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**AFRICAN EDUCATED WOMEN IN AMA ATA AIDOO'S *CHANGES*
AND BUCHI EMECHETA'S *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN*.**

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DEDICATION

To

My lovely daughter

Wisdom Femi OLAMIDE

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I am extremely thankful to my parents, my mother and my father, for all their support. Without them, I would have given up a long time ago.

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the pitfalls of educated women both at their workplaces and in their community as a whole. The study of the two novels, *Changes* (1991) and *Second Class Citizen* (1974) has proved that education has not changed women's life as expected. Rather, it has strengthened men's abuse of authority over them since they fear that educated women might be tempted to subjugate them. Men still think that they deserve minor jobs. And those who have succeeded in equating men professionally are not well paid. Though professionally efficient, they are not awarded accordingly.

The violation of marriage requirement as suggested by the tradition makes marriages are money-centered and loveless ones. The reversal of role has taken place in most educated married women households. Within marriage, Esi, Adah Fusena and Opokuya have experienced all forms of violence: sexual, physical and psychological. Educated women's acceptance in any society is still a problem. Under such circumstances, some educated married women opt for resignation and others for divorce.

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INTRODUCTION

Education is an imprescriptible right granted the world over. Africans unlike the other nations come to appreciate the values and benefits of education thanks to colonisation. Though criticised for having played a great havoc on the natives, colonisation has brought light to the colonised people by establishing schools. In doing so, it has given the Africans the opportunities to share knowledge and experience with other people throughout the world. Likewise, women are the ones who greatly benefit from it even though it is commonly said that women have experienced double oppression under colonisation, as the writer Helen Chukwuma confesses in her article, *Women's Quest For Rights: African Feminist Theory In Fiction*: “ We blame colonialism as a whip horse but it is colonialism that eventually offered the beacon of light of women's western education and exposure which propelled us to the outer wider world and recognition of the commonality of women's subjugation world-wide”.¹

Thus, very early, the first educated women have realised that only education can free the African woman from the patriarchal bondage. Consequently, they start fighting and define writing as a weapon of their struggle. Then, in 1966 the Nigerian born woman, Flora Nwapa published the first African woman plot, *Efuru*, in a uniquely male literary tradition where female writing is not seen as something worthy as Grace Ogot says:

I remember taking some of my stories to the Manager (of the East African Literature Bureau), including the one which was later published in *Black Orpheus*. They really couldn't understand how a Christian woman could write such stories, involving with sacrifices, traditional medicines and all, instead of writing about Salvation and Christianity.²

¹ Helen Chukwuma. “Women's Quest For Rights: African Feminist Theory In Fiction” in *Forum on Public Policy*. 2006. P 1

² Obioma Nnaemeka. “From orality to Writing : African Women Writers and the (Re) Inscription of Womanhood” in *Research Literature* .p 139-140

Efuru appears as a great symbol of women's strong will to fight against patriarchy. What women writers specifically do is to fight sexism and male chauvinism in their literatures by elevating the image of the woman. As a result, they create female protagonists who are fiercely independent and economically self-sufficient. In a word, these female protagonists are "not anybody's appendage". Thus, what Gordon terms 'women's desubordination' finds expression through organised collective action or acts of rebellion, which constitute a significant phenomenon³.

Therefore, many women's associations and movements have been created to defend and protect women against subjugation. Known as feminist organisations, these associations are rejected by men who see them as an insult not only to manhood but also to the African society. In fact, feminism, as Helen Chukwuma asserts "is a reaction of women with guts and steam and nobody tells the other to remove her head from the yoke. It is only the determinant weight"⁴. Men openly disapprove of this dream of women's and qualify it as inappropriate in an African context. This can be read in the former United Nations General Secretary's words:

Subjugation, after all, has not really been the exclusive menu of the female gender. An oppressive being is an oppressive being whether a man or a woman. And since this is such an evident truth those women who still dissipate their energy and zeal harping on women empowerment and reversal of gender roles are only betraying a poorly formulated and ill-concealed murky machination for attaining, by discordant slogans, what they are genuinely afraid to compete for.....⁵

As it can be seen, educated women's reaction against patriarchy counteracts men's priorities to the extent that these women are given unfair treatment owing to their ideals that men see as a waste of time. The educated women are treated as non Africans because these

³ Francisca Hadjitheodorou. *Women Speak : The Creative Transformation of Women in African Literature*. Master of Arts, University of Pretoria, 1999. P 8

⁴ Helen Chukwuma. "Women's Quest For Rights: African Feminist Theory In Fiction" in *Forum on Public Policy*. 2006. P 1

⁵ Ugochukwu D. Ejinkeonye. "Literary Feminism : When Ideology combats morality"_. In *Forum: Discussions on literary Feminism*. P 4

ideas are Europeans'. They are labelled defenders of western values, which Helen Chukwuma disagrees with in her article: "The term "feminism" is English, as the language itself, but its realization is inextricably bound to the culture and peculiar backgrounds and experiences of the women. ⁶

In a word, the African educated women are frowned upon, even disregarded and treated accordingly. Men are reluctant to marry such women because it is looking for trouble. Owing to their strong sense of independence, economic self-sufficiency and cultural constraints, educated women are more discriminated than the uneducated ones. These women witness harsh unquestionable living conditions that people cannot imagine.

Among the Anglophone African women writers who have concerned themselves with the African women's conditions are Buchi Emecheta and Ama Ata Aidoo. These two writers belong to the second generation of writers who have witnessed the predicament of colonisation and neocolonialism. Empowered by liberal education and the acquisition of literary skills, they have succeeded in breaking the seals of silence and invisibility on the female protagonists by the early traditionalist male writers. Thus, in the majority of their works, they focus on women's condition to raise their fellow sisters' consciousness. They have done it so successfully that the acclaimed feminist Helen Chukwuma refers to them as: "new home-grown intelligentsia, educated, erudite and probing, fired with the zeal of having a voice and being heard". Their efforts to present brand-new, assertive and individualistic females have helped to salvage the lop-sided image that male writers have created.

⁶ Helen Chukwuma. "Women's Quest For Rights: African Feminist Theory In Fiction" in *Forum on Public Policy*. 2006.P2

An evidence of this is in the two novels: *Second Class Citizen and Changes* in which Buchi and Aidoo have put a great emphasis on the unbelievable predicaments that educated women experience in their societies.

Buchi Emecheta's autobiographical novel *Second Class Citizen* (1974) is about an educated woman's struggle to achieve personal fulfillment in their communities. Adah, the main character, is a heroine as she succeeds in being educated despite the overwhelming cultural and psychological pressures her community puts over her. She undergoes a lot of pitfalls because she is an educated professional woman. Her story is that of the African professional woman in Africa and Europe entrenched in her traditions whereas Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*(1991), is a class portrayal of three educated women (Esi sekyi, Opokuya Darkwa, Fusena Kondey) whose behaviours and reactions as regards women's role in the African society depend on their respective educational standards. Aidoo uses these three educated Akan women, Esi, Opokuya and Fusena living in Ghana to highlight the different pressures the educated women face and their reactions while living in an oppressive patriarchal society.

Aidoo and Emecheta attempt to create believable female characters whose stories illustrate the various issues facing educated African women. There is still a gap in their lives. In this DEA thesis, I am concerned with the pitfalls of the educated women in their society both at their workplaces and in their community as a whole. That is why I entitle my thesis *Educated Women in Buchi Emecheta's Second Class Citizen and Ama Aa Aidoo's Changes*.

The analysis of this topic is made through chapters. This first chapter, introduction to the problem, has to do with the statement, significance and purpose, and the limitations whereas the second chapter, the literature review, recalls the former researches about the two novels in order locate this work in the African literature, on one hand and to show the relevance of this study on the other hand.

The third chapter; Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo and their novels under study: the reasons why, presents the factors which motivate my choice of these women writers and these plots. To do it successfully, I recall their social backgrounds through a brief account of their biography respectively, and summaries of the novels under study; *Second Class Citizen and Changes*.

In the fourth chapter, women's professional career and male chauvinism, I intend to emphasise first of all women's devotion to their profession and all their endeavours to keep their household united, that is their successful combination of their job and household duties. Then after, I may recall men's strategies to undermine women's professional career through different acts of chauvinism; in other words, their attempts to take such women out of the realm of profession.

The fifth chapter, educated women and the pitfalls of marriage institution, examines the marriage institution through its traditional unchanging functions to show its hidden exploitative aspects. It is within this institution that women's oppression finds its source and at the same time the one which empowers and justifies men's chauvinist attitudes. It even represses any man who fails on this ground. This plays a great havoc on educated women whose reactions vary from one to another.

Then, the sixth chapter, presents women's responses to men hegemony in *Changes* and *Second Class Citizen*. While some get resigned others distance themselves from the marriage institution and seek for freedom instead.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

1-1 STATEMENT:

Generally speaking, it can be noticed that the educated women feel isolated and rejected in their community in males and females' plot. This is due to the pressure the society puts on them. This is so high that the majority of these women are unmarried or divorcees. Moreover, their unsuccessfulness to live peacefully in the African society is often associated with their great sense of their emancipation and economic self sufficiency in male writings. That is why Beatrice in Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* is shown as a free woman; a no man's land. She lives alone with her maid in her luxurious house.

Just as Beatrice and many others, African educated women are presented as civil servants. As such, they are appointed to leading positions in their community. At the same time, they are considered as failed women in regard to wifhood. Their society does not consider them as 'good wives' because they are away all the day from their homes. They do not have much time for cooking meals, bowing to their husband and his relatives, taking care of the children's education as suggested by the customs. Therefore, they are not seen as wives. That is why the majority of these women in the African literature are shown as outcasts because the society compels the man either to avoid the educated or to divorce her and take a 'second wife.' The plot usually ends with a sad, sorrowful and desperate educated woman seeking for happiness.

Sometimes, educated women take themselves this decision out of frustration as it happens in the female literature. It is obvious that the women writers' objective is to insist on their female protagonists' determination to seek for freedom; which is an act of courage

indeed. However, the end of women's plot is not quite different from men's because educated women are full of disgust as is the case of Ramatoulaye in Mariam Bâ' *So Long A Letter*.

The problem is that people never wonder why educated women fail in their social duty- marriage, why they give preference to motherhood rather than wifehood, why they do not hesitate to divorce. Rather, everyone is eager to label them devils owing to their educational standards. Unfortunately, these women are also beaten, scolded, exploited and abused like any ordinary woman and nobody neither cares nor minds because they are women. The reason is that people lay the responsibility of educated women's failure in any domains of life at women own door. Their life is even worse than anyone can imagine. All their life, they experience predicaments whenever they are. Their attitudes, speeches and acts are misunderstood and misinterpreted. Their private life is a misery. Either at home or at work, they are considered as the devil that the community should be ostracised of.

I can feel Mariama Bâ, Flora Nwapa Buchi Emecheta and Ama Ata Aidoo female protagonists' unhappiness and loneliness. They resort to divorce as the solution of last resort. It is their sadness; their unsuccessful efforts to be understood and their society unwillingness to appreciate their open-mindedness that makes me investigate this topic. What I am concerned with in this paper is educated women's harsh living conditions and their will to be 'good wives', 'good mothers' and be involved in their communities.

Obviously, one may wonder why I give preference to Buchi Emecheta and Ama Ata Aidoo whereas there are younger female writers who have depicted this predicament of educated women in their plots too. The reason is that, though Buchi and Aidoo are contemporaries, they look at educated women's plight at different era. This can be associated with the different setting of the plot. *Second Class Citizen*(1974) depicts the African educated women's hardships as well in the colonial Africa and its evils as in the metropolitan country. In *Second Class Citizen* the main character Ada, is shown as the forerunner of women's

education and emancipation whereas in *Changes* (1991) women's education is no more a taboo in Africa. All the three protagonists: Esi, Opokuya and Fusena are educated women. However, Ada, Esi, Opokuya and Fusena face the same hardships as regards their communities' apprehension of educated women.

1-2 SIGNIFICANCE AND PURPOSE


Any reader may wonder whether this study is important so far owing to the abundant literature on women's issues. As I said a little bit above, educated women are shown fighting against unjust established norms that enslave them and liberating themselves violently from the gendered yoke. African educated women are presented in literature as emancipation oriented, autonomous and self reliant, devils, talkative as they are always claiming for this/that right.

In this paper, my intention is to dismantle with this approach of presenting and analysing educated women as antagonists of the society established norms. In fact, men ignore that educated women are not contented with their life. They are still looking for something else that the society has not provided them with yet. And this makes their life harder than that of the illiterates.

What is significant about this project is that women writers do not leave us with their interest on a violent reclamation project. Their aim is to somehow find a usable past in which to inform the present, a present, which has become increasingly more complicated for the African women, particularly for the educated African women. Therefore, women writers have to inform and teach their sisters, mothers whether educated or not and their brothers on the necessity to enhance sustainable emancipation.

1-3 LIMITATIONS

However, any research work has its own limitations. The theme under consideration is focused on two Anglophone African women's novels: *Second Class Citizen and Changes*. In the two novels, I am going to identify the different strategies men use to make educated women's life hard so as to doom them to loneliness, sorrows and sadness. Obviously, I am going to stick to the scope of my theme. Notwithstanding the shortcomings of my research, I believe it may be a step towards the society's will to relieve educated women from their pain.



CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The two novels under study have been the concerns of a great number of research works. The majority of the scholars and researchers investigate in their papers the impacts of education on women's life. In so doing, they associate the benefits women get from education with their thirst of freedom and the rise of women's emancipation. As a consequence, they depict sorrowfully the feminist attitudes of the African educated women in their papers. They usually emphasise the need to show this category of African women the necessity to be in accordance with their culture. Thus, they blame women writers for creating stronger female protagonists who do not grant much interest and respect to their culture and traditions.

In this chapter, I am going to emphasise the images of the educated women as seen by the researchers, scholars and writers so as to state clearly why and how my research work will contribute to existing knowledge. I do not intend to provide the reader with the genesis of women's fight for education. Rather, I am going to focus on the implementation of education and its impact on women's emancipation and status in the African society.

2-1 WOMEN'S EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF EMPOWERMENT

Education is the beacon women need to step forwards. It gives women opportunities to appreciate their own life conditions and their capacity to enjoy its benefits. As such it helps them be initiative and resourceful so as to survive and succeed in a society where education is seen as a man's priority. In a word, it brings light to their life. That is why Buchi and Aidoo put an emphasis on education either in the autobiographical novel or the love story one. As a consequence, the majority of the critics and researchers analyse female protagonists as symbols of patriarchy disempowerment.

The very first sign of this empowerment is their ability to liberate themselves from the cultural constraints. This is what most scholars and researchers study in the two novels. They notice that any educated woman is no longer willing to bear the cultural barriers her community puts on her; that is to say be decorative accessories for instance. She feels free and strong to view her opinion about her own life and her society. As such, they present the educated woman as an emancipated one. One of these researchers is Ibrahim Ndiaye, who in his article *Space, Time and Empowerment in Ama Ata Aidoo's Changes* (2002), demonstrates that Ama Ata Aidoo is one of the African women writers who have succeeded in moving from the all too-stereotyped images of women towards stronger ones or symbols of African women not taking active and shared roles with men, but also taking responsibility for their own destinies. In this article, Ibrahim shows that Aidoo remarkably Aidoo dramatises and subverts the male power mechanics which disempowered women.

As a matter of fact, education opens women's eyes to their right to freedom of speech. In this vein, they can speak out freely their frustration as shown by Curry Ginette in her article *Women From Ghana: Their Urban Challenges in Ama Ata Aidoo's Novel Changes* (2011).

For instance, they can make a conjugal reality be known to the world; which is of a rare occurrence in Africa. Ginette states that the problem depicted, in *Changes*, is that the educated woman no longer shares the view that sex 'is something a husband claims from his wife whenever he wants and as his right. Her opinion is that marriage ought to be based on an egalitarian conjugal agreement that earns a woman both psychological and emotional needs. Ginette acknowledges that, in so doing, Aidoo makes her female protagonists redefine the dynamics of sexual relationships within a couple knowing that the dominant gender structures of the African society make it difficult for young ambitious women to be sexually fulfilled. Ginette concludes that Aidoo not only stresses the gender imbalances that characterise the African society but she also acknowledges that they are characteristic of other cultures.

Another feature is their strong determination to be socially successful. This is an indication that good education leads to a better employment. In that respect, Jude AGHO and Francis OSEGHLE (2008) in their article "*Wonder women': Towards a Feminization of Heroism in the African fiction: A Study of the Heroines in Second Class Citizen and God's Bits of Wood*" show that *Second Class Citizen's* main protagonist's self-achievement in a highly patriarchal environment and her husband's failure is a sign that success is not a matter of sex but that of a strong will. In addition, these researchers acknowledge that through the picture of the main protagonist, Buchi points out that though women are physically the weaker sex; they are not mentally and intellectually inferior to men.

In my previous thesis on *Women's Emancipation in Ama Ata Aidoo's Changes* (2006), I insist on educated women's sense of independence and their ability to take shared roles. As I write, in *Changes*, one can appreciate all the benefits women and the society as a whole get from education. That is why Aidoo presents three educated women who stand for the different changes in the Ghanaian society. Two of them are appointed to higher position in the administration because of their educational standards and experience. They are commander in

chief to whom men owe respect. Socially and politically speaking, the main character, Esi Sekyi, overlaps her husband. And the second, Opokuya Darkwa, holds a job that makes her think critically about her country management and the bilateral relation between African and European countries.

In so doing, Aidoo, Buchi and other women writers make male ones like Chinua Achebe, Ousmane Sembène, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Elechi Amadi, Cyprian Ekwensi, Isidore Okpewho, Chuks Iloegbunam join them in their dance. These latter focus their attention on women and elevate them as central characters. Christine Ohale in her article *The Dea(R)Th Of Female Presence In Early African Literature: The Depth Of Writers’ Responsibility*(2010) quotes Segun who contends that in Ngugi’s *Petals of Blood* and Sembène’s *God’s Bits of Wood* the two writers “have demonstrated that the inequality of the sexes is neither a biological given nor a divine mandate but a cultural construct,”⁷

Christine N. Ohale is a critic who believes in women’s education. She confesses that education bestows not only confidence but provides better opportunities for women. Education has remained the most effective tool for African women’s empowerment. An excellent example of this strategising, she says, is found in Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* where instead of arguing with her parents-in-law, the main protagonist, Adah tactfully decides to “be as cunning as a serpent but as harmless as a dove” in order to bring to fruition her dream of joining her husband in England, a strategy that works out just right. Education coupled with determination bestows women the ability to achieve wisely their aims and get easily even the consent of the most chauvinist man.

⁷ Christine, Ohale. “The Dea(R)Th Of Female Presence In Early African Literature: The Depth Of Writers’ Responsibility” in *Forum in Public Policy*. 2010. P5

In a word, through education women can reach out to the world and this would enable them to have and do whatever men can afford. Economic self-reliance is the second step of an actual emancipation.

