up propagating and perpetuating the stereotype of the woman as a subaltern who cannot do without man. Her theoretical as well as ideological approach is bound to compel a reexamination of popular concepts and pedagogies on women's condition though. From the ongoing discussion, it is then, interesting to note that *Changes*, as a fictional work, focuses on the representations and misrepresentations of women in literary texts. Her educated male characters are presented to the reader as chauvinistic savages and wife molesters, who victimize their women folk and at the same time, moves from weak images of women to that of women taking

responsibility and sharing roles with men in a “man’s world”. When Oko sexually harasses his wife, Esi, who intends to protect herself ; he not only considers the act as a way of marking his own territory but also considers her as his own property. Although she accuses her husband for having raped her, nobody is ready to listen to her. *Changes* portrays women as products that can be appropriated and owned by their menfolk. This issue beckons Kirsten Holst Peterson’s and Anna Rutherford’s contention which will provide a critical lens through which one can read the fiction of Ama Ata Aidoo. Peterson and Rutherford (1986:9) argue that a male ethos “has persisted in the colonial and postcolonial world.” They critically point out that both colonialism and resistances are male centered and used the word “double colonisation” to refer to the ways in which women have simultaneously experienced the oppression of colonialism and that of patriarchy as well. This refers to the fact that women are colonised twice: first, by the colonialist realities and its representations and secondly, by patriarchal ones too. In her text, she portrays how the African woman is not only colonized but is also considered a product that can be appropriated and owned by men.

This paper offers to analyze a significant approach to the concept of oppression in the light of Peterson and Rutherford’s critical lens. It contends that African women have simultaneously experienced the oppression of colonialism as well as patriarchy in the colonial and postcolonial setting and shows this through each female character’s attitudes towards self-sacrifice, self-assertion, and self-fulfillment in relation to men and offers to illustrate the relevance of double colonisation and concludes that in feminist and post-colonial discourses the issue of double colonization gives the impression that women in African societies are colonized twice and have to fight both colonialisms.

### ***I- The Concept of Double Colonisation : Modernism and Patriarchy***

The central argument of Ama Ata Aidoo’s novel, *Changes-A Love Story*(1991), is that throughout history, woman mostly African, has always occupied a secondary role in relation to man and has for that matter been relegated to the position of the “other”, i.e., that which is adjectival to the substantial subjectivity and existential activities of man. For the novelist, while man has been enabled to transcend and control his own environment, always furthering the domain of his physical and intellectual conquests, the woman has remained imprisoned within immanence and remains a slave within the circle of duties ascribed by her maternal and reproductive functions. In delineating this subordination in her novel, the novelist wants to show her readers in its “characteristic existentialist fashion”(Habib 2008:667) how the so called essence of the woman was in fact created by man at all societal levels: political, economic and religious by historical developments representing the interests of men. Simon de Beauvoir (1952) has pointed out this domination and subordination when she highlights the fundamental asymmetry of the terms “masculinity” and “femininity” and concludes that masculinity is considered to be “absolute human type” i.e. the norm standard of humanity. In this complex situation, she summarises this tradition of thought in these terms:

*“Humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as a relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being....she is incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute- she is the “other””* (683).

In fact, man’s relegation of woman to the status of the other directly violates the principle of mutual recognition, thereby strengthening the very status that man has for so long jealously accorded to himself, to his own subjectivity. Viewed from many perspectives of profound relevance to literature, criticism as well as theory, these considerations connote subjugation and subordination, i.e. colonisation in one word. In a comprehensive sense, discourse on the identity

of women has been the major focus of contemporary scholarship in Africa, especially female scholars. Many scholars of postcolonial studies, female as well as male, have come to terms with the contention that fundamental aspects of colonialism are hostile to the emancipation of the colonized. So there is a need of paradigm shift or research methodologies to enable the supposed hitherto marginalized to aspire towards emancipation.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century feminist criticism has grown to encompass a vast series of concerns among which a rewriting of literary history so as to include contributions of women in a world dominated by male concepts, values and pedagogies. While some are claiming for the need for a female language, others are advocating an appropriation and a modification of the inherited language of the male oppressor to suit their convenience. Depending on the setting, many writers have attempted to articulate a feminist vision distinctly marked by their specific concerns. Thus, postcolonial feminist criticism offers to analyze a wide range of issues across representations of women in once colonised countries. If the act of writing is considered one of the most powerful ways by means of which women can inscribe themselves into history, then, the acts of female writers in inscribing themselves and their persecutors into literary history may function as a powerful response to women's exclusion from history.