2-2 EDUCATION AND WOMEN'S FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Education enables women to acquire economic self-reliance because it makes them skilful and as such they are candidates for employment. An educated woman is likely to earn more easily her life and be financially liberated from her husband in this world getting global than the uneducated one. Then, education doubled with economic power is what women need to be totally emancipated. An educated woman confined at home is just a loss of earnings for the society as a whole.

As regards *Second Class Citizen* and *Changes* researchers present us female protagonists who are not only educated but they also have jobs that provide them with the necessary means to live without their husband's assistance. Sometimes, the female protagonists are the ones who feed the whole family. One of the benefits of women's education is the opportunity they have to go out and work in order to take an active part in the household. This is a powerful way to assert one's independence.

Financial independence acts as a backbone of the female protagonist mobility in the novels as Ifeoma in her article *Feminism and Self-Assertion of Female Characters in Buch Emecheta's Second Class Citizen and Zaynab Alkali's The Stillborn* quotes Helen Chukwuma who writes in her article "*Voices and Choices: the Feminist Dilemma in Four African Novels in Literature and Black Aesthetics*" about female protagonists' economic independence:

The point therefore is that economic independence becomes a source of female assertion, breaking loose the shackles of subjugation and establishing choice as the basis of interaction. It is Adah's economic independence that guided her to her separation from Francis. The development above proves

there are various representations of feminism. For the sake of clarity it is important to give an account of the different understanding of the term⁸.

Ifeoma comments that one must note the reversal of role in this novel as the wife, Adah, is the breadwinner and the husband is a full-time student. Adah's financial independence, her fierce commitment to a better life for herself and children and her independent spirit make her support her children after her divorce.

Being financially independent, women can afford themselves whatever they want. A major way to do this is to genderise occupation and occupational skills. Selaci Dorcoo confesses in his essay, *Independence and Automobiles in Changes* that driving is a man's occupation in contemporary Ghana. Any woman who can own and drive a car is seen to be equal to men. However, according to traditional Ghanaian beliefs, women are supposed to depend on their men for everything. In Selaci's opinion, it is a deviation from the norm to find women who own cars in contemporary Ghana. Thus, he confesses that, in so doing, Aidoo empowers her female characters in making them buy and drive their own cars while some husbands cannot. This is quite positive and all women have to reach this level of independence.

Owing a car is then a great achievement for women in the Ghanaian postcolonial society. Megan Behrent notes, in his article *Opokuya: Resisting Gendered Material Limits in Aidoo's Changes (2002)*, that a car, for any educated woman, is a material necessity to be able to fulfill her role as a working woman, a mother, and a wife and symbolises to some extent the daily struggle of the working class woman against the material restraints imposed upon her.

⁸ Ifeoma E. Odinye. "Feminism and Self-Assertion of Female Characters in Buch Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* and Zaynab Alkali's *The Stillborn*." P50

<http://www.ajol.info/index.php/ujah/article/viewFile/66306/54023> retrieved on june 9th, 2011

Just as Selaci, Lindsey Green-Simms in his article, *Postcolonial Automobility: West Africa and the Road to Globalization (2009)*, stresses the importance of car in an African woman's life. He examines what happens when women instead of men become the owners, drivers, and accumulators of automobiles. In *Changes*, he argues, the automobile is fetishised as a quotidian object. It is used to run errands, drive to work, and meet friends or lovers in the city. He remarks that for the female drivers, in this novel, automobile is consumed as a liberatory tool, a means for them to master space and time and to challenge patriarchal structures. The car then is presented as a symbol of the modern woman, a sign that she can have access to the type of autonomy and mobility typically reserved for African men. Clearly, driving a car is not a matter of sex. Women's financial independence is no more a taboo in the African societies as women and the African community as a whole can appreciate its benefits for women.

Charles Nnolim (2000) is so much convinced of women's financial independence that he writes in his discussion of Nwapa's women's characters as it can be read in Helen Chukwuma's article *Women's Quest For Right: African Feminist In Fiction* "The lesson? Women shall never stop suffering at the hands of men. But the women's saving grace, their last redoubt, lies in being economically independent."⁹ An African educated woman deprived of a job is a prey to an everlasting subjugation as it is shown in earlier male literature where women are always victimised because they are presented as poor people who need to rely on men in order to buy even their briefs. They are associated with small jobs that hardly provide them with enough money to satisfy their needs.

Helen quotes Marie Umeh in her article where she shares the same view as Nnolim about women's financial independence backing herself on Nwapa's women characters. She is

⁹ Helen Chukwuma. "Women's Quest For Right: African Feminist In Fiction" in *Forum on Public Policy*. P8

of the opinion that Nwapa's "canonical contribution to Nigerian letters is then a poetics of economic independence and self-reliance for female empowerment:

Nwapa: . . . I feel that every woman, married or single, must have economic independence. If you look at *One is Enough*, I quote a Hausa proverb which says 'a woman who holds her husband as a father dies an orphan'.

Umeh: My interpretation of the proverb is that a woman should be economically independent. One should not rely on inheritance or men for survival?

Nwapa: Exactly¹⁰.

Moreover, Helen Chukwuma, in this article of hers, backs up Umeh about the necessity for all women to be economically self-reliant. Nwapa's novels, *One Is Enough* demonstrates it. Because of her economic stability, Amaka can survive comfortably when she leaves her husband. Economic viability, Helen concludes, is one of the foot-holds of African feminism as ensconced in novels by African female writers¹¹.

Women's access to economic power offers them the opportunity to speak freely and be listened to. The significant point here is that successful women are acclaimed by the society and their erstwhile husbands. They are rather accorded recognition and respect. Consequently, it can be said that education bestows on women the power to resist patriarchy and make their decisions be the best for everybody. It is then worthy that both education and financial independence should not fail women as most of women victims usually have neither education nor viable economic means. Education and economic self-reliance are the weapons women need to advance really in an African environment. Education lifts women out of the bog of superstition so as to go forwards. Education acts both as cement and water while economic power is the gravel to lay a solid and strong foundation for women's emancipation.

¹⁰ Helen Chukwuma. "Women's Quest For Right: African Feminist In Fiction" in *Forum on Public Policy*. P8

¹¹Helen Chukwuma. "Women's Quest For Right: African Feminist In Fiction" in *Forum on Public Policy*. P8

In this section it is clear that the question of women's financial independence is determinant in a woman's emancipation. Their independence and emancipation can be total unless they get a good education that can help them appreciate and make valuable choice as regards their own life. Anyway, an uneducated woman has very few options in life.

2-3 THE QUESTION OF CHOICE AND WOMEN'S MARGINALISATION

Education has made women aware of the many choices available to them and to know that they should not just sit and wallow in self-pity but that they should they think, plan, execute and concretise.

The first choice strong educated and financially independent women make is divorce. In an African context a woman's duty is to suffer her husband. Then, divorce is not welcome. It is usually interpreted as an act of irresponsibility, a deviation from the established norms and such women are often ostracised by their community in Africa. As a matter of fact, it is not even an appendage of all educated and economic self-reliant women because divorcee women are usually laughed at. Only those who are courageous and freedom oriented resort to divorce as an expression of their will to enjoy totally the benefits of education. They do not mind being rejected or treated as uprooted women. Their intention is not to negate the African tradition but they want to make their community know that they can flee with their own wings.

Christine Ohale interests herself in this question of woman's choice in her article, *The Dea(R)Th Of Female Presence in Early African Literature: The Depth Of Writers' Responsibility* (2010) where she states clearly the reasons why some educated women walk out of their marriage in Flora Nwapa's novels *One is Enough and Women Are Different* and Mariama Bâ's *So Long A Letter*. The first one has to do with polygamy. Most educated

women put an end to their marriage whenever their men start looking for another one. In their opinion, polygamy is very harmful and as such it acts as the cancellation of their contract. That is why Amaka in *One is Enough*, leaves her husband. Her self-confidence and financial independence combine to embolden her and strengthen her decision to channel her energies to her contract business and to raise her twin sons all by herself. Nwapa uses Amaka to highlight the importance of women's economic independence, with the implication that education, hard work and determination ultimately open doors for women. This point is articulated further by Nwapa in *Women Are Different* where the character Chinwe divorces her husband without asking for/ expecting any form of support from him:

Chinwe has done the right thing. Her generation was doing better than her Mother's own. Her generation was telling the men that there are different ways of living one's life fully and fruitfully. They are saying that women have options. Their lives cannot be ruined because of a bad marriage. They have a choice, a choice to set up a business of their own, a choice to marry and have children, a choice to marry or divorce their husbands. Marriage is not the only way.¹²

In *So Long a Letter*, Mariama Bâ presents Aissatou, who is faced with a dilemma: to remain with Mawdo Bâ and to accept all the ramifications attendant on that decision, or to leave him. Aissatou, unwavering in her decision, stoically walks away from a compromised marriage, taking only her dignity and self-esteem and, of course, her four sons. One of the reasons she is advised not to leave her husband is that sons need their father, but she pays no heed to that and leaves anyway. In the end, contrary to popular assumption, she recovers from her betrayal, relocates to North America with her sons and from all indications, finds fulfillment and settles to a dream job.

As I said a little above, courageous women's determination and sense of purpose propel them to control their destiny. By this singular act, divorce, female protagonists

¹² Christine Ohale. "The Dea(R)Th Of Female Presence in Early African Literature: The Depth Of Writers' Responsibility" in *Forum on Public Policy*. P8

confront and dismantle the shackles of subjugation and set themselves free. Educated women are blamed for their willingness to leave their husbands whenever they get fed up with a marriage in which their opinion is not needed. In African female writing, divorce is no longer a taboo. Educated women do not ask for any in-laws's opinion before leaving a man. They have their own vision of what marriage should be. Marriage, they think, should be based on the principle of equality. Unfortunately, this is not their husbands' viewpoint. Thus, they give preference to celibacy.

Another reason why educated women seek for divorce is men's extreme possessiveness and authoritarian attitudes as Curry Ginette explains in her article *Women From Ghana: Their Urban Challenges in Ama Ata Aidoo's Novel Changes* (2011). It is shown that educated women see marriage as two people business, which contradicts African social values. To their mind, marriage institution should not be similar to a prison where one loses his freedom of speech and mobility. If so, women had better live alone. Ifeoma in her article *Feminism and Self-Assertion of Female Characters in Buchi Emecheta's Second Class Citizen and Zaynab Alkali's The Stillborn* quotes Gloria Chukwuma who writes in *Gender, Voices and Choices*: "In Adah's ultimate awareness, the novelist creates the heroine who in spite of her vicissitude refuses to accept the degrading stigma of second class citizenship"¹³

Educated women, as it can be seen, can make choice that suits them even if this contradicts their traditional beliefs. That is why this category of women is marginalised owing to their ability to say what they think and as such they have to move from this suffocated environment to a more aired one. The enabling factor in this domain is space, location and environment. The researchers and critics show that non-subjugated women on the rebound

¹³ Ifeoma . "Feminism and Self-Assertion of Female Characters in Buch Emecheta's Second Class Citizen and Zaynab Alkali's The Stillborn"

need their space, their own struggle pad. They remove themselves from their subsuming environment in order to create a free niche for their avowal.

It can be noted that these women characters undertake a journey looking for a more bearable environment. This kind of journey is listed in women's novels as a prevalent motif.

Helen argues that the journey motif:

[...] on the physical side, involves a distancing, a far remove to a new place which makes its own demands and sets its own standards. Here, Amaka physically moved from Onitsha to Lagos, six hundred miles away. The journey is also appreciated on the symbolic level where it involves a metamorphosis in orientation and goals on the part of the traveler. In moving from the interior to the exterior or the limelight, the heroine sheds her personality. Amaka moves from Idealism to Realism (from innocence to experience)¹⁴.

The conclusion, here, is that women writers make their female protagonists burst the marriage institution when it becomes too subjugating. Thus Amaka in *One is Enough*, Aissatou in *So Long a Letter*, Adah in *Second Class Citizen*, Esi in *Changes* and others, all go away from their matrimonial homes, distancing themselves physically and psychologically to seek their individuality and self-realisation in the wider world. Obviously, they are not backed by their men in their decisions. Paradoxically, in these new milieus men do not lose any occasion to let them know that they are still women. Education has not changed their destiny so much as they have initially thought.

2-4. EDUCATED WOMEN AND THE PERSISTENCE OF PATRIARCHY

The previous sections of this chapter show how much women benefit from education. Not only do they speak freely and make suitable decisions but do they also enjoy financial independence. All this proves education is a saviour from poverty. However, they have not enjoyed total happiness yet. Men still stick to their patriarchal privileges.

¹⁴ Helen Chukwuma, *Accents in the African Novel*, 2nd ed. (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Peral Publishers, 2003) 84

Thus, most critics emphasise the cultural constraints put on women in their communities. They, firstly, explore fundamental issues such as marriage so as to present this institution not only as a vivid manifestation of patriarchy but also as a means to silence women forever. They achieve this thanks to the discourse they use to show all their disgust and power of patriarchy. Marriage accounts for the young girl's funeral even if she is educated. Sadiqa Maqbool in his paper *Thematic Concerns and Linguistic Strategies: Post Colonial Subversions of Verbal Humour in Aidoo* points out that it is important to note how consistently Aidoo relates gustatory imagery to heterosexuality and power relations. In this paper, Sadiqa makes it clear that the progress made by the world does not affect the institution of marriage in Africa. It is still unbelievable that a woman be single in our societies.

Secondly, critics note that education does not elevate women's status so much. They are considered as inferior people like any ordinary women since they do not enjoy the same privileges as men do. Thus, for instance, Francisca HADJITHEODOROU (1999) focuses her thesis on women for her Master of Arts. In this paper, *Women Speak: The Creative Transformation of Women in African Literature*, she asserts that Emecheta in *Second Class Citizen*, concentrates herself on the multiple oppressions identified and experienced by educated women. Set in Nigeria and England in the 1940s and 1970s, *Second Class Citizen* reveals what is to be a woman of Igbo cultural descent, and by implication, according to Emecheta, to be a victim of a syndrome that is identified as "second class citizenship".

Another critic, Luca Pono, (2004) thinks that *Second Class Citizen* illustrates the author's thorough exploration of gender discrimination in her native Nigerian society and in African immigrant communities in Britain. To his mind, African educated women can't escape subjugation no matter where they are. Adah suffers in Britain because her Nigerian Diaspora community replicates the patriarchal values of the mother country as it can be seen

in Adah's husband's voice: "it is allowed for African males to come and get civilized in England. But that privilege has not been extended to females yet"¹⁵. She is accepted neither at home nor in Britain as a successful person because she is a mere woman.

This sexual discrimination has been exemplified in Aidoo's *Changes* too. In this plot Aidoo gives a painful picture of three African women who experience differently gender oppression because of their various education standards. Megan Behrent (2002) in his article, *Aidoo's Changes: A Class Portrayal of Women*, adapted from his honors thesis shows that this novel is primarily focused on the problems of educated women. Megan remarks that Aidoo through the depiction of three main female characters shows multiple facets of the constraints imposed on women in post independent Ghana. Moreover, Megan notices that Aidoo clearly demonstrates that women of all classes face oppression by virtue of their gender although this varies in severity and form depending on social status. That is why, in the end of the novel, none of the women are able to exercise full independence as all of them are constrained in some way, whether materially, emotionally or psychologically. Though educated, they have either to give up their jobs on their husbands' request or ask for permission whenever they have to go out.

Rebekath A. Walsh (2003) in her article, *Critique on Ama Ata Aidoo's Changes*, asserts that Aidoo in *Changes* presents issues of how not only African women conduct their lives, but also the effects on their husbands, families, friends and lovers. In this article, Rebekath argues that Ms Aidoo has captured in *Changes* the idea of a difference between how women are and how they are supposed to be, and its consequences in the characters of *Changes*. In Rebekath's opinion Aidoo uses the lives of three non-traditional African women to highlight the struggles that African women are going through. These struggles are partially

¹⁵ Second class citizen p40

due to their un-conforming, career-oriented goals and comparatively due to their environments preconceived ideas of the essence of womanhood and wifehood.

Just as Rebekath, Ibrahim Ndiaye in his article *Space, Time and Empowerment in Ama Ata Aidoo's Changes*(2002) explains that *Changes* is a critique of the status of woman in the shifting socio-political landscapes of contemporary Ghana, more particularly Africa. African countries now boast significant political, infrastructural, social and economic improvements, improvements that have fostered increasingly independent, mobile, educated upper- and middle-class women in control of crucial matters such as their reproductive lives. Ibrahim thinks that such changes, however, should not overshadow the fact that the majority of women have not benefited from the said improvements and that most emancipated women's freedom and rights keep being seriously constrained by their gender. Aidoo's sisters still live in a man's world.¹⁶.

The reading of these different papers shows that researchers have given a keen attention to the various aspects of women's situation since they are granted the right to education. Nonetheless, the last section of this chapter shows that education does not relieve their pain. Rather, it has strengthened men's will to subjugate their female counterparts. These different papers about educated women's condition make us understand that in an African context a woman, despite the overwhelming progress of a world being global, whatever her education standard may be, is still victimised and treated accordingly. The educated woman is expected to use her expanded knowledge for professional duties only. For the sake of personal achievement and fulfillment the educated woman has to make a self sacrifice.

¹⁶ Ibrahim Ndiaye. *Space, Time and Empowerment in Ama Ata Aidoo's Changes*. 2002
<http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v613/aidoo.htm> p2

It is this aspect that interests me; educated women's predicaments wherever they are. I do not intend to justify educated women's sense of emancipation. Rather, I want to investigate the overwhelming pitfalls they meet in the society.

In the next chapter I am going to give a brief account of Buchi and Aidoo's personalities in order to locate my theme in the chosen novels

CHAPTER THREE: BUCHI EMECHETA, AMA ATA AIDOO AND THEIR NOVELS UNDER STUDY; THE REASONS WHY?

The post independence era corresponds to the birth and emergence of women writing all over the African continents. This period fosters increasingly independent and determined female writers known as writers of the second generation such as Flora Nwapa, Mariama Bâ, Aminata Sow Fall, Bessie Head, Buchi Emecheta's and Ama Ata Aidoo whose aim is to present a "corrected" image of the female. These women pioneers have been joined in the dance by those of the younger generation: the Zimbabwean Tsitsi Dangarembga, the Nigerian Chimamanda Ngozi Adichi and the Ghanaian Amma Darko who stick to their elder's objective.

Then, one cannot understand why I give preference to two leading writers of the elder generation whose novels have been much studied. Aidoo's *Changes* and Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* address relevant issues despite the length of years. In this chapter, there must be a brief account of their lives' events and the content of *Second Class Citizen* and *Changes*.

3-1 WHY AMA ATA AIDOO AND BUCHI EMECHECHETA?

Born in 1940, these two women writers share a lot of predicaments related to the woman's status in their countries, continent and the world as a whole. Both come from Anglophone countries that is to say former British Empire colonies and as such they share the same linguistic and cultural values as regards western education.

By the time they were born only daughters whose parents were open-minded were sent to school. The short/ long stay is determined by their parents' beliefs and their social classes. What I mean is that these authors' childhood, social background may affect differently their educational and professional careers and their portrayal of the educated women in their fictions. The hardships and the chauvinism they have experienced in their own communities shape the strength of their female protagonists to survive in their patriarchal worlds.

Aidoo and Emecheta do not actually have much in common as regards social backgrounds. Rather, they are diametrically opposed. The Ghanaian writer and educator, Ama Ata Aidoo comes from a wealthy background. As such, she has not suffered from poverty and gender bias because of the society in which she was born. Ghana was a matrilineal society where women were everything: they were supposed to hold the power. Ama Ata Aidoo was born Christina Ama Aidoo on March 23, 1942. She was the daughter of Nana Yaw Fama, chief of the town of Abeamzi Kyiakor in the south central region of Ghana and Maame Abba. She grew up as a princess in a Fante royal household with a clear sense of African traditions.

Though Fama, her father, was an anti-colonialist he acknowledged the superiority of Western education and sent his daughter to Wesley Girls High School in the Southern Seaport Town of Cape Coast. At school, Aidoo proved to her father that he had made the right choice.

In addition, her aunt sensitised her to the subjugation of women, urging her to embrace formal education as a means of mitigating the imposed inferiority. This what her aunt told her as it can be read in the afterword of *Changes*: “Go as far as you can into this education, as for marriage it is something you take along the way.”¹⁷. She has developed artistic resolves very early since she decided at the age of fifteen to be a writer and within four years she had achieved that ambition by winning a newspaper short story competition as she says:

At the age of fifteen, a teacher had asked me what I wanted to do for a career, and without knowing why or even how I replied that I wanted to be a poet. About four years later I won a short story competition but I learned about it only when I opened the newspaper that had organized it, and saw the story had been published on its centre pages and realized the name of the author of that story in print was mine. I believe these moments were crucial for me because.....I had articulated a dream ...It was a major affirmation for me as a writer, to see my name in print.

Empowered by this ambition and encouraged by her father she went on to study at the University of Ghana in 1961 where she studied literature and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. At the University of Ghana, Aidoo became involved with the Ghana Drama Studio, founded by Efua Sutherland. On fellowship in 1965, she published her first play, *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. It was one of only two plays that she published by the end of the century.

Aidoo’s career has also been strewn with a few pitfalls. Very early her feminist inclinations have been felt in her essays and this played against her. As any woman determined to overlap a man in the African context, she has experienced men’s chauvinism during her stay at Legon University where the anti-feminist attitudes of British professors have sharpened her artistic resolve instead. In English courses, for instance, misogynist comments such as “Superior Work” except for female shoddiness” or “Excellent but for feminine carelessness” frequently defaced her essays.

¹⁷ Changes p170

In 1991, Aidoo wrote about women issues in *Changes* where she uttered repeated concerns for the plight of womanhood in Ghanaian culture. She has endowed the female characters in this novel with strong wills and distinct personalities. In writing *Changes*, Aidoo has later admitted she realises that love or the workings of love is also political. In *Changes*, Aidoo examines the role of women in African society and around the world. Combining traditional African storytelling with western genres, she writes of the contemporary roles of African women and the negative impacts of Western influences on African culture.

Unlike her elder sister, Emecheta comes from a poor family and a strong and fiercely Nigerian patriarchal community Ibo. Florence Onye Buchi Emecheta was born in Lagos to Ibo parents, Alice Okwuekwu Emecheta and Jeremy Nwabudinke. Her parents were partly educated and as such they embraced the C.M.S (Church Missionary Society) way of life. But being of the old Ibo kingdom, they made sure that she and her brother never lost sight of home, of life in Ibo. Emecheta's parents moved to the town to find work, Lagos, where her father worked as a railway man in the 1940s.

Four years later, Buchi Emecheta was born on August 14, 1944 in Lagos. Unfortunately, the pay was so low that her father couldn't meet all his family's needs. In addition, at that time, the prevailing atmosphere did not favour girl's education. Then, she started school when she was eight and she had to leave since her father died. But Emecheta was very fond of school and as such she persuaded her parents to consider the benefits of her education. Orphaned at nine and raised by her extended family where she was used as a maid, she struggled alone to survive in this heartless world. Fortunately, a year later after her father's death she received a full scholarship to attend the Methodist Girls' School. So, they allowed her to stay and she spent her early childhood in this school where she remained until the age of sixteen when she married Sylvester Onwordi, a student she had been engaged to since she was eleven years old. She had to stop at the end of secondary school to get married.

Very early, she married for it was the best means to fulfill her dream that is going to London. And she did succeed without anyone's help. She started working to feed her family and had enough means to fulfill her dream. At eighteen, she moved to London with her student husband where poverty still followed her. She bore five children to her husband in six years' time. It was an unhappy and violent marriage as chronicled in her novel *Second Class Citizen*. Her husband's lack of ambition forced her to work outside home. She found a job in the library of the British Museum and later became a youth worker with London education Authority. To keep her sanity, she wrote in her spare time, but her husband resented her literary aims and he burnt her first manuscript. Then, she left her husband at the age of twenty-two working to support her five children alone. Emecheta realised that writing might provide her a more stable income for her children. She noted in *Criticism and Ideology*. "I thought I would wait to be as old as Big Mother with a string of degrees before writing, but I had to earn my living and the only thing I could do was write."¹⁸ At the same time she enrolled at the University of London, earned a degree in sociology, and began writing a column in the *New Statesman* in 1972.

She is the author of many novels such as *The Bride price*, *The Rape of Shavi*, *Joys of Motherhood*, *Head Above Water*, *Kehinde*, *The New Tribe*, plays like *A Kind of Marriage* and *Family Bargain* as well as children's/Young books like *Titch the Cat*, *Nowhere To Play* and *The Wrestling Match*. She is currently a lecturer at university, a college teacher, a sociologist. She publishes a lot articles in *The Black Scholar* and *Criticism and Ideology*. All this achievement is paramount of her strong will to end subjugation. Throughout her prolific literary activity, Buchi has reproduced her struggle against the social, economic and cultural forces that lead to the exploitation of the African women. Besides, her attempt to translate

¹⁸ Kristen Holst Petersen. *Criticism and Ideology* Second African Writers' Conference, Stockholm, 1986. Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1988 p175

personal experience into a sociological interpretation of African womanhood has proved problematic and challenging.

Aidoo is not only a writer and an educator but she is also a revolutionary woman and a politician. In 1970, she was incarcerated when political tension simmered up and intellectuals were persecuted for their beliefs. Within this decade, she has published her second play *Anowa*, her first collection of short stories *No Sweetness Here* and her first novel *Our Sister Killjoy; or Reflections from a Black-Eyed Squint*. In 1982, she became the National Minister of Education and remained prominent in Ghanaian academic affairs until 1983. Her activism was forced to end due to the circumstances arising from the lack of women's acceptance in political affairs. In fact, as a minister she wanted to make education in Ghana freely accessible to all. She realised that her aims couldn't be achieved; then, she resigned and moved to Zimbabwe where she continued teaching and writing. During her time in Zimbabwe she composed enough poems to publish a collection, *Someone Talking to Sometime*, which was published in 1985, as well as a children's book, *The Eagle and the Chickens* in 1986.

Socially and politically more elevated, Aidoo has concerned herself with too many political issues in Africa in her works to the extent that she has been told to write like a man. The implication of this statement is that she is far too bold, too revolutionary and too loud for her sex. Thus, some editors do not appreciate her articles as she confesses in "*To Be An African Woman*" that her life as a writer has been more difficult than being a university teacher. She castigates African literature establishments as follow:

I have heard of some well-known journals on African literature who routinely refuse good studies on the work of women writers on the pretext that they are not ready with our special issue on the work of women writers, especially as these supposed special never come about at all, or once in a half-decade? . . . In the discussion of modern African writing, even when women are vouchsafed any mention, it is often absent-minded at the worst, full of veiled ridicule and resentment. When commentary on Africa women

in literature is none of the above, it is certain to be disorganized... and chocked full of condescension.¹⁹

Instead, Emecheta has never been appointed to any leading political position in her country since she was not prepared to this achievement in her childhood. When she was a young girl, she had been so much embedded in her traditions that she did not pay a keen attention to the political atmosphere in her country.

This political awareness makes a great difference between these two authors who are often referred to as feminists owing to their artistic resolves. Emecheta rejects being considered as a feminist as she says in her essay "*Feminist with a Small 'f'*" at the Second Writers Conference in Stockholm in 1986:

The writer has a crucial control over the subject she writes about. For myself, I don't deal with great ideological issues. I write about the little happenings of everyday life. Being a woman and an African born, I see things through an African woman's eyes. I chronicle the little happenings in the lives of the African women I know. I did not know that by doing so I was going to be called a feminist. But if I am now a feminist then I am a feminist with a small "f". I write about women who try very hard to hold their family together unit until it becomes absolutely impossible.²⁰

Emecheta regrets that any time a woman writes about women's issues she is named feminist. So does Aidoo. She thinks that the fact that one writes about women should be taken as a very legitimate way of seeing the world. That is why Aidoo has reaffirmed her belonging to it and in that respect, at the same Second Writers Conference she retorts:

We hear that feminism is something that has been imported into Africa to ruin nice relationships between African women and African men. To try to remind ourselves and our brothers and lovers and husbands and colleagues that we also exist should not be taken as something foreign, as something bad. African women struggling both on behalf of themselves and on behalf of the wider community is very much a part of our heritage. It is not new and I really refuse to be told that I am leaning feminism from abroad.

¹⁹ Ama Ata Aidoo, "*To Be An African Woman – an overview and a Detail*" in *Criticism Ideology*. p.162

²⁰ Obioma Nnaemeka. *From Orality To Writing: African Women writers and The (Re)Inscription of Womanhood* in *Research in African Literatures*. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3819872> . P15

These quotations prove that Aidoo and Emecheta have the same objective but different approaches to women's struggle. The reason is that the former is a modernist while the latter is a conservative woman. Emecheta's statement is the expression of her strong attachment to her culture even though she left Nigeria at eighteen and her resentment to feminism. This is evidence that her parents have succeeded in keeping her in touch with her traditions.

What they have in common is that they advocate their commitment to women's emancipation as they refuse to see their female characters as victims. Often regarded as feminists, because of their strong belief in women's self-determination, these two women use the English language to expose the exploitation and disenfranchisement of educated women, not only from their careers but from the essence of their own identities such as the burden of traditions over women, women's reaction and male's attitudes towards their educated wives.

3-2 WHY *CHANGES* AND *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN*?

Women writers in their fictions focus on womanhood that is to say on the cultural constraints society puts on women. They represent traditional uneducated women as resigned and unhappy people who contend themselves with motherhood. *Changes* and *Second Class Citizen* are not an exception but the particularity of these novels is that the authors have underscored the problems education can be the source of for women in the African context. Sorrowfully, they notice that women's status, despite the conclusions of different conferences held on behalf of women, has not changed so much. Rather, any woman with the least amount of education is seen as a 'devil'. Thus, Emecheta and Aidoo explore the injustice of traditional male-oriented African social customs that relegate even educated women to a life of child-

bearing, servitude, and victimisation. More and more, educated women start resigning themselves as their mothers have done. Others who are strong enough to dismantle patriarchy end up in loneliness or divorcees. Educated women's plight varies according to the amount of western knowledge each woman has. In a word, no educated women achieve personal fulfillment.

Another specificity of these novels is that though they have different settings their authors show that social and political changes have strengthened women's oppression. One can even say that the more opportunities women are given, the more constraints society puts on them. This can be the reason why Emecheta has suffered a lot before fulfilling her dream. Buchi's fiction focuses on the plight of African women who struggle against patriarchal family structures, unfair gender stereotypes, and contradictory social values in contemporary Africa. While critical of patriarchal tribal culture, Emecheta's fiction evinces an abiding reverence for African heritage and folklore that reflects the divided loyalties of Africans torn between the competing claims of tradition and modernisation. Noted for her realistic characterisation, conversational prose style, and sociological interest, Buchi is highly regarded for introducing an authentic female perspective to contemporary African literature.

The two novels reveal many aspects of the writers' lives. For instance, Aidoo's wealthy background is seen in her protagonists in *Changes* who have reasonable living standards whereas *Second Class Citizen* is the expression of all the hardships Emecheta has experienced early in life. This, in fact, has sharpened her sense and devotion to the struggle of women's freedom. Aidoo writes and publishes *Changes*, a tale of a woman from the Ghanaian capital of Accra and her personal battles. *Changes* artfully enmeshes the passions of upward mobility, the predicaments of African educated women at their workplaces, and the role of the African female as the designated pawn of a polygamous society. It is Aidoo's contention that sexism is a learnt behaviour on the part of the African male and clearly a consequence of the

neocolonial environment. What they have in common is their ability to transform western literary genres into Africans'. So has done Emecheta in *Second class Citizen* where she illustrates the value of education and self-determination for aspiring young women who struggle against sexual discrimination, racism, and unhappy marital arrangements to achieve individuality and independence.

3-3 *CHANGES: A LOVE STORY AS AN EMBODIMENT OF AIDOO'S REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN'S VARIOUS SOCIAL CONDITIONS*

Aidoo is a Fanti who comes from a very wealthy and women's education oriented family. She duplicates these aspects in her female characters in *Changes* as all of them somehow have witnessed the values of education. Esi, Opokuya and Fusena are the three woman Aidoo presents in this plot to depict the burden of tradition in the African society.

The central character of this novel is Esi Sekyi, a lady with a master's degree in statistics who holds an important post in the Department of Urban Statistics in the novel. She is married to a primary school teacher and as such she earns more than he does, owns a car which she drives herself and the house in which they live is part of the allowances the government grants her. Besides, she is taller than he is. Clearly, she overlaps her husband in every domain where in Africa only men are expected to be at the top. Such features embody in a woman is of a rare occurrence in the community where they live.

It can be guessed that Esi is the typical example of emancipated woman. She is strongly dedicated to hard work. She leaves the house for her job from sunrise to sundown and brings home some work to do; a behavior that she justifies as follow: "As you know, my job can be very demanding sometimes. I have to prepare materials for ministers, permanent

secretaries ... you know, such people. And then I have to do a lot of travelling; inside the country, outside. Oko resented every minute he was free and I couldn't be with him"²¹

To her mind, household chores count for less that is why she lets her daughter, Ogyaanowa, live with her father's mother. Oko wants to have more children and most preferably a boy who can keep his family line but he can't because his wife is under of one these dreadful birth control policies. Oko resents his wife's stubborn professionalism for her job takes precedence over her marital duties as they are traditionally understood in some African communities: cooking for the husband, sharing the bed and taking care of the husband and the household as well. Esi respects none of these obligations. She is reported to be "a great cook who complains endlessly anytime she had to enter the kitchen." Oko is a man who needs space to express his manhood thoroughly. Then, he wonders: "Is Esi too an African woman? She not only is, but there are plenty of them around these days ...these days...these days."²².

Aidoo disagrees with such women like Esi who misuse their education on the pretense that they are emancipated. She criticises women who let their children's education on the hands of grandmothers or foster mothers. Aidoo is conscious that it is quite difficult to combine successfully profession and children education. However, a woman must have a spare time for her children.

Another stumbling block in their marriage is that Oko's extreme possessiveness. She asks for divorce when her husband without her consent has sex with her. She perceives this incident as a marital rape. This exemplifies Oko's attempt to dominate his wife. Esi concludes

²¹ Changes p54

²² Changes p8

that Oko is not the type of man who can adapt himself to her lifestyle and vents her frustration to her friend Opokuya:

I couldn't bear it" exclaimed Esi, quite obviously having a problem keeping her voice down. "Another husband to sit on my back all twenty four hours of the day? The same argument about where a woman's place is? Another husband to whine all day about how I love my work more than him? Ugh, Opokuya, I couldn't. I couldn't. And thank you very much.²³

Though she is enraged, she realises that 'marital rape' does not even exist in Ghanaian society because there is no indigenous word. In this vein, Aidoo makes use of interior monologue to show how much confused Esi is. She cannot find an answer to her dilemma. Imagining herself presenting a paper on the topic of 'marital rape' in an African urban environment to a predominantly male audience, she realises that there is no existing, gendered terminology describing this kind of sexual assault in any African languages:

But marital rape? No. The society could not possibly have an indigenous word or phrase for it. Sex is something a husband claims from his wife as a right. Any time. And at his convenience. Besides, any sane person, especially sane women, would consider any other women lucky or talented or both, who can make her husband lose his head like that.....And dear lady colleagues, how would you describe marital rape in Akan?Igbo? ...Yoruba? Wolof?...or Temme? Kikuyu?.....or Ki-Swahili? Chi-Shona? Zulu ?.....or Xhosa ?²⁴

Esi notices that despite her independence, she is still constrained by marriage. As a result, she promptly decides to divorce and forces Oko to leave her house. Surprisingly, a few months later, she enters a polygamous marriage. This is evidence that women's celibacy is prohibited. This is quite relevant nowadays. However, Esi's second marriage cannot last for the fundamental muslim rule of polygamy has been violated. The first wife's consent has not been requested. As an African born, Aidoo does recognise polygamy's validity as it is traditionally practiced in rural areas. What she then challenges in *Changes: A Love Story* is polygamy in a modern urban setting, where the traditional rules of this practice such as

²³ Changes p45-46

²⁴ Ibid p12

obtaining the consent of the first wife are broken. That is why Esi's second marriage cannot work to her advantage:

In the clash of personal expectations and traditional values, Esi forgets that she can make a polygamous work to her advantage. . . Esi overlooked the fact the heart has a way of going in its own way without listening to the head. So I think you can survive being a second wife if you can also hold your heart in check and not sharing the man you love and I don't think it is possible."²⁵

Overwhelmed by her marital problems, Esi feels nervous and suffocated and resorts to tranquilisers as a consequence. Through the use of tranquilisers, the narrator hints at the high pressure of the society on women, which causes her to lose that liberty.

Opokuya married to Kubi Dakwa, a nurse and midwife, is the second educated woman character. Unlike Esi, she is a balanced woman who combines well traditional and modern values, her duties as a mother and a wife with her profession. Though her husband is a chauvinist, she has never questioned his authority. She needs his consent over all matters even if she wants to pay her parents a visit. That is why she is nicknamed "good woman". She is of the view that Oko is the right man any woman can dream of. Then, she cannot understand her friend's complaints about her husband's possessiveness as she confesses: "How many women wouldn't give up everything they've got to have a man like that?"²⁶ Opokuya is surprised that her friend puts an end to a monogamous marriage and enters a polygamous one.

It is through Opokuya that Aidoo discusses the negative aspects of family planning and other issues such as overpopulation and weight, the new bilateral cooperation and the African leaders' greed. Opokuya is the embodiment of Aidoo's political trend indeed.