Since the woman has been presented as a victim of cultural practices, the promotion of post-colonial studies, which is a step in the right direction towards the promotion of African identity in its bid to correct the misconception about culture, is in relation to the question of identity as well. Though culture has been variously defined, it is simply understood as a way of life of a people. To be more precise, it is made up of customs, traditions, beliefs, behaviour, dress, language, works of art and craft, attitudes to life among others, which vary from one society to another and suggests that cultural values are largely relative and are not static. All these considerations provide us with a ground to approach the sense of double colonisation. The concept of "double colonisation"<sup>1</sup> which was first used by Anna Rutherford and Kirsten Holst Petersen finds its expression in their endeavour to unite "postcolonialism" and "feminism" through recognition of the overlap between colonialism and patriarchy. Following their critique, this suggests that both racism and sexism function in the same way and highlights two forms of oppression and subjugation. In this context, post colonialism refers to the condition of people and their country after the imperial rule was over. Moreover, it is used to stand for the culture and literatures of the countries right from the moment of European colonization to this day.

To circumscribe the term "double colonisation", I need to give the substance of the word "colonization" which I am too aware can help the reader understand it. Defining colonisation as domination of one subject over the other by any means, physical, linguistic, cultural, economic or political will help understand the status of women in the society-colonial or post-colonial. In fact, like the colonizing nations which dominated the colonized countries in all spheres, women too are dominated by men over centuries. Feminist scholars, in their endeavour to understand the status of the woman, have focused their attention on a fundamental framework called the colonisation of women which has been adapted to their localized context. Thus, in the African context, African women suffered a double colonization: one from European domination and other from indigenous tradition. In this paper, I will try as much as possible to discuss the status of women as featured in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* as victims of "double colonization". Aidoo's women, modern and well-educated figures, cannot be enfranchised and have to contend with

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<sup>1</sup>The term is coined in the mid-1980s, and is usually identified with "Holst Petersen and Rutherford's *A Double Colonisation: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women's Writing* which was published in 1985" (Ashcraft et al, 2000).

customs, traditional rigidities and modernism as well. The fact of the matter remains that postcolonial women writers contest both patriarchy and colonialism.

In this work an effort to look at the patterns of colonisation- which is defined as a domination of one subject over other by any means, physical, linguistic or cultural and to discuss the status of women as subjects of “Double Colonization” in colonized countries- is made. But the status of women in the countries which were formerly colonized was even more complicated and complex. The women belonging to the colonized countries, however much they try to cannot have a standing for the entire community they represent because they can never be isolated in their experience, either as a woman or as a member of a colonized community. In this text, the novelist’s contention is that women should be presented as victims of cultural practices and should be recognized as such, and value must be placed on the human person, not sex. If culture is presented as a way of life and is dynamic, one does not expect it to be destructive. *Changes*’s submission is that the woman and her experience must no longer be viewed entirely from a negative perspective.

Post-colonialism is as an attempt to re-imagine and re-write colonial ideals that distorted and displaced the histories and cultures of indigenous populations. Since the grounds upon which assigned aesthetics of post colonialism stand is colonialism, it goes without saying that it is an attempt at transcending the historical definition of its primary object of study toward an extension of the historic and political notion of “colonising” to other forms of human exploitation, repression and dependency. For instance, in its methodology, it gives authority and presence to the “other”; i.e. the colonised people who become separate from and stand apart from the dominant colonizing culture. It is a philosophical concept called alterity whereby “the others” are excluded from positions of power and viewed as both different and inferior. Its goal is to win back a place in history for the colonised, enabling all readers to value the many different kinds of cultures and peoples. In situations of severe racial and sexual oppression like Africa, literature is seen as a privileged site for understanding “the social structures, cultural codes, and psychological tropes of cross cultural and inter-ethnic” (Ryan, 2003: 147). I think the title of the novel makes it clear that the novelist’s topic is a historical event, the rise and demise of European colonialism and underscores her interest in an integrative and accommodationist brand of feminism; one which she has carefully articulated as complementarity and which, for her is found within African tradition and religion.

In fact, whether the post-colonial critic embraces the tenets of feminism, psychoanalysis, or any other theoretical framework, such a critic emphasizes each person’s humanity and his/her right to personal freedom. Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Changes* is a text in which the voices and concerns of women, educated as well as non-educated ones are expected to be heard in both academic and social arenas. Some writers and critics draw a relationship between post colonialism and feminism. For them, the language and the ability to write and to communicate represent power those in stronghold patriarchal cultures wield and allow the colonised to maintain an opening against imperial violence. Undeniably, then, feminist discourse shares many similarities with post-colonial theory and for this reason the two fields have long been thought of as associative and even complimentary. Both discourses are similar in purpose. They are predominantly political and concern themselves with the struggle against oppression and injustice and try as much as possible to reject the socially established hierarchical patriarchal system, which is dominated by the hegemonic male, and vehemently deny women the supposed supremacy of masculine power and authority. Imperialism, like patriarchy, is after all a phallogocentric supremacist ideology that subjugates and dominates its subjects. The oppressed woman is in this

case akin to the colonised subject. While essentially exponents of post colonialism are reacting against colonialism in the political and economic sense, feminist theorists are rejecting colonialism of a sexual nature. June Hannam has argued that feminism is:

*a set of ideas that recognize in an explicit way that women are subordinate to men and seek to address imbalances of power between the sexes. Central to feminism is the view that women's condition is socially constructed, and therefore open to change. At its heart is the belief that women's voices should be heard-that they should represent themselves, put forward their own view of the world and achieve autonomy in their lives (2006:3-4).*

In the above quotation, Hannam has raised burning issues which echo in postcolonial studies. These have to do with matters of subordination, power, the social construction of lived experiences, an investment in change, concerns about representation and self-representation. I may say in the cultural context that the last two terms (representation and self-representation) have become a particular preoccupation for postcolonial critics in feminist framework. In this sense, a feminist reader is often “enlisted in the process of changing the gender relations, how [it] represents women, what it says about gender relations, how it defines sexual difference” (Belsey and Moore, 1989:1). In the light of this, it is understandable that feminist reading is involved in the contestation of patriarchal authority. As was said earlier on, patriarchy is systems which invest power in men to the detriment of women. Like colonialism, patriarchy manifests itself in several ways such as marginalization, denial of rights and at the level of imagination. Like also colonialism, patriarchy exists in the midst of resistances to its authority. So in my opinion, I think it is worthwhile saying that both feminism and post colonialism share the mutual goal of challenging all forms of oppression. Elleke Boehmer has argued that in mainstream postcolonial studies, gender is still conventionally treated in a tokenistic way, or as a subsidiary to the category of race (2005: 7).

If post-colonialism and feminism are from Ashcroft's (et al; 1995) viewpoint, emphasizing each person's humanity and right to personal freedom, this implies as well that both concepts seek to counterattack oppression in all its different forms and in this context patriarchal oppression. For them, concepts like universality, difference, nationalism, postmodernism, representation and resistance, ethnicity, feminism, language, education, history, place, and production are under scrutiny. As diverse as these topics are, they draw attention to post colonialism's major concern: the struggle that occurs when one culture is dominated by another. As post-colonialists point out, to be colonised is to be removed from history. Ama Ata Aidoo, the novelist is a product of the Colonial British cultural, literary and scholarly background and therefore investigates insights of great importance to mutual quest for sexual equity in Africa. It has been argued that one of the most powerful forms of sexual oppression and subjugation is the control of understanding. That is why Aidoo's query focuses on what happens when two cultures clash and one of them, with its accessory ideology, empowers and deems itself superior to the other. Cora Kaplan's (1979: 4-16) arguments against Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* treats patriarchal ideology as a set of false beliefs deployed against women by a well-organised male conspiracy. Kaplan therefore suggests that male misogyny may be unconscious and that women often internalize patriarchal values. Aidoo's *Changes* is an appeal to adopt strategies to counter patriarchal oppression which is all-pervasive; but on a conciliatory stand.

***II- Double Colonisation: Allegiance to Culture and to Modern Societal Norms (Career versus Motherhood).***

Post-colonialism as a literary approach gives a kind of psychological relief to the colonized people for whom it was born. It emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and posits as a “set of theoretical approaches which focus on the direct effects and aftermaths of colonization, post colonialism forms a powerful intellectual and critical movement which offers to renew the perception and understanding of modern history, cultural studies, literary criticism, and political economy”<sup>2</sup>. It is connected with the immediate effects of colonisation and encompasses subjects as religion, anthropology, politics, feminism, and literature. It should be emphasized that all these subjects are interconnected.

In this essay, the various perspectives of domination featured in *Changes* stand on when one attempts to answer the questions concerning where, how and why power mechanics is perpetrated in colonial and postcolonial situations or settings and; the examination of the various ways groups of people are oppressed, subjugated or denied power. Following the critique of Anna Rutherford and Kirsten Holst Petersen, this suggests that colonisation and patriarchy function in the same way and highlight total oppression and subjugation on its own subjects. Obviously, then, it is understood that the two forces oppress and subjugate at the same time.

From the above discussion, it appears that a typical example of colonial oppression experienced by the women featured in *Changes* is that which is physical. As articulated in the novel, this mostly concerns the control of the bodies of colonial subjects. While Opokuya Dakwa and Fusena Alhassan Kondeh have, each on her part suffered seriously the direct experience of being owned by their menfolk; Esi Sekyi, owing to her newly acquired social status, is less subject to the many forms of domineering. All these women are forced into the history and culture of hegemonic Europe after having internalised its value system at the expense of their own culture which is almost on the verge of being erased. Each woman and man featured in the novel is defined by his /her own career. Contrary to the couple Esi and Ali, are Opokuya Dakwa and her husband, Oko. Both characters work in the professions that demand personal sacrifice: while Oko is a teacher Opokuya is a nurse. Since each character works in a field that reflects his or her own personality, the novel demonstrates the substantial role that careers play in defining identity in contemporary society.

In *Changes*, Ali just like Oko, is representative of power and patriarchal ideologies. The mere fact that he is wealthy and highly educated at the expense of his wife Fusena makes this point valid. For him, marriage is a business where cash matters than his wives who are reduced to objects of exchange between men. His second marriage with Esi stands as a case in point. His first wife did not have any say in the preparations of her husband and his parents as far as marriage is concerned. All that was expected from her is to try her hardest to make the marriage work. Esi’s friend Opokuya also chooses to enslave herself to care for her husband and children. As a “state registered nurse and a qualified midwife” (14), Opokuya is exploited both at home and at work. All the female characters featured in this novel namely Esi Sekyi, Opokuya Dakwa and Fusena Al-Hassan Kondeh are suffering from dissatisfaction, disillusionment and frustration coupled with disenchantment. The reason that they cannot resist can be found within culture, since men are seen as privileged beings within both the society and the family. In *Changes*, a

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<sup>2</sup>Postcolonialism.StudyMode.com.Retrieved 11, 2013, from <http://www.studymode.com/essays/Postcolonialism-44535649.html>

particular disturbing form of oppression happens when one morning tired of being harassed by the rational personality of his wife Esi, Oko her husband, forced her into sex what brought about the big crisis in the novel:

*Oko flung the bedcloth away from him, sat up, pulled her down, and moved on her. Esi started to protest. But he went on doing what he had determined to do all morning. He squeezed her breast repeatedly, thrust his tongue into her mouth, forced her unwilling legs apart, entered her, plunging in and out of her, thrashing to the left, to the right, pounding and just pounding away. Then it was all over. Breathing like a marathon runner at the end of a particularly gruelling race, he got off her, and fell heavily back on his side of the bed (9).*

The narrator clearly exposes one the mechanism and evil effects of colonialism on the colonised. For men like Oko, the coloniser, in a society where masculine supremacy and dominance are all pervasive and where gender roles and relationships are circumscribed by norms and traditions, he has to force her into sex to mark his own territory. Yet this act erodes the very humanity of the colonised woman. From the above quotation, it becomes crystal clear that the female body becomes a thing of commodity; an item to be owned, controlled, or abused for sexual gratification by those in power.

Meanwhile Oko is bothered by the teasing attitudes of his friends on his behaviour, his inability to prove himself man as an answer to his wife's refusal to have a second child and to his wife's independence from him. Very worried and confused Oko determines to mark his territory by proving his manhood, i.e. by showing that he is the head of the family. It is worth recalling that this act was not welcomed by his wife. It rather became an act which allegedly leads to Esi's decision to divorce him, given the fact that he does not even apologize for the act she labels « marital rape ». Like all of the characters featured in the novel, female as well as male, Oko is trying vainly to understand the meaning of his marriage in a changing world. Following his divorce, Oko's mother presents him with an unpleasant gift: a young girl who can play the role of a compliant and obedient wife to replace his arrogant wife; but Oko continues to love his strong-willed ex-wife. On the New Year's Eve, Ali Esi's newly wedded husband, rushes over to her house before returning to his family. On his arrival at Esi's, Oko appears with their daughter. When the two men begin to fight over Esi for power, Esi, in the mean, grabs her lonely daughter Ogyaanowa and escapes to the house of her friend, Opokuya. She tells Opokuya and her husband Kubi all that had happened. Immediately, Kubi goes to Esi's house and finds that both macho men have left. He looks for Oko at his mother's house and finds out that he is only slightly injured after the fight.

Related to this idea of control over his wife by Oko is the concept of double colonization, a term which not only recognizes the differences between the colonizers/colonized, but focuses on the universal oppression of women before, during and after imperial colonization. Esi's tactical ploy to part with her husband puts her again in a desperate situation in the fictional phallogocentric Ghana. After this rape incident, every woman she dares confide in thinks her fool for having come to that and the most courageous ones tells her that living with a man who's "so crazy about her" is a blessing. Others told her that Oko "can't control himself" because of the love he has for her and therefore claims for his due. Many other women told her that this should have made many other women envy her. Oko himself confesses this to Esi when he told her that he raped her to save their marriage. With this rape incident, Aidoo imparts to the reader that Oko