²⁵ www.bbcworldservice/womenwriters/Aidoo

²⁶ Changes p44

To her mind, family planning, a European-originated idea should not be accepted wholesale on its surface value. Opokuya does not object to birth control but she rejects the use of contraceptive pills, capsules and injections, which she finds dangerous and murderous. She would rather Africans used methods that she deems safe for a woman like having the ends of her fallopian tubes tied. Opokuya notes that the stress placed on population reduction and weight in regard to women is so important that these contraceptives are available in abundant supply and forced on women while medication which could address the much more serious medical needs of African people is scarce. In this vein, she says ironically:

I could be wrong, she would make an attempt to concede, and then move straight on, otherwise how is it that no matter how remote and hidden a rural clinic is, two items you are bound to find in great amounts are pamphlets and samples for losing weight and contraception? Eh? She would ask her bemused listeners, her hands akimbo..And as for hospitals like this one, you know we would never run out of the routine drugs if they were also contraceptive and we gave them to all patients, including men and children, and asked them to take three times a day before meals.²⁷

Likewise, she critiques the emphasis on weight loss for women and in particular the negative depiction of overweight women, particularly African women saying that: “The days when being fat was a sign of prosperity and contentment are long over. You and I know that these days the only fat people in the world are poor uneducated women in the so-called Third World and unhappy sex-starved women in the more affluent societies who are supposed to eat for consolation.”²⁸

In so doing, Aidoo harshly not only disregards this type of western intervention which operates under the pretense of aid to Africans but she also critiques the acquiescent role of the national government.

²⁷ Changes p13

²⁸ Idem

Opokuya therefore expresses her disgust and her firm position that such a European strategy should be fought against. As a matter of fact, she disapproves of the way African leaders rule the continent. Opokua's position appears in the critical way she considers the aid Europe grants Africa. This aid allegedly destined to help African countries to develop rather slows its development because the strings attached to it are too onerous. The situation is worse when African countries are granted loans. The conditions are decided by the loan givers, which make the repayment considerably fastidious and almost impossible. Its corollary is that it makes African countries permanent debtors with its unforeseeable incalculable consequences. It is unfortunate that only few African leaders think of a way out of such dependence. Most of them are simply content with receiving whatever is offered from outside. Aidoo clearly denounces this with much irony through Opokua's angry remark:

Meanwhile our governments are behaving like all professional beggars. They have learned the rules of effective begging, one of them being that you never object to anything the giver likes. And they know the giver likes one thing now: that there should not be too many of us. Under such circumstances, how does the beggar tell the giver to go and stuff his dangerous and experimental contraceptive pills, capsules and injections? Yes injections. And they call their murderous programmes such beautiful names: "family planning" and "mother health" ... all to cover up...'29

All these critiques Opokuya makes about the ruling of her country testify that she is an intellectual. Though she is a mother of a large family, she devotes a great time to her work. She thinks she should use the opportunity that she is given to work for the government as one through which she will show herself equal to men and even outstand them. Therefore she has her time for nothing but work.

The third educated woman is Fusena Kondey, a former primary school teacher who gives up her job on her husband, Ali Kondey's request. It can be inferred from her job-teaching at primary school level- that she is relatively low class intellectual to compare her to

²⁹ Changes p14

Esi and Opokuya dealt with above. This impedes on her since she easily allows Ali to drop from her teaching job opening her kiosk where everything in the world is available and buying her a red car. The argument Ali puts forth is that “it is a waste of time. The hours are long and the pay is terrible”³⁰. Ali, at the same time, keeps on learning until he holds a Master in Business Administration and opens a travel agency in Accra where he meets Esi. He decides to take Esi as his second wife. Then, Fusena realises that it is the educational gap which makes her husband take another wife who holds the same degree as he does.

Fusena’s sorrows give Aidoo an opportunity to teach her sisters the necessity to keep one’s job. This type of attitude is frequently observed among some educated men. They forget that in rural areas men never drop their women from farming or trading. Rather, they encourage them so as to make them self-reliant.

Besides educated women, Aidoo presents some representatives of the old generation: Esi’s mother and her grandmother, Nana. Nana highlights Aidoo’s opinions about marriage and traditional practices in the modern African society. Nana is confused on the way young people arrange and put an end to marriage. That is why she asks her granddaughter whether Oko has beaten her or he denies her money. It is none of these problems. Then, Nana and Esi’s mother are shocked since they cannot understand how one can leave monogamy for polygamy as Nana says:

Why destroy a perfectly good marriage because your husband has too many people around him? Ei. In the old days wasn’t that one of the big reasons why any family gave their princess to any man in marriage? And how can you tell yourself you like some man because you don’t know a single relative of his? Ei. But wasn’t that a good reason to avoid a man in the old days? ³¹

It is obvious that Nana is aware of the sacrifice the institution of marriage requires from a woman. Indeed, she believes that in a marriage a man always gains in stature through

³⁰ Changes p66

³¹ Ibid p108

any way he chooses to associate with a woman. She thinks, however, that there is no excuse for anybody to question this institution. For her, no external factor, not even education should allow any woman to misbehave in the household, to behave in a way contrary to the tradition.

The novel ends up with Esi as a single woman whereas Opokuya and Fusena resign themselves to their fate. In a word, none of the women, despite their attitudes as regards the roles assigned to women have achieved happiness. This situation makes Esi wonders “Why is life so hard on the professional African woman?” This assertion shows the persistence of patriarchy in this so-called modern world. Its pressure on the educated women is so high that the old women in the novel ask themselves sorrowfully why so little has changed for their daughters- school and all- and advise them to accept the situation. Modernisation, ironically, fails in liberating truly the African women.

3-4 ADAH IN *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN*: A REPRESENTATION OF AFRICAN EDUCATED WOMEN VICTIMISATION IN HER COMMUNITY.

The title of Buchi Emecheta’ second novel, *Second-Class Citizen* (1974), refers to the condition of the protagonist Adah in both her native Nigerian society and in the African immigrant community in Britain. Adah, like Emecheta, was born in the forties to Ibo parents. The first part of the novel is set in Nigeria in the 1940s and 1950s and recounts Adah’s childhood marked by the death of her father and her frustrated aspirations for an independent existence. Thus, the central character is representative of all Emecheta’s success and failure in life as a resourceful woman strongly determined to part her way from patriarchy. Just as Emecheta, Adah’s life all starts on the wrong foot.

In this part, Emecheta has brought up various matters like the marginalisation of girl child at birth. Adah comes into this world and determines to survive in it while nobody has

expected a female child. Consequently, nobody minds about recording her birth as the narrator said:

She was not even quite sure that she was exactly eight years old, because you see, she was a girl. She was a girl who arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her. She was so insignificant.³²

Emecheta through this passage critiques the African traditional beliefs which do not favour girls' birth. This practice is still relevant today since people expect only boys as their first child. The reason is that a girl cannot keep the family line. Thus, it is not worthy sending them to school.

This leads to another issue discussed in this first part which is girls' non-access to education. It is a recurring problem in the African societies, more specifically in the remote areas where boys are given preference to. The main cause, Emecheta castigates, is parents' reluctance. Like many Africans, Adah's parents are convinced that girls' education is a waste of time and money even though they know the values of education.

Boys were usually given preference to, though. So even though Ada was about eight, there were still discussions whether it would be wise to send her school. Even if she was sent to school, it was very doubtful whether it would be wise to let her stay long. A year or two would do, as long as she can write her name and count. Then she will learn to sew. Ada had heard her mother say this many times to her friends.³³

Clearly, girls' education is not a privilege for all girls. Only those who are born from open-minded parents enjoy this right. But, this discrimination has another cause; that is poverty. In fact, the economic condition of a family determines what a daughter should do; continuing her study, working to support her own life and her family, or getting married with

³² Second class citizen p7

³³ Second Class Citizen P9

a rich man chosen by her parents. So, Adah's brother is away at school while Adah is kept at home for household chores.

But, Adah's dream is to go to the United Kingdom to study and to see the greatness that she is sure is there. She decides to school herself as she sneaks away from her mother one day and runs all the way to school. In so doing, Adah demonstrates her will and desire to be an educated woman, to be a "first class citizen" as she says: "I came to school- my parents would not send me"³⁴ This passage is an indication that determination leads to success.

Her ambition brings trouble to her mother because she has been charged for child neglect and forces to drink big bowl of Gari with water. Annoyed and wanting to punish her daughter, Adah's mother unconsciously turns her blunt speech into a blessing: "You made me drink Gari only last month until I nearly burnt my stomach, all because you wanted school. Now we gave you school, you want the wharf. No, you won't go. You chose school. To school you must go from now until you go grey."³⁵

Definitely, Adah's mother is right for Adah would never stop learning. Unwillingly she propels her daughter to success. There is still a long way for Adah to meet her expectations since the road is strewn with many pitfalls. Her problems start with her father's death

The third issue then is the unfair living conditions of orphan girls. In Africa, orphans are rarely taken in charge by the State. Unfortunately, poverty prevents close relatives from taking care of these children. Consequently, after her father's death, Adah is used as a maid in her mother's brother house. As the elder child, she has the responsibility to find the required means to finance her brother's education. This is part of the custom.

³⁴ Second Class Citizen P12

³⁵ Ibid p15

Children, especially girls, were taught to be very useful very early in life, and this had its advantages. For instance, Adah learned very early to be responsible for herself. Nobody was interested in her for her own sake, only in the money she would fetch, and the housework she could do and Adah, happy at being given this opportunity of survival, did not waste time thinking about its rights or wrongs. She had to survive.³⁶

This instance proves that poverty makes orphan girls put an end to education very early. Consequently, they enter marriage while there are under age. Adah's case in *Second class Citizen* is an example of orphan girls' living conditions. It is an urgent question because the fund for Adah's brother's education is running low. Her future marriage is, then, seen as a potential source of wealth and this is what her uncle is expected from her. Emecheta criticises this severely and this is the reason why she makes Adah reject the old civil servants who are encouraged to come and talk to her. Although she is very young, she has a clear opinion what marriage should be. As an educated girl, she promises herself that:

she would never, never in her life get married to any man, rich or poor, to whom she would have to serve his food on bended knee: she would not consent to live with a husband whom she would have to treat as a master and refer to as 'Sir' even behind his back. She knew that all Ibo women did this, but she wasn't going to.³⁷

Here, Emecheta stresses the necessity for women to set objectives and fight for their achievement. Adah cannot bear leaving school so young. She does not pay attention to her parents' threats either. Fortunately, she passes her entrance examination and gets a scholarship to attend the Methodist Girls' High School. Her ambition is to go to Ibadan University to read classics. Unfortunately, she cannot attend university due to the traditional beliefs of her community. The problem is that, in Lagos, at that time, teenagers are not allowed to live by themselves mainly if it happens to be a girl. This is one of the golden reasons why many young girls do not attend university. Most of the time, universities are set

³⁶ Ibid p19

³⁷ Ibid P20

in urban areas and parents do not see it worthy to let a girl live by herself. In addition, there is poverty which prevents parents from helping them. This time Adah has to marry otherwise she can give a farewell to her dream.

Like Emecheta, Adah marries at sixteen when she leaves the Methodist Girls' High School. Adah marries Francis, a very quiet and poor man reading to be an accountant. For her parents, Francis is not the man she must marry. Being a college trained, it is unbearable that she agrees to marry a student who cannot afford them with five hundred pounds for her dowry. In their opinion, it is a shame that is why none of them came to her wedding. They let her down as they think that "Adah should have continued her education and become a doctor since she managed to struggle through secondary education."³⁸ The whole situation makes Adah feel uncomfortable. What her parents forget is that university studies are not easy and for the time being she needs more money as the narrator says: "Nobody talked of who was going to support her, nobody talked of where she was going to live. So she found herself alone once more, forced into a situation dictated by society in which, as an individual, she had little choice".³⁹

The greatest satisfaction she gets of this marriage is that she can go on studying on her own pace. She then uses her marriage in the sense that she gets a good job and takes care of her husband and her children. Her job gives her the opportunity to save money with the intent for her family to go over to United Kingdom. The plan is that she will go along with her husband and both of them will continue their educations and become prominent figures in society.

³⁸ Second Class Citizen p29

³⁹ ibid p29

Another blemish in her marriage is that though she is breadwinner of her household and that of her in-laws all decisions are made on her back, for instance, their travel to United Kingdom. At first Adah is filled with rage, but she controls her anger and she comes up with a plan. She quotes to herself "Be as cunning as a serpent but as harmless as a dove"⁴⁰ Once again she uses her smarts to get what she wants. She sends Francis, her husband, off to England to study and in the meantime she works and sends him money. A few months later, she joins him with her two children. She has arrived in the United Kingdom where she goes from a first class citizen in her native Nigeria to a second class citizen in England.

The second part of the plot is set in England in the seventies when women's rights movements are on its ways. She soon discovers that her childhood vision of England as the land of opportunity has clearly been the result of the cultural domination of the colonisers. Emecheta effectively draws the reader's attention to the paradoxical nature of traditional gender beliefs within the Nigerian immigrant community. Though they are in Europe, they treat women as if they were in Nigeria. For instance, only men have the right to get civilised. On one hand, Francis firmly believes that a woman's place is at home. On the other hand, he is fully dependent on Adah, who supports the whole family with her salary as a librarian. Life has been so hard for Adah in England for her husband is a heartless, lazy and ruthless man. Adah has alone to take care of the children, goes out and works to feed her family. Francis is only good at making her pregnant to the extent that she becomes the mother of five kids within six years time. Tired, she makes him work as it can be read: "The money was not enough to go around and she told Francis, from now on, fend for yourself. I know the children

⁴⁰ Ibid p37

are mine, because they need to be fed. You must go out and work. If not, I shall only cater for my children.”⁴¹

What Emecheta stresses through this passage is that women must not favour the reversal of role at the very beginning of their marriage. This does not mean that a woman cannot help her husband but they must not encourage lazy husbands like Francis. There are today plenty of young educated men like Francis who rely on women. Even, in traditional African societies, no matter how wealthy a wife can be, the husband always holds his job and he sees to it that his duties are fulfilled. Unfortunately, this is what happens today in some young educated couples living in urban areas. The message, Emecheta conveys, is that of a necessary mutual assistance in the household for the welfare of the spouses.

This time Adah succeeds as hunger drives Francis to work as a clerical officer in the post office. This new situation enables her to scribble down *The Bride Price* in her spare time.

Just as the reader starts to find hope for Adah, another circumstance arises and as the book progresses one wonders how a woman can put up with so much horror and yet be so strong. Adah informs her husband about her book who replies that he prefers watching the *Saint* on the television which they have hired than reading her book. He resents her literary skills and tries to undermine her literary aspirations by burning her manuscript. Francis’ reaction is that of some educated men, scholars and critics who do not believe in women’s abilities to write something worthy. As a result, there are still fewer women writers and critics compared to men.

Adah’s life becomes purgatorial with Francis as a response to her literary aspirations. By doing so, Francis makes a definite moment in Adah’s growing self-awareness and confidence. Her marriage ends up in battles and quarrels. The whole business has been

⁴¹ Second class citizen p176

reported to the English court where Francis shamelessly says that he has never been married to Adah since he burnt the marriage certificate, Adah's passport and the kids' birth certificates. Chauvinist as he is, Francis openly and heartlessly declares that he does not mind their being sent for adoption.

By these words, Francis has just stuck a dagger in her wife's heart. At the same time, these words arise and strengthen Adah's energy as the narrator points out; "something happened to Adah then. It is like a big hope and a kind energy charging into her, giving her so much strength even though she is physically ill with her fifth kid.⁴² This driving force empowers Adah who replies bluntly to her husband loudly and very clearly: "Don't worry, the children are mine and that is enough. I shall never let them down as long as I am alive."⁴³ Adah is a great lady who has been taught in life to take advantage of any mess she can find herself in.

The central character of *Second-Class Citizen* is representative of many African educated women who suffer a lot within marriage. Today, these women act as fathers and mothers since men flee from their duties. This behavior of men contradicts the African saying "you divorce from a wife but never from children"

⁴² Second class citizen p191

⁴³Second class citizen p191

CHAPTER FOUR: WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND MALE CHAUVINISM IN *CHANGES* AND *SECOND-CLASS CITIZEN*

In this chapter, Aidoo and Buchi show us how much skillful educated women can be. They prove that devotion to hard work and professional consciousness are not only men's appendage. Esi, Opokuya and Adah have drawn themselves up to their height and this is an indication that there is no difference in terms of efficiency, holding and managing a whole department and making socially important decisions. However, their efforts are not rewarded accordingly. The society in which they live is a man's world and they see to it that educated women do not enjoy the same benefits as they do. Aidoo and Buchi correlate all these hardships at workplaces with the forces of patriarchy. It conspires to support with social structures and institutions endemic male sexism.

In this twofold chapter, first of all, I am going to stress career women's great dedication to good work, their capabilities and their courage and secondly men's attempts to minimise their efforts and plunge them into submission.

4-1 EDUCATED WOMEN AND THEIR DEVOTION TO THEIR PROFESSIONAL CAREER.

African women's experience testifies to a history of hard work, resourcefulness and fortitude. In certain African societies women may control a good part of the food supply, accumulate cash, and trade in distant and important markets. This is the avenue depicts in *Changes* and *Second Class Citizen* where Aidoo and Emecheta introduce us to three hardworking women; Esi, Opokuya and Adah. In terms of professional productivity and integrity these women have no reason to envy men. Owing to the length between these novels in term of publication, one can conclude that African women understood and appreciated the values and necessity of employment many years ago. This empowers them to the extent that they keep improving themselves academically and professionally.

4-1-1 EDUCATED WOMEN AND THEIR MILITANCY AT WORK

Women, in *Changes*, are career oriented and show a great dedication to work. Esi with her masters in statistics is strongly convinced that women have the capabilities to equal men if they are given the opportunities. Thus, she avoids professional pitfalls like being late or failing to deserve her salary because she views these as a wasting time as it is pointed out in the novel: "It was bad enough that she was to be late. A woman in her kind of job must be careful...She sat down again, this time almost making herself comfortable. As if the state paid her to come and sit down in her office to try and sort out her personal life"⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Changes P9-10

Esi has a great sense of professionalism and sees to it that everything is well done. By so doing, she believes that women should be given the means to demonstrate their know-how. Esi herself enjoys working with figures, co-ordinating and correlating them as well as applying a research approach. This ability, capability and efficiency owe her an appointment in the Department of Urban Statistics in the novel. Conscious of this stake, she actually seizes this appointment as an opportunity through which she shows the whole world and the African world women's love for good work. This earns her much respect from her colleagues. This is clear from the narrator's words: "she was very much respected by her colleagues and other people who knew the work she did. So she should not really be trying so hard to impress..."⁴⁵

Like Esi and Adah, Opokuya is a dedicated worker. She devotes her time to her work as a nurse and a midwife. More than her house, her hospital is the place where she spends most of her time as it reads here: "So there she was administering the hospital and delivering babies on New Year's Eve. And for the dozenth time and year, whenever she felt free for a minute, she would look at the calendar behind her chair and try to focus on the month of April."⁴⁶

Opokuya's professional integrity and consciousness is very high indeed. So it is to the extent that she overworks herself, which the narrator captures as follows:

Opokuya was feeling sorry for herself and tired. Tired from being too conscientious. Tired of being mindful of other people's needs and almost totally ignoring her own. Tired from having to be in many places at the same time. First, and as usual, there was the hospital. For one more end of the year season, she had not been able to give herself any "offs". However desperate she may have felt, she kept telling that it wasn't right that she who fixed the roster should also give herself the best part of the timetable; like going off during the Christmas and New Year holidays. Practically everyone else wanted to go off around that time. Obviously, when the ancients said that " who shares meat doesn't eat bones", they hadn't counted people with her kind of conscience, had they?⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Changes p.8

⁴⁶ Ibid p.120

⁴⁷ Ibid p120

This professional integrity earns her an appointment as the Head of the Department she is in charge of. All these skills witness that women are talented and they can be as good as men provided that they are given the opportunities and means. To be more talented and balanced women in terms of professional and traditional duties they need to have a controlled maternity.