has the right to jump on her. The narrator aptly puts it this way: “Sex is something a husband claims from his wife as right. Anytime. And at his convenience” (12). In the African society, within wedlock, men are endowed with the power of using the woman as his own property and her body at will, while the woman is powerless and cannot prevent her husband from doing what he likes. The patriarchal creed gives Oko all the power to use his wife at will. But for Esi, it is worth recalling that this was not done at the appropriate moment. Esi seems devastated because she was ready to go work. Another instance of rape discussed in the novel is when Esi was helpless after what she called marital rape as a result of the type of violence exerted on her by her husband. When she decides to part from him by demanding divorce, her friend’s husband Kubi wanted to capitalize on her desperate situation by attempting vainly to rape her. In the colonial context, not only is Esi colonized; but she is also sexually humiliated and thereby reduced to a non-entity. She wrongly labels her husband’s attitude a rape. This, of course, is absolutely denigrating and pushes her to claim for her rights, status, and freedom; but this should be realized through divorce and remarrying a man of her own choice and standard. She feels that marrying an educated man in a world inextricably bound to culture and traditions, her plea can be understood. For her, once the oppressed are recognized as fully humans, the colonized pretense will become unsupportable.

When we refer to the conflicts featured in *Changes*, it goes without saying that the one that opposed the protagonist to her husband what led to her getting rid of him is a strange one. Rape she calls it. Marital rape as she called it in the second chapter of the novel is an attempt by her husband Oko to dominate her. In the traditional context or according to customs the term “marital rape” does not even exist in any local language. Of what sense will that make in accusing one’s legal husband of rape? In the long run, she became aware that in phallogocentric Ghana in particular and in Africa in general the word marital rape does not exist. The society in which she is born and bred reminds her of the requirements and constraints of marriage in Africa and insists that her body belongs to her husband and he is free to claim it at will. Faced with this dilemma, she soliloquizes: “But marital rape? No. The society could not possibly have an indigenous word or phrase for it. Esi is enraged and sends her husband away. In so doing she expresses for the first time her taste for freedom and independence. In fact, compared to the majority of women, even those in her shoes, she enjoys much freedom because of her special social and economic status. This endows her with all the ability to marry at will and not to conform to the roles prescribed by society for women. Esi’s grandmother asserts this when Esi decides to remarry Ali the man she thinks her heart has chosen for her:

*Leave one man, marry another. Esi, you can. You have got your job. The government gives you a house. You have got your car. You have already got your daughter. You don't even have to prove you are a woman to any man, old or new. You can pick and choose (106).*

The narrator shows the reader the extent to which education liberates and believes that Esi is free from the material restraints many women face and which forces them to rely heavily on men. Her new lover, Ali, is a married man with an already established family and accepts to live a polygamous life; a life no educated African woman is ready to lead. For Esi, polygamy will be a significant outlet that will not only guarantee her freedom but will also enhance her commitment to her status as a career woman; which in her first marriage disturbed her a lot. For the novelist, polygamy is a medium for a woman to have much freedom and time to devote to her personal

business. Being Ali's second wife allows her to meet partly her emotional, physical and psychological needs: she has less time to cater for her husband although she is good at cooking. In the beginning her polygamous life was amazing and self-fulfilling. Ali often leaves her alone and rushes to his first wife Fusena and her children giving her much time to devote to her career. But this one also turns nightmarish! No sooner did she marry Ali than she realized that the marriage does not quite satisfy her. She met with heavy frustrations. When Esi divorces Oko, for example, she thinks she is finally liberated not only from slavery but is also released from sexual/bodily oppression and experiences freedom and selfhood. But the joy of being freed from this oppression did not last long.

One interesting woman featured in the novel is the character Dakwa. The domestic quagmire in which she is entangled does not sap her strength or make her apathetic to the inequalities she faces at work; instead, her experiences serve to strengthen her sense of self-ownership. She epitomizes the educated female who accepts willingly to assume the stereotyped role of a wife, mother and a career woman. She thus expresses her frustration and dissatisfaction in the following terms:

*Endless drudgery at work. And the state, who was her employer, paying salaries so low you were convinced the aim was to get people like her to resign and go to work for doctors in private practice (150).*

She does not understand the double colonisation that she is trying to express. Each colonisation or oppression went through dehumanizing cruelties; but she finds it difficult to relate to anything other than the raw physical violence that she is accustomed to both at workplace and at home. Once her nightmare is finished, she—in contrast to Esi's relatively way of resenting big families—must respond to the demand of her work at office and at home: night shifts at the hospital and the demand placed on her by her exploitative large family. Opokuya always laments her lack of time and for that matter her freedom and independence. She is exploited both at home and most often complains of not having enough time to sleep. She has to care “for a fully grown man, a young growing woman and three boisterous boys” (34). The size of the family is too big for her. All these sufferings to cater for the family reminds the reader of Esi's complaint about her husband, Oko's numerous family, who always hang along to suffocate her. Contrary to Esi, on the New Year's Day, Opokuya's was at her wit's end because she has to cater for the whole family and the numerous relatives who poured into their compound unexpectedly, a “whole load of Kubi's young relatives” (124) to feast. Opokuya's life is replete with challenges which illustrate her endurance and hardships. She often complains of her not having enough time to sleep and being often ragged because of her night shifts at the hospital and the demands placed on her by her family. She is both exploited at work and at home. Being married in the African context supposes being married to all the members of the extended family. Moreover she is supposed to be at their beck and call. For her, caring, feeding, serving her husband's people and being nice to them is part of the education society offers to young girls. She has chosen to enslave herself in exchange for security and peace for her own family lives far away from her. Self-sacrifice has become her motto. Through the character Opokuya, Ama Atta Aidoo gives form and shape to domesticity through the portrayal of a woman's slavish condition of life, or better, the double colonisation she suffers from. Thus, Opokuya explains her own predicament as a woman:

*It was already two o'clock in the morning. Plainly for Opokuya, there wasn't much of the night left. She had to wake up at five—exactly three hours later—to get ready for the hospital. When she stepped down from the bed, she could hardly walk for fatigue. One consolation was that at least there was food for everyone in the house, and more (130).*

*The children and their father refuse to organize even their already cooked supper when I'm around. You think that with me being away on duty at such odd hours they would have taught themselves some self-sacrifice. But no. When I am at home, they try to squeeze me dry to make up for all the times they have to do without me (34).*

As a woman Opokuya internalizes the belief that caring for the family is woman's business. She is an epitome of the traditional mother, indulgent and self-sacrificing. She sees to it that her husband, children and the rest of her husband's relatives are well fed. The above passage suggests reasons for Dakwa's suffering. As a mother and wife she is badly exploited, victimized and eventually robbed of her domestic bliss. She epitomizes the type of educated women who are historically coerced into using and accepting a language dominated by male concepts and values. In other words, she accepts to play to the full the stereotyped role women are called upon in the fiction of some male authored works: self-sacrificing wife and mother at the hands of unscrupulous men. For Esi, Opokuya is a fulfilled woman and her good natured attitude gives that impression. For Oko, Esi's first husband, Opokuya is the ideal woman, a "good woman" (9).

Another instance of slavery and domination is seen in the fact that Ali's first wife Fusena who, sacrificed her career and education to the detriment of husband, has to consent to his second marriage with Esi, a university graduate. But after marrying Ali, he cannot go to her house that night and this marks the beginning of the newly wed Esi's disillusion. In essence Ali is torn between spending time with his two wives. When Ali, Esi's second husband and Oko her first husband fight at her house on New Year's Eve, she escapes with her daughter Ogyaanowa to Opokuya's house where they spend the holidays. Ali visits her once in the blue moon. As if to add insult to injury, though newly married, she finds herself lonely during the cold holidays of december that year and is forced to take sleeping pills to help her get through the psychological and emotional suffering she is undergoing. Ali visits Esi on New Year's Day to bring her a brand new car as a gift. When Esi drops Ali off at Hotel Twentieth Century, she bitterly realizes that what she calls marriage is a dead end and sincerely tells Ali that what really links them is not what she calls marriage. Totally disillusioned, Esi calls Opokuya and confides in her her plan to break-up with Ali. After Opokuya visits Esi to comfort her and collect Esi's old car ; Esi, cries alone in the dark. In the long run, Esi does not annul her marriage : they rather become good platonic friends. Esi has no choice : she to accept the type of love Ali offers her and often asks herself if the fashion of love Ali offers her is the adequate one. Rather than spending time with her after work, Ali drives his new female secretary, who is younger and more attractive home. By the end of the year, Esi feels completely abandoned and accepts with pleasure Ali's colonisation. Overwhelmed by the requirements of the patriarchal world in which she lives, Esi decides to keep Ali as a close friend with whom she has occasional sex ; and they never get a divorce even though Ali continues to colonise other women in his bid to extend his territories.

A woman is a social construct. "One is not born woman; one becomes one", as Simone de Beauvoir puts it. Seen in this perspective, patriarchal obsession consists of imposing certain