Similar to women in *Changes*, Adah in *Second Class Citizen* succeeds in getting a job, in the sixties, in the American Consulate in Nigeria thanks to her secondary education, which has been a privilege granted to men only. Her principles are punctuality and consistency at work. She likes her work and enjoys doing it since pregnancies do not prevent her from going to work, she does not complain herself about her employer's lack of provision for maternity benefit either. She is so determined that she resumes her job twelve days after her second childbirth. Consequently, her employer pays her a high wage (sixty pounds) to congratulate for her devotion to her work. Actually, her salary is three times her husband's. This wage makes Adah equate the majority of the Nigerian intellectuals working for the State. As such, she is now established as a first class citizen in her country as her husband remarked "We are ahead of all our colleagues"⁴⁸.

Her great devotion to hard work earns her a good job in a library in London too. At North Finchley Library, despite the prevailing racism and the disgust for black women who seek for white-people jobs, she is quickly taken under the wing of the chief librarian, a Czech lady. Adah is very successful in her new job because she loves working. In fact, the skills one needs in a library are quickness, readiness and swiftness. And she does not fail on this ground. She is quick in filling books and tickets, making out readers' tickets, tracing the lost ones and

⁴⁸ Second class citizen p27

saying 'thank you' to people at each step. Adah's success certifies that women are efficient. It is a proof that determination and hardworking lead to self-realisation wherever a woman is.

This new job in London helps Adah discover some talents which are dormant, for instance, her fondness of reading. Unlike Africans who are only keen on reading textbooks in order to raise their status economically, English are interested in fictions. This fondness of English people has impacted her positively. She, soon, starts to read the works of contemporary novelists and this helps her a great deal culturally. Consequently, it is a necessity that women get involved in a job to let their mind be cleared and seek for personal achievement.

In a word, Aidoo and Emecheta show that educated women are very dutiful, efficient and they can equal men. They can even be more efficient than men.

4-1-2 USE OF THE CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS.

In the African societies, a married woman is expected to enlarge the compound of her husband, that is to say, bearing as many kids as possible and stay at home to educate them. With access to employment, women realise that this assumption can no more work. In addition, in this century, the life high cost has driven all women outside their houses so that they contribute financially to their offspring education. Consequently, children are no more quantified but qualified since education is more and more expensive. That is why it is important to have a reasonable number of children in order to face new challenges. Then, they start using conceptive methods to regulate their life. Thus, working women are not likely to bear a great number of children as expected of a married woman. It is a burden to educate children and be really efficient at work. Educated women often opt for birth control policies.

In fact, birth control is not a new avenue in the African societies. In the past, there were some techniques deemed safe to spread children birth in order to give women time to recover. What is interesting is that they are more efficient than the new ones. An evidence of it is Adah's fourth pregnancy, in *Second Class Citizen*, though she is under pills. This is the reason why Opokuya recommends a tubal ligation, which denotes her resistance to the simplistic view of women's role as biological reproducers. She firmly believes that she is no less of a woman despite the fact that she no longer can have children. In so doing, she empowers herself to be a good career oriented and dutiful traditional woman as well.

In *Second Class Citizen*, Adah, once in London, realises that one cannot be professionally successful with a huge number of children. She is so good at being pregnant that she is nicknamed "Touch not". Then, she seeks for family control policy to regulate a little bit her sexual life. How can an educated woman be given such a name by this century when family planning policy is no more a taboo? Adah feels humiliated and threatened by the loss of her job, she resorts to contraception.

Unhappy and determined to achieve her dream in this white man place, Adah openly begs the nurse. Adah's speech when addressing the nurse highlights her disgust and shame: "Please, could I have the pill? You see, I am not twenty-one yet and if I had another child it would be my fourth, and I originally came here to study and bring up the two babies I brought from home. Can you help me? I need the pill"⁴⁹

Adah is determined to stop having children at random. She wants to conduct her life as an educated lady that she is. She plans to be under these pills on her husband's back. Through the use of contraceptive Aidoo and Buchi emphasise a new approach to motherhood.

⁴⁹ Second class citizen P155

But some men disregard this policy seeing it as an insult. What often happen to career oriented women in the African societies? What problems does women's labour generate in the society?

4-2 MALE CHAUVINISM AS A BARRIER TO AFRICAN WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL CAREER

Women have rarely achieved a dominant role in the working world because men resent professional working women. Emecheta and Aidoo in their novels dwell on the various facets of male strategies to keep their wives in their households.

4-2-1 CONSTANT PREGNANCIES AS A HANDICAP TO WOMAN'S CAREER.

Constant pregnancy is a recurring problem in our society since it limits women's availability. And men use this tool to confine their wives at home. As I have said a little bit above, women are expected to have many kids as possible. The number of children till now testifies to men's virility. On this ground, Francis is the best. An evidence of this is the nickname her wife is given: "Touch Not", that is to say she is fast in getting pregnant. Adah bears him five children within six years of marriage. Francis is a very special man who is eager to reduce her wife to a lesser level. He is able to change his religion whenever a religion tolerate birth control policies as it can be read "He was a Moslem...when he realized that equipping Adah with birth-control gear would release her from the bondage of child-bearing, Francis went catholic."⁵⁰.

Purposefully, Francis like some of the men limits their wife's professional abilities through pregnancies on the pretense that women are good for childbearing and childrearing. Their objective is to overload them with regular pregnancies so that they may neglect their studies/career. Aware that family planning/birth control can enhance her wife professional skills, he turns down her need to put an end to child bearing. He is convinced that men know

⁵⁰ Second class citizen p 122

how to deal with such matters, which are men's priorities. "Francis told her not to go because men knew how to control themselves better, the way it was done in the Bible. You hold the child and you don't give it to the woman, you pour it away."⁵¹

This factor makes some men give preference to uneducated women holding small jobs like trading. For such jobs, women are their own employers and as such they can bear as many children as possible. At the same time, educated women working for others are not free on this ground. Adah is obliged to hide her pregnancy otherwise she will lose her job. But her husband does not mind about it. How can she be successful with a man who thinks that children must be sandwiched in a barn as in the old days? She decides to equip herself with birth control gear. The last nail in the coffin is that the wife brings a form which her husband is supposed to sign to tell that he wants his wife equipped with birth-control gear. Francis' sexual greed and his pride of his manhood lead Adah to commit the crime of forging her husband's signature. She has no other choices as the narrator says: "If she did not forge the signature it might mean another child, another traumatic birth, another mouth to feed; and she was still not getting anywhere with her studies. The price she would have to pay for being an obedient and loyal wife would be too much."⁵²

Unfortunately, her attempt to adopt birth control policies has failed since Francis discovered the whole truth. She knows what it means to Francis; betrayal and unfaithfulness as she thinks:

So, she a married woman, married in the name of God and again married in the name of Okoboshi, the goddess of Ibuza, came to London and became clever enough within a year to go behind his back and equip herself with a cap which he, Francis, was sure had been invented for harlots and single women. Did Adah not know the gravity of what she had done. It meant she could take other men behind his

⁵¹ Second class citizen p154

⁵² ibid P156

back, because how was he to know that she was not going to do just that if she could go and get the gear behind her back?⁵³

Clearly, some men resent birth control/family planning as they see it as controlling and dominating their masculinity since men themselves know that constant pregnancy is a means to weaken women. It becomes the friction in most working women's marriage.

Similar to Francis, Oko shows his disgust of this policy that he qualifies as a dreadful one. He wants to have as many kids as possible but his wife is keen on competing professionally. Esi decides against her husband's will to have only one daughter, which is source of quarrels between her and her husband on one hand, and her in-laws on the other hand. He feels that Esi neglects her duties when she decides to use contraceptives. As an African man, he tries to persuade Esi to give up these dreadful birth control things: pills, or loops.

The conclusion is that men consciously make their wives pregnant to dominate them, to reduce their sense of professionalism. Evidence is seen in Fusena who has accepted to give up her job because it becomes quite difficult for her to associate maternity and profession. Esi is the most successful because she has only one child

4-2-2. EDUCATED WOMEN SEEN AS HELPFUL MATES

In their attempt to silence/dominate women professionally men seem to have devised many strategies. The community as a whole is convinced that educated women can do only odds jobs which are not stimulating. As I have mentioned earlier, African women are said to be destined to domestic work. This view is sustained by the imported religion which has taught women where their place is in a house.

⁵³ Second class citizen p160

Just as missionary women who were only involved in subaltern tasks like teaching, nursing to name a few, the missionary schools designed for African women a specific women's western education focused on domesticity, divorcing women from the political, public and lucrative spheres of colonial economies. This disempowerment persists to date and impacts negatively on the inclusion of women in the canon in different areas of life in Africa. In general, the Christian curriculum for African women focused not on the interests of African women as expressed by them, but on the interests of their fathers, husbands, brothers, the colonial state and the male-dominated church.⁵⁴

Like missionary women, African women are taught to be helpful mates as the narrator criticises in *Second Class Citizen*: "Those God-forsaken missionaries! They had taught Adah all the niceties of life, they taught her by the Bible, where a woman was supposed to be ready to give in to her at any time, and she was to be much more precious to her husband than rubies. It was all right for a man who had seen rubies before and knew their worth."⁵⁵

That is why in London the Nigerian community and Francis forces Adah to seek for the type of job suitable for women even though she is educated; housewives jobs. Francis, the master, keeps pressing her wife to get a job in a factory. He resents later her literary talents and reminds her that she is a mere black woman. And that living in London does not mean that she can be involved in a man's profession as he says: "the white man can barely tolerate us men, to say nothing of brainless females like you who could think of nothing except how to breast-feed her baby."⁵⁶ A woman writer in his house (the rent of which he does not pay) in a white man's country, a true African man cannot tolerate that. It is a shame and his parents would never be happy if his wife became a writer. Among other solutions, he decides to burn Adah's baby, the manuscript of her book '*The Bride Price*'

⁵⁴ Rudo Gaidzanwa. Gender and canon Formation : Women, men and Literary Art in Africa. University of Zimbabwe. P 2

⁵⁵ Second class citizen p30

⁵⁶ Ibid p184

It is this state of mind that, in *Changes*, make Oko complain regularly about his wife's sense of professionalism. There are some under-educated men who like marrying highly graduated women with demanding and highly paid jobs. Paradoxically, such men are always looking around for their wives in the kitchen because it is the place they are supposed to be.

Clearly Esi's ideals are not shared by her first husband, Oko, with whom she has constant fights over her work and her role as a wife. Then, women's employment is seen as a handicap to his total happiness and an insult to his manhood as Oko laments in *Changes*: "...what had he got out of it? Little. Nothing. No affection. Not even plain warmth. Nothing except one little daughter! He wanted other children...a boy if possible"⁵⁷ But Oko seems to forget that the house in which he lives is the benefit of his wife's devotion to her career.

Such men's objective in marrying such ladies is to make them give up their jobs later by reminding them of a woman's place in the African society. But they forget that these women are attractive because of these lucrative jobs and it is the foremost reason why they have chosen them. The following dialogue between two wives, Opokuya and Esi about men who marry bright working women, sheds more light on men's inconsistencies in regard to their wives' demanding jobs:

"The few who claim they like intelligent and active women are also interested in having such women permanently in their beds and in their kitchens."

"Which is a contradiction."

"Yes. But there is. Very few men realise that the sharp girls they meet and fall in love with are sharp because, among other things, they've got challenging jobs in stimulating places. That such jobs are also demanding. That these are also the kinds of jobs that keep the mind active -- alive. Look, quite often, the first thing a man who marries a woman mainly for the quickness of her brain tries to do is get her to change her job to have a more "reasonable" one. Or to a part-time, not a full-time job. The pattern never, never changes. And then a 'reasonable' job is quite dull too."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *Changes* P8

⁵⁸ *Ibid* p44

The last part of the quotation is illustrative of some men's reaction in regard to their working wives. The problem is that some men fear that jobs can make educated women too ambitious, too independent and too economically successful and challenging to the extent they may lose authority in the household. Women's own-account activities may be considered in conflict with the interests of the household because they consume part of her working hours that would be devoted to the household. Needless to say that such men may feel threatened by the economic strength of their wives and seek to enforce traditional authority. Anyway, women's economic position has been affected by a:

[...] traditional opposition to the idea of wives working. [...] Fears were expressed that women who went out to work would not bear children, and this objection was particularly strong when the employment of wives involved being under the authority of a man who was not their husband. [...] In the view of some men, for a wife to earn money not only constitutes a threat to a husband's authority and to his ability to control her, but may enable her to abscond. ⁵⁹

Therefore, the category of African educated men who are eager to marry women with western education are also reluctant to see them tiding permanently their households and be successful in their traditional duties as mothers and wives. Hence, the independent activities of the wives are seen as subordinate to those of the household enterprise and are to be performed during the wife's ' spare time.

Fusena in *Changes* is an example of the helpful mate African tradition wants a woman to be. Ali, Fusena's husband, willingly ends her teaching contract without being labeled a demon, without requesting her in-laws' opinions: "Teaching is out of question. It was a waste of time. The hours are long and the pay is terrible. There should be more lucrative job that you should do and still look after the children"⁶⁰ By more lucrative jobs he means small jobs

⁵⁹ Anastasia J. Gage-Brandon, Dominique Meekers. *The Changing Dynamics of Family Formation: Women's Status and Nuptiality in Togo*. P6

⁶⁰ *Changes* p66

like trading. For him, a woman's place is at home near her children that is why he withdraws Fusena from her government job opening her a kiosk to run and buying her a red car to drive.

Fusena's example is not given ex-nihilo. This is what happens to middle even highly educated women who on behalf of their love for their children and their desire to preserve the unity of their household give up their career, which is a mistake. Ali's attitude denotes some men and the whole community's fear of working women. He belongs to this category of men who resents women civil servants since they think that such women cannot be faithful. He prefers having his wife running a kiosk where his eyes can be every time. He fears that once at work his wife's mind can be brainwashed by these so-called emancipated women the State Offices are full of nowadays. This is a very intelligent and successful strategy to dominate his wife since Ali sees to it that she lacks nothing. This act is a fashion for educated men in urban area. More and more educated men drop their wives from their jobs.

It can be seen that some men fear too much women's unfaithfulness. They ignore that women are not so frivolous. They enjoy keeping their dignity. Financially independent, they like to invest for their children's education. For example, they send them to the most expensive schools, buy them bikes.

Opokuya is a state registered nurse; that is the type of job women deserve to be totally involved in, in order to fulfill their social duties. Such jobs are demeaned minors by men who see it as female ones and they are referred to as traditional works. Thus, Opokuya succeeds in being a good woman and a worker. She has no decision-making power, not even for matters related to women's issues and she is still the head of the nursery department. In this vein, she remains powerless to the abundant but rather useless contraceptive pills, caps and all the European stuff about weight in her clinic that European foreign institutions pill upon the African country. She is upset by this situation because only men can put an end to it. All she has to is to endlessly complaint about this unhealthy situation hoping that one day men should

decide to stop it. What Aidoo intends to emphasise, here, is that educated women must make a difference between their status as a wife and a civil servant. Being educated does not grant a woman any power to disobey her husband. At home, she must remain a wife that is taking all instructions from her husband. At work, she acts as a civil servant.

Besides, Opokuya is a mother of four growing sons, which represents a burden for a career-oriented woman like her. She is visibly exhausted because she has to juggle motherhood and her career, with no help from her husband who is undoubtedly proud of having four children of the desired gender. Opokuya has a hard time being a mother because of the demands her children exert on her. For example, she complains that her children are not self-reliant at home: “When I’m around they try to squeeze me dry to make up for all the times they have to do without me.”⁶¹

Aidoo succeeds in describing the actual living conditions of educated women. Men always prefer that their wives hold subaltern jobs. It is very important since it makes them feel men; the one who overlaps his wife. Thus, she gives Opokuya the type of job men think consider suitable for women. By so doing, she depicts the few avenues educated women have professionally speaking. Their strong will to be elevated in this domain is hardly welcome as it can be read in *Changes*: “Wanting to be a nuclear physicist but everyone telling you it’s much safer to go into teaching because, you know, isn’t that too much for a woman? ... and wouldn’t that be too exotic anyway for Africa?”⁶²

Aidoo is then convinced that this state of mind persists to-date in the African societies. It is still unbearable to see women performing in scientific domains, for instance. In this vein, any woman who holds a stimulating job is seen as a stubborn and inefficient one. Actually,

⁶¹ *Changes* P56

⁶² *Ibid* P140

teaching and midwery require a lot of thinking, know-how and some qualities like humility and tolerance. A teacher is someone who has the right information so that he might not mislead his learners.

In a word, Aidoo and Emecheta want women to hold stimulating jobs. They urge women to use this opportunity they are to show their capabilities. They must not listen to men's stories which aim at confining at home. However, they must remain good wives even if some men do not appreciate their efforts to be balanced women.

4-2-3 REGULATIONS TO ENFORCE DISCRIMINATION AT WORKPLACES

In this century, women still have problems to access to decent employment. Some States set rules which forbid women's access to working unless their husbands allow them. For instance, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a few years ago, husband's authority over his wife was reinforced and strengthened by restricting her independent activities. According to those new laws, a woman cannot obtain a commercial license, or even open a bank account, without her husband's permission. Moreover, although a woman has the right to sign a labour contract so as to be engaged in a paid labor, she cannot enforce this right if her husband objects to her employment. A husband can legally terminate his wife's employment contract by simply informing her employer in writing that he disapproves of her employment. If the husband allows his wife to work, he has the legal right to control her income, if he deems this to be in the best interest of the household.⁶³

For instance, in *Second Citizen* it can be read that there is such a regulation in Nigeria where women cannot get a job without their husband's consent or signature as the narrator

⁶³ Anastasia J. Gage-Brandon, Dominique Meekers. *The Changing Dynamics of Family Formation: Women's Status and Nuptiality in Togo*. P7

notes: “he told her she could not do that because she was the wife. He could refuse to allow her to go to work”⁶⁴. Francis is so proud of this privilege that he forgets that they are living now in England where a woman needs no more his signature before getting a job as Adah retorts to him “This is England, not Nigeria. I don’t need your signature to secure a job”⁶⁵. This proves that labor restrictions upon women are still perpetuated in Africa. On this account, the wealthiest and the most chauvinist husband can actively request the termination of his wife’s employment contract. So does Ali in *Changes*. He puts an end to his wife’s teaching career.

The second handicap to women’s career in some countries is wage discrimination and other professional disparities. On the pretense that women do not need much money and are less productive and efficient than men are, women workers are subjected to allowances disparities. It is noticeable that working women though aware of gender inequities, do devote all their being to their work. Unfortunately, their extreme passion for good work is not rewarded. Opokuya complains that the State that is her employer is paying her a salary so low that she can barely clothe her four growing children and afford herself whatever she needs. As a result, she fails to buy a brand new car as she can only afford her friend, Esi’s old car which starts with difficulty. This makes her wonder:

Where was her luck? where was her luck? What was it she had gotten out of life and out of marriage?
Answer : a very faithful husband. Four fine children. 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.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Second class citizen P177

⁶⁵ Second class citizen p177

⁶⁶ Changes p149-150

Actually, Opokuya buys this second hand car as a response to her husband cynical attitude towards her. Kubi, her husband, keeps reminding her ironically during a discussion they have over his car that he is a senior civil servant through and through as he says: “What? What an idea! I’m a senior civil servant. Car allowance is an approved benefit!”⁶⁷ A mere nurse and a woman cannot get it even if she is the head of her department. It is an abuse of power that a woman drives her husband’s car to her working place. Such an inequity stands for a strategy to discourage such women who see employment as the soul of their realisation.

Esi is another victim of wage discrimination at her workplace. She complains that her male colleagues overlap her though she overworks herself as she notes: “But in fact, considering how much I put in my job ... sometimes I even take home data to analyse! I never get that much from it, not half as much as those men ... and even with the promotion; they passed me over a couple of times ... Why is life so hard on the professional African woman?”⁶⁸

This quotation confirms that professional African women still live in a man’s world where all their endeavours to acquire self-esteem is doomed to failure. There is no pity for them since they intend to equal their husbands. Then, they have to fight to deserve each promotion or benefit they can get in their career.

The third pitfall in professional women’s career is some men’s lack of confidence in them. Men wittingly think that women do not have the required managerial capacities to hold some posts. At workplaces, some men object to having women as their leaders. They think it is a bad sign and express it as follows: “Having to deal with a man who is over-qualified for a job is bad enough. To have to cope with an over-qualified woman in any situation is a

⁶⁷ ChangesP17

⁶⁸ ibid p46

complete misfortune.”⁶⁹ This is also Kubi, Opokuya’s husband’s view: “. . . years of having a clever woman in his home and an unbroken chain of rather stupid heads of Department in his place of work had taught him not to take anything for granted in a discussion”⁷⁰

Through this picture Aidoo criticises some men’s mentality who still think that educated women are not qualified to head an office and cannot in anyway be their managers. Their recognition of women’s rights is just in words and few men are prepared to work for a change in women’s situation.

I am conscious that many scholars can provide valuable arguments to defeat this point of mine seeing that in this century many women are appointed to leading positions, Helen JOHNSON, the president of Liberia for instance. But what I mean is that, and I do agree with Aidoo and Emecheta, very few women do have these privileges. And this is what they castigate in the two novels. The social environment does not favour women, State legislation for instance. The next minute a woman is appointed to a leading position, some of the men around wish to kick her out. They usually devise some mischief to convince her of her inefficiency due to her sex. Then, Adioo’s intention in presenting women in leading positions in this novel is to show such men the stupidity of their behaviours and mentality.

This development confirms that women’s professional life is full of odds and all their efforts to have a balanced life are seen as a waste of time. There are still some men who are not mentally prepared to accept their lifestyle yet; I mean the combination of professional and domestic duties. At the same time these men urge their own daughter to do further studies in order that they might get stimulating and challenging jobs. They even train them to be the opposite of what their wives are.

⁶⁹ Changes p.40

⁷⁰ Ibid p19

Is it only professional life that is hard on African educated women? Owing to these predicaments at their working places it is necessary that I should investigate about their life within marital unions? What does it look like? Bed of roses or quarrels and battles, Hell or Paradise?

CHAPTER FIVE; EDUCATED WOMEN AND THE PITFALLS OF MARRIAGE INSTITUTION IN *CHANGES* AND *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN*

In Africa, marriage institution is a serious one. That is why Aidoo and Emecheta insist on its importance and the necessity for any woman to be married. Either in *Changes* or in *Second Class Citizen*, all the educated women are involved in it. At the same time, Aidoo and Emecheta reveal the oppressive mechanism of this institution, the havoc it plays on educated women who have to be more subjugated than their uneducated sisters are.

Aidoo and Emecheta insist on the high prize educated women have to pay to remain married. In this vein, they emphasise the reversal of role in the household where educated women have to feed, clothe, pay the rent and all fees in connection with children's education. Some men flee from all their traditional duties on the pretense that such women are financially powerful. They are convinced that they have to exploit such women economically otherwise they must reduce them to slave state. Clearly, Aidoo and Emecheta testify that educated married women are the saddest women on this earth. Nonetheless, they advise them not to lose hope.

In this chapter, I intend to show how marriage plays havoc on educated women. But before, I may first and foremost emphasise the importance of marriage institution in the African context.

5-1 THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE: IMPORTANCE AND PRIMARY FUNCTIONS

In most African societies women are expected to go through different stages: puberty, marriage and motherhood (primary functions). In this section, I am going to stress the last two stages.

5-1-1 IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE

An educated woman's life is valuable and well appreciated if she happens to be married. That is why women are not allowed to stay at school for a long time. A woman has no business with being clever. As a consequence, in Africa some parents are not inclined to let their daughters be highly educated for fear that she might not find a good husband that is why Adah's parents in *Second Class Citizen* were reluctant as regards her long stay at school as it can be read: "Even if she was sent to school, it was very doubtful whether it would be wise to let her stay long. A year or two would do, as long as she can write her name and count."⁷¹

This view is endorsed by one of *Changes'* characters, Fusena's mother who harshly scolds her twenty-six years old daughter, Fusena, when she refuses to marry the "alhaji" and keeps studying. The mother finds it unbearable and rather stupid to be so much invested in education since it can bring Fusena trouble as regards marriage. The question Fusena's

⁷¹ Second class citizen p9

mother poses to the “mallam” shows the gravity this matter bears for her. “Was Fusena ever going to get married?”⁷²

Marriage is seen as educated women’s saviour from shame and despair and a provider of safety and protection. Adah’s marriage with Francis in *Second Class Citizen* is an evidence of it. A woman needs a home, that is to say a place where she and her children can live. She needs a roof over her head and pots for cooking. All this can be only provided by a husband. Marriage is then not optional. This is confirmed in Adah’s marriage with Francis since she leaves school for marriage whereas both of them are under age. Marital union is a duty for each woman and the sooner the better. A woman has to marry for her singlehood is an insult to manhood. The following dialogue between Ali and Es, in *Changes*, is assertive of it.

Your male colleagues have still got their wives?’ she said almost angrily.

‘Not to mention the odd girlfriend or two.’ Esi added.

‘I’m glad you realise that yourself, eh?. And of course their wives and girlfriends are still waiting for them to come back home from more conferences... And where is your husband?’⁷³

It is clear then that a woman cannot be defined outside marriage. Marriage is seen as the pinnacle of her realisation that is why elders give much care to it. In the context of African culture, marriage is a sacred institution which first and foremost requires the agreement of both families. The second criterion is that each family investigates the other to ensure that he is not the one “with criminal records, laziness, suicide, physical deformities and bad social names.” This certitude, they believe, is the only way to guarantee the welfare of future generations.

Owing to all this sacrifice, an unmarried woman cannot be tolerated in an African context. Esi and Opokuya stress the mess such a woman can find herself in when they meet at

⁷² Changes p59

⁷³ Changes P50

the Twentieth Century Hotel. Talking about the impossible situation for single women, they swiftly identify the oppressive mechanism in the fact that single women are invisible in their society. They point out the various types of single women and their situation.

Opokuya: It is frightening to think that our societies do not admit that single women exist. Yet.

Esi: yet what?

Opokuya: single women have always existed here too, she said with some wonder

Esi: oh, yes. And all over the continent

Opokuya: women who never managed to marry early enough

Esi: Or at all. Widows, divorcees.

Opokuya: I wonder what happened to such women...

Esi: I am sure that as usual they were branded witches.⁷⁴

This quotation shows that single women are not tolerated in the African societies as Opokuya says: "...our societies have had no patience with the unmarried woman. People thought her single state was an insult to the glorious manhood of our men"⁷⁵.

This assertion allows Opokuya to present the reasons why Esi is unable to remain unmarried after her divorce from Oko. Opokuya reminds her friend that staying alone is not healthy. She warns Esi about the dangers of celibacy in African societies as she says: "So they put as much pressure as possible on her until she gave in and married or remarried, or went back to her former husband... 'And of course if nothing cured her they ostracised her and drove her crazy. 'And then soon enough, she died of shame, loneliness and heartbreak.'⁷⁶

Needless to say that marriage grants a good and worthy reputation to all women and, more particularly, educated women. That is certainly why Emecheta and Aidoo see to it that all the educated women they present in their novels are married. This is the golden reason why Esi enters a polygamous marriage after her divorce. It is important for a woman to be

⁷⁴ Changes p8

⁷⁵ ibid p48

⁷⁶ ibid p 48

married. It does not matter whether it is a monogamous or polygamous marriage. “My lady Silk, it was not a question of this type of marriage or that type of marriage. It was not a question of being an only wife or being one of many wives. It was not being a wife here, there, yesterday or today. The product of the womb of my womb product, it was just being a wife. It was being a woman”.⁷⁷

Aidoo and Emecheta prove that they believe strongly in family. So, any educated woman has to experience this life. There are various reasons why women should marry. This opens door to the primary functions of marriage and the concept of motherhood in the context of African civilization.

5-1-2. THE PRIMARY FUNCTIONS OF MARRIAGE: BIOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL REPRODUCTION.

In Africa, the marriage institution has two main functions: biological and cultural reproduction. Educated or not women are expected to marry and have children (biological reproduction) and live within their husband’s household to educate them, which is cultural reproduction. It can be seen that the notion of marriage is firstly associated to the notion of procreation so as to perpetuate human race. In this vein, Nana’s attitude towards marriage does also advocate the view that the first and foremost duty of women is to procreate as many children as possible. This is evident in Nana’s answer to Esi’s question about the reasons people marry. She says: “Esi we know that we all marry to have children...”⁷⁸. Women’s sense of womanhood is contingent on motherhood.

⁷⁷ Changes p107

⁷⁸ Changes p42

So important is motherhood to most African cultures that a woman's reproductive health is one of the major considerations prior to marriage. Some families may investigate the genealogy of the future bride/groom to make sure her/his family has no known cases of infertility among its female members. Thus, a marriage can be deleted in case that there is a sign of infertility. Sometimes, it happens that the bride's family itself investigates the fertility of their daughter when she is an educated woman or is taking times to be pregnant.

The problem is that people believe that educated women waste so much time while studying that their uterus can no more tolerate any fetus. They are convinced that the more educated a woman is, the less fertile she is. Even if God gives her this opportunity, they think, she cannot have a great number of children. An example of this can be read in *Changes*, when Fusena's mother starts worrying about her daughter's motherhood since she is really old and she seems not to be interested in this matter. On behalf of her daughter's motherhood, the old woman requests a mallam's service to check her daughter's potential about childbirth as it can be read "when that time comes, would she not be too old to have children?...How many children would she have?"⁷⁹. This is the reason why both Ali's and Fusena's families insist that Fusena should become pregnant before Ali leaves for England. This act indicates the importance of child bearing.

This augurs Adrienne Rich's position about motherhood. In her work *Of Women Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1977) she distinguishes two meaning of motherhood. One is the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction to children. The other is the institution which aims at placing that potential and all women under male control.

This institution has been the keystone of the most diverse social and political systems. [...] In the most fundamental and bewildering of contradictions, it has alienated women from our bodies by

⁷⁹ Changes p59

incarcerating us in them. At certain points in history, and in certain cultures, the idea of women-as-mother has worked to endow all women with respect even with awe, and to give women some say in the life of a people or a clan. But for most of what we know as the "mainstream" of recorded history, motherhood as institution has ghettoized and degraded female potentialities. The power of the mother has two aspects: the biological potential or capacity to bear and nourish human life, and the magical power invested in women by men, whether in the form of a goddess' worship or the fear of being controlled and overwhelmed by women.⁸⁰

Thus, motherhood has always played a vital role in the life of women in many cultures. In *Changes*, Esi, though emancipated has had a child before submitting herself to these dreadful pills. Fusena, like Opokuya, has the necessary number of children to build an African household. In *Second Class Citizen*, Adah scores the best mark on this ground to the extent that she is nicknamed 'Touch Not'. Adah confesses that she has not disappointed her in-laws in this domain. It is the best solution to gain one's in-laws' confidence.

All the women characters in the two novels have begotten a number of children advocating Emecheta and Aidoo's view of motherhood. They know that a childless woman's predicament is dire in her family and community. This shows that educated women do not negate motherhood. Their capacity to childbearing is a sign that they do not contest motherhood as it is usually read in literature. Either in *Second Class Citizen* or in *Changes* professional women like Adah and Opokuya and the non-professional Fusena have complied themselves to this rule just to be happily married, not to be outlawed.

It can be concluded that there cannot be marriage without children since they cement and solidify the relationship between the two families. In this sense, the barren woman is doomed to dearth. Unfortunately, nobody questions the fertility of the man but rather everybody pounces upon the woman and urges the man to seek for another woman. This is also what happens to a woman who is unable to bear as many boys as possible. It is the only

⁸⁰ Omar Sougou, *Writing Across Cultures: Gender Politics and Difference in the Fiction of Buchi Emecheta*. New York: Rodopi, 2002. Chap 4.p1

way in the African society for a woman to be sure of the love of her husband and the loyalty of her parents' in-laws. A boy is so important that he counts for four female children put together because he keeps the family line forever. Such a woman is so much respected that she is given the status of a man in the tribe mainly when these boys happen to be a university educated ones. Esi's case is a testimony to this uncomfortable situation. Under these conditions, Oko's parents encourage him to look for another woman. Such a painful situation is likely to make her husband to get more children from 'outside'.

He wanted other children, at least one more... a boy if possible. The fact that his mother and sisters were always complaining to him about the unsafety of having an only child made him feel worse. One of them had even suggested that he did himself and them the favor of trying to be interested in other women. That way, he would perhaps make some other children 'outside' (...) 'My friends are laughing at me,' he said. Silence. 'They think I am not behaving like a man' (...) 'What would you like me to say?' She spoke at last, trying very hard to keep the irritation out of her voice. 'You don't care what my friends think of me?' he pressed.⁸¹

Aidoo castigates the female gender's attitude (mothers and sisters in-laws) who urges the man to look for another woman. They are the ones who openly named their bride as a barren and useless woman. Sometimes, they send her out without their brother's and son's consent. Aidoo through this passage of her novel acknowledges that the number of children is still important to appreciate a woman.

Secondly, women have children to bring them in their father's house. In a conversation between grandmother and granddaughter, Esi questions Nana about the essentiality of marriage when she says that "children can be born to people who are not married"⁸². This way Esi takes procreation out of the realm of marriage, and thus implies that marriage is old-fashioned and unnecessary. Nana's argument in favour of marriage is that it is

⁸¹Changes P8-9

⁸² Changes p42

a means of increasing the number of people to share a sense of belonging with. Nana cannot share this opinion because women cultural reproduction is not possible outside marriage.

Cultural reproduction is another task assigned to women. This role is closely connected to children's upbringing. Nana's view is that people marry to produce children and to give them a home in order "to help them grow up well", that is, to foster them to become good citizens of the nation. This role assigned to women seems to be quite obvious to Ali. He gladly goes off to England to study, leaving Fusena in Ghana to give birth and raise their first child. It is only after three years that he sends for her and their son.

Aidoo deplors that people do not trust educated women's ability to be successful cultural reproducers since they spent most of their time outside their home. They leave their households in the morning and come back only at dawn. This is one of the reason why Ali puts an end to her wife's teaching career. This assumption is actually wrong. Educated women are good cultural reproducers because their financial independence enables them to sustain their children. In *Second Class Citizen*, unlike their countrymen who send their children away to be fostered, Adah keeps her children at home just as if she and her husband were first-class citizens.

Unfortunately, no matter how determined an educated woman can be, her community scarcely appreciates her efforts to be both biological and cultural reproducers. For this and that alone her marital life is purgatorial.

5-2 MARRIAGE INSTITUTION AS A SOURCE OF EDUCATED WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

Traditionally the experiences of marriage dominate the lives and identity of women in Africa. This is not surprising when one considers the enormous weight of the structural,

cultural and ideological processes which bears upon women. It is within this institution that female subordination and oppression find its justification. Up to now, educated women have been discriminated in any way they choose to be associated to a man. Marriage acts then as the mainstream of their oppression.

5-2-1 STATUS OF THE EDUCATED MARRIED WOMEN IN THE TWO NOVELS.

Speaking of women's status is stressing the gender bias they meet in their societies. Its manifestation is man's abuse of power and authority over educated women. It is obvious that all women are oppressed worldwide since this view is long sustained by all traditions and religions.

The argument that supports woman's oppression is that she stems from man's ribs. This is to justify her inferiority. By so doing, religion has provided strong argument to men to dominate her. Her physical weakness is no more questionable. This state of mind has not changed but rather it has been strengthened through generations. And this is one of the golden reasons why men should lure educated women into submission. To enforce his authority over his wife in the foreign country and make Adah knows that he is just doing things the way God himself prescribed, Francis reads her a passage from the Bible as the narrator points out: "Francis had said only two days ago that he had more ribs than she had, because Jehovah God took one of his own ribs and broke it into seven little pieces and made her own cage for them. That why she was called a wo-man because she was made from the ribs of a man, like himself.... He went on and on, about how Jehovah was going to bless the virtuous woman".⁸³

Francis uses all means to express his manhood. For instance, he refuses to help her wife with the babies when they are crying and their mother is busy doing household chores.

⁸³ Second class citizen. P108

He can go downstairs to Mr Nobles to watch TV while Adah is banned from going there because he thinks that Mrs Nobles can have a bad influence on her. Adah as a good woman never questions his authority. Even in England, she simply accepts her role as defined for her by her husband. Francis inherits this attitude from his father as it is said 'like father like son'. He is an African male through and through. The tone of his speech when addressing his wife is an expression of his chauvinism. Adah has just to bow, to obey.

In portraying Adah as a subservient woman, Buchi shows that an educated woman is treated just as a woman.