social standards of femininity on all biological women in order precisely to make her and society believe that the chosen standards for femininity are natural. Thus, a woman who refuses to conform is labeled both unfeminine and unnatural. The character Fusena contrasts to that of Esi in Aidoo's fictional work. Aidoo is theoretically aware of this situation. She uses this device to show that not all women are willing to withstand patriarchal oppression. She features many similarities in the conflicts both Fusena and Esi face as they are married to the same man. The choices they make are radically different. Both Fusena and Esi are educated women. Fusena meets Ali while both of them were teaching in Tamale, i.e. a college school friend. On her part Esi attracts Ali because of her love of freedom and for Ali, she is an interesting woman. On her own, Fusena decides to marry Ali because of the mutual love and respect they have for each other. She prefers marrying her peer to a wealthy and powerful man, the Alhaji, thus refusing to conform to the conventional view of traditional marriage. However, once married to Ali, Fusena realizes, just as her rival Esi did, that this marriage always entails the loss of the self she is looking for. Cultural constructs are always unquestionable. Such beliefs often affect the ways men treat their womenfolk. Using their political, physical, and economic strength, they dominate women. In the course of the marriage, the relative equity and mutual respect that had existed between Ali and Fusena prior to their marriage is lost. Frustrated and aware of the world in which she lives, Fusena says, "by marrying Ali, she had exchanged a friend for a husband. She felt the loss implied in this admission keenly, and her grief was great" (65). Such an argument relies heavily on the assumption that patriarchal ideology is all-encompassing in its effects. Thereafter, her husband Ali objects vehemently to Fusena's desire to pursue her career as a teacher and instead gives her a kiosk to run in Accra where she had no choice to make a choice. Unlike Esi, the statistician, Fusena the teacher, accepts her role as wife and mother and thereby loses her own independence. The narrator puts her resignation in the following terms:

*Leaving Ali was not only impossible but would also not be an answer to anything. Because having married her friend and got a husband, there was no chance of getting back her friend if she left or divorced Ali the husband. She would only have an estranged husband. Nor did it help matters much that in the middle of all her frustrations, she kept telling herself that given the position of women in society, she would rather be married than not, and rather to Ali than anyone else.(66-67)*

In this passage, Fusena expresses her anger, frustration and big loss in her decision to conform to the role her society expected of her. This, to her means sacrificing herself, her ambition and her independence for a sense of security. In this case, both Esi and Fusena are confronted with the same dilemma; but the choices they make are diametrically opposed with biased results. In the end, however, neither one of them achieve true fulfillment which according to the novelist insinuates that the position of female sex (woman) is such that emotional or psychological fulfillment and total independence is utopia. At the beginning, Fusena naively defies the requirements of her society: first of all, she refuses to leave school at an early age and marry as is required by her Muslim community where arranged marriage (and teenage marriage) is in vogue and goes on to post-secondary school to graduate as a teacher and eventually secures a job. Fusena Al-hassan Kondeh just like Esi, symbolizes headstrong women who dare defy tradition in a Muslim community in quest of success in life. The entire community thinks her mad because at 26 she is still not yet married. Her mother is worried about her fate and rushes to see a soothsayer to know the reason behind this oddity. Her mother was very uncomfortable at her stubbornness to refuse to marry the rich and arrogant Aladji who showered them with gifts and money. Not only did she manage to get rid of this rich man but she chooses her own husband, another college

friend, Ali Kondeh to the amazement of her parents. For her, she doesn't want to be deposited as a parcel on the door of a man she neither know nor loves. This allusion is made to Esi's friend Opokuwa who did marry a man she did even not know. She is referred to as an object and therefore thingfied or colonised.

But the polygamous way she has chosen for herself is far from removing herself from patriarchal thrusts. The pressure society has on her is going to destroy her. The Muslim community into which she is born and bred has an impact on her. Though educated as her husband Ali, he persuades her to put an end to her career and ambition of having degrees. Not satisfied with this, he asks her to switch to trade, a profession he thinks will not much interfere with her role as a housewife and mother. She stands in contrast to Esi. Oko, Esi's husband, wants her to devote much time to her home, to having many children, and to taking care of both her husband and children. Since marriage in her community means yielding to one's husband's wishes and desires, Fusena is defeated and has to surrender to the requirements of her community so as to avoid being the laughing stock of her peers. This is highlighted in an exchange with Esi and Fusena: "Our people have said that for any marriage to work, one party has to be a fool. And they really mean the woman" (49). From a feminist perspective, Fusena's giving up her career and ambition of furthering her studies works as a price to pay for marriage. This is a type of insecurity which does not guarantee her any permanent fulfillment. After accepting all these she has to contend with her husband Ali's sexual promiscuity. Out of jealousy she often pays Ali unexpected visits at his office to know what often keeps him late from coming home early. In the end she is completely defeated by the cunning manners of her husband. He challenges her twice: once with polygamy and secondly with a woman who equals him in degrees. Once again Fusena is disillusioned not because of polygamy but because her husband's second wife has more degrees than her. This means that Fusena does not resent polygamy as such because of her background. Rather she is confused as to the strategy used by her husband to prevent her from self-fulfillment.