In *Changes*, Ali is presented as an authoritative man who never requests his wife's opinion even if it has to do with her life. As an African born and a Muslim, he is convinced that the educated woman has to be held with tough hand otherwise you can give a farewell to your manhood. In this vein, education is not the main determinant of women's status. The prestige or respect that the society accords women, in general, is still more closely linked to their roles as wives and mothers than to the new roles that they perform. And these traditional family priorities and values are enforced by the society which often judges any change in sex roles within marital unions as deviant or a threat to male authority. The tone of his voice is assertive in this sense: "Teaching is out of question" Ali addresses his wife as if she were a slave or a mere housewife; it is the father speaking to his offspring. All that Fusena is requested for child rearing children and taking care of their father. Ali does not only terminate her wife's teaching career but he also prevents her from studying while he keeps doing his studies as the narrator said: "It was this business of Ali getting more and more educated while she stayed the same."⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Changes P65

Another factor that makes Fusena aware of her childish behaviour is Ali's attachment to polygamy. Under Islam laws, a man is allowed up to four wives. But he must be able to show that he can treat each woman equally and provide a separate home for each one. This criterion grants the respectful scholar and wealthy business man, Ali, the privilege of picking and choosing who to be, where to establish himself and whom to betrothe or marry. That is why he decides without requesting her wife's consent to marry another woman who holds a university degree as he does. Men are so unjust in this world! It is unbelievable that a man willingly terminates his wife's career and later on gets married with another woman.

Aidoo's objective is to warn educated women against such men who take them out of the realm of their profession. They must know that the only reward you get is polygamy. Very few men keep, on these conditions, the first wife until the end of the day. The wealthier and educated a man is, the greater his thirst for women is.

Another prey of Ali's extreme sense of men's domination over women is Esi. Though she is graduated as he is, he does not mind speaking to her in a harsh tone. This is confirmed when he wants to give her a ring, a signpost of Esi as his property: "Bring your finger" Ali commended⁸⁵. Such a speech is not required between a man and a woman who are going to be involved in a marital union. Moreover, he refers to a married woman as an 'occupied territory' stating clearly that he is the owner and the only one who has the power decision. And it is the reason why a woman should wear a man's ring is: "To let the rest of the male world know that she is bespoke.'` [...] that she has become occupied territory.'⁸⁶

Therefore, Ali operates as a symbolic product of patriarchal norms through which female Africanness is defined.

⁸⁵ Changes P87

⁸⁶ Ibid P91

Kubi Darkwa, Opokuya's husband is another stumbling block of African male intellectual who does not really approve of women's emancipation. He frowns upon women's status and treats them accordingly. He is authoritarian to the extent that he forbids his wife to visit her own parents; he is not prepared either to let his wife who is a government worker use his car every time she needs it as appears from this quarrelling interaction of theirs:

Kubi: what do you mean common sense? Are you abusing me? I collect my full car maintenance allowance. Do you want me to let you drive it every day to the market?

Opokuya: But

Kubi : Does the fact that everybody else does it mean that we should do it too?

Opokuya: Please, Kubi, listen. First of all, I am not abusing you. You know I am not trying to say that you should let me drive the car all over the place with government allowances.

Kubi: Then what are you saying?

Opokuya: If you would let me finish. Please just take your car off maintenance.

Kubi: What? What an idea! I'm a senior civil servant. Car allowance is an approved benefit!

Opokuya: What I'm trying to say is that since I also need the car in order to look after the family properly, please take the car off maintenance. With your salary and mine; we should be able to take care ourselves. That way, there would be no reason for any of us to feel guilty when I drive it.

Kubi: You always carry on as if you are the only salary-earner around.⁸⁷

In addition, he has developed the habit of chronic lateness to back home, which makes him anxious about his safety. But he does not mind her being worried. He never tells her where he is going, she cannot ask him either. Ali and Kubi's attitudes reflect that of their male contemporaries in their attempt to maintain the system alive as appears from Taban Lo Liong's saying:

I hope that at the end of the day we will still have African motherhood intact and African sisterhood intact so that at least even after all the problems they will still bring up another child who will still remember the mothers and the sister who brought him up. I am trying to say this because I suspect that feminism may destroy that which up to now has enabled Africa to withstand all the buffeting from other cultures. I think I should appeal to keep the African household intact at the end of the day, otherwise we may have our younger sisters going off and joining in dances in Lapland which concern the people of Lapland only⁸⁸.

⁸⁷ Changes p17

⁸⁸ Obioma Nnaemeka. "From orality to Writing : African Women Writers and the (Re) Inscription of Womanhood" in *Research Literature* .p153

This is how most men proceed which conforms to Achebe's view in *Anthills of the Savannah*. He believes that men use creation myths to oppress women. In this outlook his alter ego, Ikem, argues that creation myths are not about the beginning of the earth, rather they are the beginnings of men's oppression on women.

What preoccupies Aidoo is the consequence of the strategies men use on women. Unfortunately a great number of women have got used to the practice. They look at it as normal as is seen in Opokuya's female colleagues' reactions when she complains to them that she is refused to take the car:

For the whole world to see.
Definitely for the whole world to see, and
Sometimes even refusing the wife a ride,
If he should pass her on the street.
Opokuya is spoilt.
She is really spoilt.⁸⁹

Aidoo unlike these women does not believe and does not feel that Opokuya is spoilt. Rather she is surprised and shocked that some educated women accept their subordinated status. She openly raves against them when they say that: "It was Opokuya who was unreasonable and mad. Clearly, she didn't know anything. She should listen to the stories of women who paid for cars, which their husband then took over completely."⁹⁰

It is noteworthy that even in western societies, university educated women do not gain substantial decision-making power because of the persistence of the image that women are inferior. Similarly, in most African societies husbands' views concerning authority, respect and gender roles remain virtually unchanged regardless of their level of education and of that of their spouses. In Africa, women's emancipation is a nebulous concept since even is an

⁸⁹ Changes p17

⁹⁰ Idem p.66

increase in female education does not guarantee the improvement of women's status. Such women who have by any chance smelt western schools like Adah in *Second Class Citizen*, Esi, Opokuya and Fusena in *Changes* are condemned to a life one can never imagine. For instance, the following quote is characteristic of the social distance that is present even in relations among educated couples: "The husbands always remind you, no matter how educated you are, that you remain inferior to them. He is the boss in the house. Your mind is not as good as theirs, even if you have a university degree... The minute you put on the ring the trouble starts"⁹¹

This quotation confirms the persistence of patriarchy. Educated women have never been treated according to their level of education. Educated woman is less and less coveted.

All this is a sign that marriage is a serious institution into which should not venture unprepared especially the girls. That is why a great emphasis is put on the girls' training in regards to her traditional duties as a mother and a wife. In this vein, marriage fails to meet Adah's expectations in *Second Class Citizen*. Very early in life, she has sworn never to marry a man to whom she would serve his food on bended knees or to treat and refer to him as a master. Once, she gets married to Francis she realises that marriage in the African context stands for the loss of one's humanity. In addition, her perception of marriage can be true only in fairy stories. In Africa, a wife has to submit herself to her husband and her family-in-law. The following poem written by Madeleine DE LALLE illustrates well what is expecting of a woman in Africa.

⁹¹ Anastasia J. Gage-Brandon Dominique Meekers. *The Changing Dynamics of Family Formation: Women's Status and Nuptiality in Togo*. 1993. P5

When I came of age
And tradition dictated I should marry
My father took me aside one evening
And confided this to me:
When you can listen to a man
Insult you without saying a word
And without being upset
Then come and tell me you are getting married:
Man is a feeble being
Who cannot admit he is so.
When he becomes angry
His ears withdraw
From the mouth that reasons with him,
Let him say what he wants to say,
And caress him where you can.
When he calms down and
Come back to your arms
Embrace him as if he is your prize,
Soothe him as best you can
He recognizes the mother in you.
And that makes him feel like a man.⁹²

This poem gives the best image of what a woman is in the African household. It states clearly the criterion a woman meets to be a proper wife. She must be such an obedient and submissive person since she is only expected to listen to her husband and never question him, to beg him for forgiveness even when he is wrong or mistaken and it is in this outlook that husbands have always treated their wives as it is said in *Second Class Citizen* after a quarrel between Adah and her husband, Francis “My name is Okpara...I don’t want to hear anything. Let’s go and beg his forgiveness. He would let you in. Typical Ibo psychology; men never do wrong; only the women; they have to beg for forgiveness, because they are bought, paid for and must remain like that, silent obedient slaves.⁹³

⁹² Irène Assiba D’ALMEIDA. A Rain of Words.p99

⁹³ Second class citizen p170

And educated women are not an exception to that rule. The following excerpt of poem written by Bernadette DAO and included in Irène d'Almeida's *A Rain of Words* is assertive about the criteria an educated woman must meet to be qualified as a proper wife:

Kalifa told me:
A proper wife
listens as her husband talks
Quickly forgets "the books"
And the school that taught her about these books
She takes from her husband
All instruction
And also from him
All judgement!
And through his eyes, even
Her own life, her joys and tears!
So I have in my hands
This rather curious rulebook
And dare not say anything about it
For fear I will irritate Kalifa⁹⁴

This poem captures the fundamental bases of marriage that is the self sacrifice of women. No marriage cannot work, if a woman whatever she may be, does not renounce to herself as it is said in *Changes*:

our people have said that for any marriage to work, one party have to be a fool.'`
And they really mean the woman, no ?
`Naturally.'⁹⁵

In a marriage nothing works to the advantage of women. Yesterday and today, educated or not marriage entails many sacrifices from women as Nana has told Esi in *Changes* who leaves her monogamous marriage to enter a polygamous one. Nana's long speech of advice to Esi in Chapter 14, clearly shows that marriage is not beneficial to women. It is in no way related to love but rather it is the means by which a woman is made the

⁹⁴ Irène Assiba D'ALMEIDA. *A Rain of Words*. P87

⁹⁵ *Changes* p46

property of her husband thus renouncing her own freedom and independence. What is important is just being a wife, a man's property as Nana says: "Esi, why do you think they took so much trouble with a girl on her wedding day? When we were told that people who were condemned to death were granted any wish on the eve of their execution... a young woman on her wedding day was something like that. She was made much of, because that whole ceremony was a funeral of the self that could have been."⁹⁶

The last sentence of this quotation proves that marriage has never been a bed of roses but a tunnel of thorns, fire and hot nails. And Esi has learnt this lesson for her second marriage fails to bring her the freedom and happiness she misses in her monogamous one. Esi's unhappiness in her polygamous marriage is not solely the result of the inability of polygamy to function in a modern urban environment; rather, it serves to illuminate the oppressive nature of the institution of marriage as a whole in regards to the roles it assigns women. This indictment of marriage clearly reflects Aidoo's views on the institution as expressed for example in her essay "To Be a Woman":

As the very foundation of the family, marriage has maintained a chameleon-like capacity to change its nature in time and space and to serve the ignominious aims of every society: slave-owning, feudal, or modern bourgeois. Throughout history and among all peoples, marriage has made it possible for women to be owned like property, abused and brutalized like serfs, privately corrected and, like children, publicly scolded, overworked, underpaid, and much more thoroughly exploited than the lowest male worker on any payroll⁹⁷

Aidoo demonstrates that the institution of marriage has not changed in that it still relegates women to a subordinate position. And a good woman in some men's mind as Nana said in *Changes* is "she who quickened the pace of her own destruction. To refuse, as a

⁹⁶Changes p107

⁹⁷ Megan Behrent : *Esi's Contradictory class/ Gender status*. www.postcolonial.org/africa/authors/aidoo

woman, to be destroyed, was a crime that society spotted very quickly and punished swiftly and severely.”⁹⁸

Clearly in the two novels the notion of marriage has been constantly analysed. They reflect through Esi’s grandmother, Ali, Oko and his family, and Francis and his parents that in spite of women’s better education nothing has changed for them. They have only gained the loss of respect. Marriage is understood as the sum “of man and wife” and signifies the transformation of a woman into a wife; she loses her identity and becomes her husband and children’s slave as Nana pointed out in *Changes*: “Certainly from as long as even our ancestors may have been able to remember it, it seemed to have been always necessary for women to be swallowed up in this way. For some reason, that was the only way societies were built, societies survived and societies prospered.”⁹⁹

And Nana is right since educated women suffer a lot in their marital union. It can be concluded that marriage is another well disguised form of women’s enslavement. Education and marriage are two distinctive notions that educated women must learn to know. Through Nana, Aidoo conveys that women must stick to their marriage. Instead of fighting against their social values, they must find some strategies to transform all their suffering into happiness. In this respect, Opokuya retorts to Esi who is looking for a man who can accept her lifestyle: “You just can’t have everything your way, and not expect to be lonely, at least some of the time....No matter what anybody says, we can’t have it all. Not if you are a woman. Not yet”¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁸ *Changes* p109-110

⁹⁹ *changes* p110

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid* p49

Do such men marry educated women out of love? Or they are looking for something else.

5-2-2 LOVELESS UNIONS AND EDUCATED WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION WITHIN MARRIAGE:

In the traditional African societies, a man is given a wife on the basis of his strength and devotion to her hard work and love. This shows his capacity to be the breadwinner of his household. That is why they see to it that the dowry is paid. Today, marriage is contracted on fake arguments basis. This is what Emecheta and Aidoo castigate in the two novels.

Today, marriage contract is signed on parents' back without their consent and the payment of dowry. The argument some men put forwards is that women are not items to be sold. Actually, this attitude hides their unwillingness to act as a true husband. It is an expression of their lack of love for their future wife. An evidence of this is Adah's marriage in *Second Class Citizen*.

Francis does not afford Adah's parents even a bottle of palm wine. It is then clear that he cannot be fair, he cannot show any sign of love. To his mind, it is a crime to let your wife know that you really love her. Showing a woman one's love is equipping her to kill your manhood and dominates you, especially with an educated one. That is why it is said in *Second Class Citizen* that a man is brought up to like variety and women shall never protest. Paradoxically, the womenfolk is the first one who blames their sister for reducing her husband to a child state when a man is reported to be faithful. He had better turn his love into a means of subjugation.

An indication of this is that Francis is rude to his wife even during pregnancy when he is supposed to be lovely. Is it the appropriate moment when need more cares, tenderness and affection for the sake of the baby psychological growth? But some men do not mind as Adah

said: “No husband would have time to ask for his pregnant wife how she was feeling so early in the morning. That only happened in *True Stories and True Romances*, not in real life, particularly not with Francis for that matter.”¹⁰¹ No African man likes his freedom curtailed by a woman, his woman.

Adah is now aware that the unfair treatment given to educated women does not depend on the type of society. She has thought that in England, far from all Nigerian and African prerogatives about men, she can have a peaceful and enjoyable marriage. The cold welcome shows Francis’ lack of love for her. He does not know how to love and his stay in England cannot change him either. Adah does her best to join her husband who seems not to appreciate it as it can be seen in the cynical tone of Francis’ voice: “it is allowed for African males to come and get civilized in England, but that has not been extended to females yet.”¹⁰²

This sentence of Francis is an indication that Adah is going to be ill-treated. Adah is conscious that she is not loved and gives herself a reason to stay in this marriage. She does not even blame her husband for his lack of cares and affection; she does not expect him to love him either as the narrator confesses: “She did not delude herself into expecting Francis to love her. He had never been taught how to love, but he had an arresting way of looking pleased at Adah’s achievements. Adah hoped she would never stop achieving success. May be that would keep their marriage together until they got back to Nigeria.”¹⁰³

One may think that Emecheta is too bold seeing that she negates men’s image. Actually, there are plenty of young men today who behave like Francis. They only see women as a source of fortunes. In these young men’s opinion, they perpetuate their fathers’ traditional beliefs, which is wrong. In traditional societies women are well treated and granted respect.

¹⁰¹ Second Class Citizen p61

¹⁰² Second Class Citizen p40

¹⁰³ ibid p82

On the contrary, today, marriage is a business; a contract. An educated woman's marriage is an occasion for her husband to make profit of his business. Francis's choice does not come at random since he says in *Second Class Citizen* that "he had married her in the first place because she could work harder than most girls of her age and because she was orphaned very early in life"¹⁰⁴ It is then understandable that he does not pay Adah's parents the required dowry and he lets her buy the ring they need for their civil marriage. He and his family are in quest of a wealthy woman on whose back they can grasp to achieve their dream. Francis' father's words are assertive in this sense when Francis wonders whether his colleagues will not laugh at him as his wife earns more than he does.

You are a fool man, you are. Where will she take the money to? Her people, who did not even come to congratulate her on the arrival of baby Titi? Her relatives, who did not care whether she lived or died? The money is for you, can't you see? Let her go and work for a millions Americans and bring their money here, into this house. It is your luck. You made a good choice in marriage, son.¹⁰⁵

It sounds as if educated women were one of these commodities nobody needs and the ones who 'buy' can use them at his own convenience. Men who marry educated women boast themselves because they are convinced that their marriage with such ladies is an act of generosity. Once married, Francis and his parents make Adah feed their family as a whole and pay school fees for those who still attend schools. What matters is that she cannot object to it otherwise she can forget about her dream; that is going to United Kingdom. Francis marries her not out of love but interests. That is why such husbands like Francis do not mind exploiting their wives. His father congratulates him for having made such a good and valuable choice in marrying Adah as the son says:

My father told me I made a right decision the day I said I was going to marry you. You know what he told me? No? I'll tell you. He said to me " Adah trained herself. She learnt vey early to let her common

¹⁰⁴ *Second Class Citizen* p45

¹⁰⁵ *Second Class Citizen* p26

sense guide her. She has the makings of a woman who would think before she acts. Very few women can do that, I tell you.¹⁰⁶

Emecheta advises women to avoid contracting marriage against their parents' will. Any educated woman must make sure that her future marriage meets the requirements of her family otherwise she must not be granted any respect and she must be reduced to a slave. On these conditions, she is made to work and feed the others. This is what happens to Adah. In the father's in-laws' opinion a married woman has nothing else to do than fighting for her husband's welfare. In that respect, he convinces Adah to let her husband travel to London, which obviously she has to finance. It reads as follows:

Father does not approve of women going to the UK. But you see, you will pay for me, and look after yourself and within three years I'll be back. Father said you're earning more than most people who have been to England. Why lose your job just to go and see London? They say it is just like Lagos.¹⁰⁷

Even in England Adah has to work to feed Francis and her children. Consciously, Francis does not look for a good accommodation for his family on the pretense that "accommodation is very short in London, especially for black people with children"¹⁰⁸. Heartless and ruthless as he is, he keeps pressing her to get a job in a factory and reminds her that he marries her because she is a hardworking woman. Whenever she shows any sign of tiredness or despair, Francis accuses her of laziness and reminds her that they need her money. This attitude of Francis makes Adah think that it is her duty to work, not her husband's. She is determined to let him have an easy life, the life of a mature student, studying at his own pace. Accordingly, she has to pay the rent, pay for Francis' course, his

¹⁰⁶ Second class citizen p31

¹⁰⁷ Second Class Citizen P30

¹⁰⁸ Ibid p41

examination fees and buy his books. Adah is overloaded to the extent that it is impossible for her to have lunch at work. She usually takes a boiled egg to eat at work. This is such an uncomfortable situation.