When she fell out with Ali on the issue of polygamy, it has been argued that all the patriarch and old women she consults to intercede are polygamous and the women are either first, second, or third wives. All the advice they gave her fell in line with the requirements of patriarchy reinforced with religious ones. Finally, she resolves to cope with that situation and become conciliatory to save her dignity and marriage. She rather adopts the attitudes of first wives in polygamous families to avoid criticism from her Muslim community. It was in this process that she learns from the good woman of Nima that the world in which she lives is "... man's world. You only survived if you knew how to live in it as a woman" (107). Fusena feels sorry for herself for having discarded her idea of furthering her studies to yield to Ali's desires and for that she weeps bitterly: she has been defeated by patriarchal structures represented by her own husband and religion. Fusena decides to develop a strategy for survival rather than thinking of divorce. Her rebellious attitudes will not make any sense; only compromise is the solution to her disillusionment. Thus, in a monologue she confides to God: "So Allah, what was she supposed to say? What was he expected to do?" (67). Ali chooses to go with Esi because of her frailty: he really needs a frail woman who can help him show off his superiority and as a man of means. This is illustrated in his handling of Esi. He lavishes her with expensive gifts among which an expensive car. The narrator in a flashback tells us that Ali contrasts with his father who was a serious womanizer. While his father showed his taste for teenagers, Ali prefers frail mature women. It is said that Ali's mother, a girl of 14, bled to death at Ali's birth. Ali is a husband who

is always on the move because of his position as the managing director of a travel agency and a womaniser.

In accordance with double colonization, women like Esi Sekyi, Opokuya Dakwa and Fusena Alhassan Kondeh are suffering from disillusionment, frustration and disenchantment because of their status as both slaves and women. While Esi is “raped”, Opokuya Danqua “is squeezed to death”<sup>44</sup> both at workplace and at home with four children to care for, Fusena is duped and exploited by her dubious husband. Another instance, is after having finally divorced with her first husband ; she remarries this time around with a married man. Considering feminism’s postcolonial concern with a wider focus brings us to an idea closely related to the subjugation of female bodies—that of double colonization. In the manner the term is used in this context, it first refers to a group of colonized women, then proceeds to recognize and distinguish the differences in the oppressed experience between the conquerer and the conquered (women), the colonizer and the colonised. In fact, this suggests that colonized women had no beneficial relationship with their male colonizers; it rather suggests that women, by the fact of being women, are subject to a deeper sort of oppression and subjugation because it includes both remnants of race and gender. Throughout the novel, whenever a male colonizer encounters a colonized female character, though he certainly remarks a number of crucial differences between himself and the colonizing subject, he is at least able to identify the similarity of humanness; this privilege, however small it is, is not afforded to women, who then obviously become the “other” in every respect of their contact. Their mobility is hindered by imperial power. From this perspective, one is able to include even the renowned artist in the colonial/postcolonial power structures.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has examined the theoretical assertion that people’s variable gender identities are a result of psychological, historical and cultural factors that impact on society and provided the reader with a working knowledge of the different theories which have been propounded as being responsible for the construction of gender, namely, biological and psychological determinism which involves factors like culture and many other social forces. Ama Ata Aidoo’s novel, *Changes*, as the title suggests, tries to approach the question of gender by trying to revisit some unquestionable malepower dynamics. Therefore, she has featured different wedded women with different ideologies and backgrounds, and has tried as a variant of western formal education to show that although the culture of ascendancy brought about by colonialism and its coloraries like formal education, white collar jobs opportunities and money driven economy ; occupation in one word, as one of the important determinants of where people fit into the new social class system; gender stereotypes hold the view that women and men are suited to perform different types of work and that women are best suited either to occupy the lowest paying job or to be nurturers. Aidoo as well as many female writers and critics focus their attention on how and why power is concentrated and wielded in colonial and postcolonial situations and offer to examine the various ways in which groups of people are oppressed and subjugated, or are withheld from it. For Aidoo, there should be no separation between the liberation of African countries from that of colonial rulers and the liberation of women from traditional patriarchal authority. This is what is meant double colonisation. It is a predicament which has been identified, criticized, and reacted against. Ama Ata Aidoo’s novel *Changes: A Love Story* » explores the changes or challenges that career women in Africa have to contend with in their marriages and families while men’s ascribed social status remain unaltered. All the female characters featured in this novel are faced with the challenge of finding a balance between being a career woman and a housewife. The novelist sees

literature as an avenue to probe into the history of society by recreating its past experience with the mind of forestalling the repetition of history because colonialism (and its aftermaths) is an instrument of reducing women to nonentities.

It has been my contention that current hostilities might be transformed into a true dialogue between man and woman, husband and wife, for a better society. Aidoo's critique shows that there are in society some propositions which, if handled with care and intelligence, could breathe new life into the moribund but encompassing and impeding patriarchal oppression. The novelist sees the distortion of imagery of characters in male authored novels as a witness to the tremendous prejudice on men's part in her vision for a new and harmonious society.

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