This conviction of Adah is a little bit exaggerated since no woman can pamper a husband to the extent she cannot satisfy her own needs. She cannot agree to fail to eat and dress herself well. Adah allows her husband to victimise her and by so doing she encourages his laziness. Consequently, he willingly hurts her by using her money to spoil his concubines as Adah stresses, “You sleep with her, do you not? You buy her pants with the money I work for, and you both spend the money I pay for her, when I go to work”¹⁰⁹

Francis keeps an eye on her wife’s salary. He always knows when she is going to be paid and as such he devises strategies to make her spend all the money. He does not mind asking her for money even when she is at the hospital delivering their third baby. He makes her pay his courses fees as he says:

You know that course Mr Ibiam said had helped him in passing his Cost and Works accountancy examination? I can now afford to pay for it. It costs less than forty pounds, and that would my success. I am paying for the whole course on Monday, so that the whole lot can be sent to me as soon as possible.”¹¹⁰

This makes Adah thinks and worries a little bit about the kind of man she marries. Even though one does not love his wife, you can show a little tenderness to this person as a sign of respect to any human creature. As the narrator notes: “what does one say to such a man? That he is an idiot? That he is selfish? That he is a rogue? Or a murderer? Nothing Adah

¹⁰⁹ Second Class Citizen p 69-70

¹¹⁰ Ibid p132

could think of could convey her feelings adequately.”¹¹¹ The only thing women get from such a slavish marriage is children.

Any marriage like Adah’s always ends up with a divorce. The day the woman decides to stop spoon-feeding the man stands for the collapse of such a union. Then, Adah forces Francis to work as a clerical officer at a post office. Francis thinks it is unjust. In order to punish his wife, he buys when he gets his salary a suit, shirt and a small transistor radio which he carries it with him wherever he goes even to the toilet. He forbids his wife and his children to touch the radio. He has proceeded like this because he thinks it is Adah’s duty to cater for the whole family.

The objective of Emecheta is to warn educated women against marriage contracted on love of first sight. It is important that women make their future husband act according to their social responsibilities at the very beginning of their union. In this vein, they must ask for their parents’ cooperation so that there can refer to them in case of trouble. This is what Adah fails to do. The consequence is that her family lets her down and Francis and his family exploit her accordingly. In *Second class citizen* Francis is presented as a feudal lord who stays at home and feeds fat on the labour of her serf wife--Adah. Adah is saddled with a husband who is perpetually unemployed and does not bring home a dime. She assumes the breadwinning role, does housekeeping and looks after the children.

Other examples of loveless and money oriented-marriages are that of Esi, Opokuya in Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Changes*. Oko, Esi’s husband is often presented in literature as a victim of a highly emancipated woman whose vision of life contradicts that of the African society. It is known that the education gap between husband and wife is equally important in determining women’s relative status within marital unions since men hardly tolerate primary

¹¹¹ Second Class Citizen p132

school educated women. They disapprove of highly educated women, because they believe that female education is eroding their superior status in society. Paradoxically, it is this kind of woman Oko chooses to marry: a woman, who is more educated than he is, earns more money, taller than he is and has a car of her own. Moreover, they live in a house she owns as a benefit of her government job. This implies that Oko is only interested in the money she has and to show whole world his capacity in emasculating an educated woman.

Esi's second marriage is another example of these today loveless marriages. Seeking for love and respect Esi walks away from her first husband. Unfortunately, Ali in marrying her is looking for a new place where he can fully enjoys himself. As a consequence, he does not rent her a house, but rather visits her in her own house and only for love-making sections. Purposefully, he sends a false witness to Esi's parents to seek for their approval. Can be trusted to be a witness only "someone who by age, kinship, social standing or wealth is in a position to stand firm in all matters to do with the well-being of that marriage. Above all, he or she must be one who in a crisis must be respected and deferred to by all parties concerned."

¹¹² Ali's witness meets none of these criteria. At the end, he lets her down and refers to his first wife's place as 'home'

Ali considers Esi's house as essential to the fulfillment of his own psychological and emotional needs as he says:

So being with Esi was altogether a change for Ali, for a number of other reasons too. For one, he was freed from the ordeal of having to find a place to be with a woman who was not his wife. . . . Being with Esi was also a rescue from the normal chaos of his existence. He could forget Linga for a while. He could also forget his home where, because of so many factors, privacy was a rare commodity. Here in this house, that was almost out of the city, he could unwind.¹¹³

¹¹² Changes p100

¹¹³ Changes p73-74

It is quite clear that marriage on the basis of love is rare in African urban areas. Aidoo and Emecheta clearly tell educated women that there are only money-centered marriages. Moreover, true love is part of fairy stories not real life. More and more, people marry for financial purposes and this is the main reason why violence between partners increases today.

5-2 GENDER BASED VIOLENCES WITHIN MARRIAGE

Married educated women like any ordinary woman are subjected to many forms of violence. Violence against women is one of the most direct expressions of the power imbalance between men and women. Violence against women in its differing forms is a worldwide phenomenon, which cuts cross-cultures, nations, and social and age groups. The root causes of violence against women are dominant gender norms and the unequal power balance between men and women. According to the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the term "violence" means any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. The two novels augur the various forms of violence educated women are concerned with.

Published in the mid-seventies, *Second Class Citizen* is a testimony of the violence the heroine goes through. Adah has been beaten and scolded in the presence of her children by her husband, which makes her unhappy and it affects a lot her children. This dreadful situation has reinforced maternal love in her offspring since they cling to her whenever they see their father slapping her or telling her off. Afraid, their eyes roam this way and that in childish terror. Francis behaves as if he were still in Nigeria where such unpleasant situations are not seen as disturbance. The problem is that people in England do not know that quarrels

and battles are part of marriage. There is an Ibo saying about such issues: “A husband and his wife always build their home for many things but particularly for quarrels. A home is where you quarrel in.”¹¹⁴ But in England it means breaking the laws; it is showing a lack of respect. Consequently, the landlord and their neighbours get fed up and beg them to leave the district as it can be read: “Mr. Noble was fed up with their fights and had asked them to move. To cap it all, the women in the house wrote Adah an open petition begging her to control her husband, because he was chasing them all.”¹¹⁵

In addition, she has suffered from sexual violence. In *Second Class Citizen* it is acknowledged that no marriage succeeds without good sex. This sentence means that both men and women still believe that sexual fulfillment is what marriage provides. The problem is that it is used as a means of women’s domination.

Seeing as men’s prerogative, women are not allowed to ask for and deny it to their husbands either. In that respect a woman is seen as a tool to satisfy one’s sexual impulses. This is clearly expressed by Francis through the narrator in *Second Class Citizen*: “To him, a woman was a second class human, to be slept with at any time, even during the day, and, if she refused, to have sense beaten into her until she gave in; to be ordered out of bed after he had done with her;...”¹¹⁶

Hence, at nights Adah is forced to give into Francis' incessant demands for his "sex rights". As if these were not enough Francis would beat her up and destroy the hard-earned property. This implies that sex is something a man claims for as his right and at his own convenience. Once more, even though it has to do with her own body she has no choice. Her

¹¹⁴ Second class citizen 171

¹¹⁵ Ibid 168

¹¹⁶ Second Class Citizen p181

opinion is not needed because she is a wife. Though Adah thinks that her husband is past reasoning, she cannot protest to him. How could she in an African environment? And a great number of educated women are subjected to this sexual violence without being able to sort it out. On these conditions, as Adah confesses in *Second Class Citizen* “the whole process was an attack, as savage as that of any animal”

Anytime, she shows a slightest opposition to her on this domain, she is beaten like a child. Tired, Adah resorts to contraception but Francis calls all the other tenants to come and see and hear about this great issue. The hits have been so strong that “she was dizzy with pain in her head throbbed. Her mouth was bleeding.¹¹⁷ Here, she is the successful Adah with a secondary school education, powerless and beaten to death by the father of her children. She cannot run to the British policemen even though once or twice during the proceedings she feels tempted to run to do so. The problem is that there is nowhere she could go.

Another form of violence she suffers from is the psychological one. Psychological violence depicts the effects some words or attitudes of a male character have had on a female one. Francis proves to be a rogue since all his words and attitudes intend to harm his wife. He does not mind where she is, at hospital, at home or not. He needs to prove her anytime that she is just a woman. Thus, while she is at the hospital and she asks Francis about her children, he uses harsh words as the narrator says: “they were well and that they did not miss her much”. So to say that she is not important. She is what somebody needs least. This harms Adah a lot as she is at the hospital to deliver her baby.

Then, Adah asks him about the fate of his children in case she has died. Francis as expected laughs and gets closer to her bed so that the words can slip into her mind: “If you are worried about who is going to look after the children, if you had died, well, I’ll tell you

¹¹⁷ Ibid p160

this. My mother brought us up all and I don't see...."¹¹⁸ These words drive Adah crazy and tears start rolling down on her cheeks. On these conditions Adah's reply comes to smooth the pain she is undergoing. It is too much, she has to speak her frustration and anger out otherwise Francis' desire can be achieved. The following passage shows how much harmed she has been.

If you don't go out of this ward, or stop talking, I shall throw this milk jug at you. I hate you now, Francis, and one day I shall leave you. I did not bring my children into the world to be brought up by a woman who can't even sign her name. a woman who used her thumb on our marriage certificate because she could not write. If you really want to know, I brought my children here to save them from the clutches of your family, and God help me, they are going back as different people; never, never, are they going to be the type of person you are. My sons will learn to treat their wives as people, individuals, not like goats that have been taught to talk. My daughters ...God help me, nobody is going to pay any bleeding price for them. They will marry because they love and respect their men, not because they are looking for the highest bidder or because they are looking for a home¹¹⁹.

The worst of it is that she is in a foreign country where there is no single friend, no relative of hers and her children are too young to understand the mess she is in. Psychological pressure kills faster than any other disease as the narrator pointed out: "Adah was not happy and this country was a dangerous place to be unhappy in, because you have nobody to pour out your troubles to, so that was why most lonely African students usually had emotional breakdowns because they had no one to share their trouble with."¹²⁰

Then, she dries her tears. She refuses to cry because crying just shows softness and weakness. She understands that Francis is a dangerous man to live with. Like all such men, he is in quest of victims. He harms for the sake of his manhood to enjoy his superiority.

¹¹⁸ Second Class Citizen p32

¹¹⁹ Second Class Citizen p 133

¹²⁰ Ibid p 173

Another instance of Francis' harmful words is when the magistrate tells him he has to contribute to children's maintenance. His reply is poignant "I don't mind their being sent for adoption"¹²¹ Francis' objective is to put an end to his wife's life. He does not want to use a gun for fear that he ends his days in a prison. Words are the easiest means he sees to achieve his aims. This attitude of Francis may be seen as part of a fiction. But, it is what really happens to educated women today. Such men transpose their lack of love for their wife to their children.

Changes is not an exception in that domain. Women are not victims of physical abuse but sexual. And this happens to the most emancipated woman in the novel. Esi, at the beginning of this novel, is forced by Oko, her husband, to have sex with him. "Oko pulled her down, and moved on her . . . 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"¹²²..

In the twenty-first century, men are still established as the hunters and women as the hunted including educated women. Therefore Esi cannot count on anybody's support even that of her fellow educated sisters, like Opokuya, because an African woman is not expected to respond negatively to her husband. Moreover, nothing about their sexual intercourse should sink out. Clearly, Esi and her lifestyle are not welcome. Any sane person especially women would consider any other woman lucky or talented or both, who can make her husband lose his head like that. A woman might be happy when she has such a good husband like Oko as Esi's grandmother, Nana, points out:

Doesn't a woman's time belong to a man? My lady Silk....remember, my lady, the best husband you can ever have is he who demands all of you and all of your time. Who is a good man if not the one who

¹²¹ Second Class Citizen p191

¹²² Changes p9

eats his wife completely, and pushes her down with a good gulp of alcohol? In our time, the best citizen was the man who swallowed more than one woman and the more, the better¹²³

Clearly, Nana's words sum up the essence of husbands' predatory nature. In this sense, she means men are the first gods in this universe and they are devouring gods happy with blood sacrifice. Oko proves that a man is a predator and being married to a highly educated woman counts for less in this domain.

Ali and Esi's marriage accounts for love making sections, nothing more, and for the comfort of Esi's bed. Ali is a womaniser who does not fear about women's feeling. He marries Esi just to exercise his manhood and his great power in using highly educated women as toys for entertainment.

Like Adah, Esi suffers from psychological pressure. The difference is that Ali is not a rogue who uses harmful words. He lets her down. His visits are scarcer and scarcer and he replaces his presences by phone calls as it can be read from the narrator's words

Esi sat and remembered all the other times in the past that Ali had announced he had to leave her- after a short or a long stay- and how intensely she had hurt each time then.

I must be running home... I have to go home... I'll phone from the office before I go home... I'll pass by on my way home... And they had both known that he had always meant where he and his wife, Fusena, and their children lived¹²⁴

He pills upon her expensive gifts to replace his physical presence. Esi realises that these gifts are unable to fulfill her emotional and psychological needs. She soon begins to see the gifts for what they are, bribes, which he pays her to compensate for his inability to give her what she actually needs. As she says, "he had brought the car for her, and she understood

¹²³ Changes p106

¹²⁴ Changes p146

the gesture as a bribe. A very special bribe. But a bribe all the same -- like all the other things he had been giving her."¹²⁵ Esi's to the extent she resorts to tranquilisers at the end.

Love is then just an ideal but when one deludes oneself into thinking that romantic love is life you get into trouble. This is what happens to Esi. The following simile used by Esi's grandmother about a about love carries the drawbacks of romantic love in a woman's life. She explains that the sweetness of palm wine drunk at dawn is a reckless indulgence and that love, like palm wine can be very deceitful. It turns the heads of women and prevents them from thinking straight:

Love is not safe, my lady Silk, love is dangerous. It is deceitfully sweet like the wine from a fresh palm tree at dawn. Love is fine for singing about and love songs are good to listen to, sometimes even to dance to. But when we need to count on human strength, and when we have to count pennies for food for our stomachs and for clothes for our backs, love is nothing. Ah! My lady, the last man any woman should think of marrying is the man she loves.¹²⁶


There is a big price to pay whenever a woman falls in love with a man who is just looking for something else. Anyway, it's safer for a lady as it is said in *So Long A Letter* to marry the man who loves her.

Through these different forms of violence, Aidoo and Buchi want to arouse educated women's consciousness to what marriage actually is. They insist that educated women get no love and no respect; too much suffering and humiliation. This means that women who happen to be unfaithful cannot be blamed because they want to feel a little bit human as the narrator in *Second Class Citizen* "She was beginning to understand why some young wives went to the extent of being unfaithful, just to make themselves feel human, just to find another human

¹²⁵ changes p143

¹²⁶ Ibid p

being who would listen to their voices, who would tell them it was going to be all right”¹²⁷. What matters is that no human societies tolerate women’s unfaithfulness. But people forget that women are human beings who yearn to be loved, to feel married, to be cared for. It is noticeable that African educated women within marriage are beaten hollow and they are not allowed to express their sorrows. Though intellectually and economically empowered, educated women still live in a man’s world in which they would be always considered as second class people. How do African educated women react to these hardships they meet in their life?



¹²⁷ Second class citizen p61

CHAPTER SIX: EDUCATED WOMEN'S RESPONSES TO MEN'S HEGEMONY IN *CHANGES* AND *SECOND CLASS CITIZEN*

The last two chapters have given interesting insights into educated women public and private life revealing their pain, suffering and downfalls. It can be noted that nowhere are joy and happiness allocated in these ladies' daily life. This situation has played a great havoc on some women to the extent resign themselves while others leave their husbands, divorce.

Here; Aidoo and Emecheta that educated married women are concerned about the welfare and dignity of their children. In this chapter I am going to discuss about women's answers to the negative drawbacks of male's extreme chauvinism. For the sake of their children and their own dignity, some educate women remain in their so-called good marriage. Others divorce instead.

6-1 WOMEN'S RESIGNATION

Resignation is the outcome of women's frustration regarding the burden imposed over them. It is the mixture of repressed fear and anger. In Africa, mothers stay in marriage despite the problems they meet for the welfare of their children. As they do not want to be charged as the root cause of their children's misfortune, many women decide to bear all the stuffs that marriage can generate. All in all resignation is a response to the hegemony of traditional pressure over women to fulfill their duties as a mother and a wife, lest they be ostracised. For example, they can give up their career, compromise their future by being strictly obedient to their husband's will.

In literature, this image is that of the uneducated women. In *Changes*, Nana and Ena; Esi's mother are the alive witnesses of this willing subordination in the present glooming changing world. So do Adah's mother and Francis' mother in *Second Class Citizen*. These women have always seen and appreciated things through their husbands' minds.

However, since the publication of Mariama Bâ's *So Long A Letter*, it becomes the appendage of some educated women who are said to hold traditional jobs like teaching and midwifery. Though Ramatoulaye has been devastated to discover that her husband has taken her daughter's childhood companion as a second wife, she decides to stay in her husband's house. Ramatoulaye has been conditioned by cultural and societal expectations. The following passage can help us appreciate better Ramatoulaye's worries:

But the final decision lay with me.... Leave? Start again at zero, after living twenty-five years with one man, after having borne twelve children? Did I have enough energy to bear alone the weight of this responsibility, which was both moral and material?... I knew others who had lost all hope of renewal and whom loneliness had very quickly laid underground.... I looked at myself in the mirror. My eyes took in the mirror's eloquence. I had lost my slim figure, as well as ease and quickness of movement. My stomach protruded from beneath the wrapper that hid the calves developed by the impressive

number of kilometers walked since the beginning of my existence. Suckling had robbed my breasts of their round firmness. I could not delude myself: youth was deserting my body¹²⁸.

This quotation illustrates Ramatoulaye's fear for being ostracised. She cries every day because she makes a choice that her reason has rejected. Her choice is the choice that she thinks she has to make in order to survive in her society. She fears having people stare at the middle-aged lady without a partner, and she dreads the embarrassment of being the only woman in the queue when she goes to pay her utility bills. In short, she is afraid of the patriarchal gaze that ultimately circumscribes and compels her to make the final choice.

Like Ramatoulaye, many educated women make some choice which contradicts their true feelings. An example of this attitude is Fusena in *Changes* who on her husband's request gives up her teaching career and lets him bring into their marriage another woman. In so doing, Fusena has accepted her role as a wife and mother while she is equally aware of the loss of independence and agency that it entails as she says:

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.¹²⁹

As a respectful and submissive woman, she represses her anger and frustration at her situation and conforms to the role expected of her. Hence, she sacrifices herself, her ambition and her independence for a sense of security. Fusena is painfully aware of the inequalities in marriage and society as a whole. Unlike Esi, she does not take action to fight them. She remains married to Ali, becomes the perfect housewife, and in exchange Ali gives her a kiosk to manage.

¹²⁸ Ba Mariama. *So Long A Letter*. P 39-41

¹²⁹ *Changes* P65

Another character who has sacrificed her ego to manliness is Opokuya. She is so obedient and traditional in her ways that she is named “a good woman” in the novel by Oko. This makes her have an otherwise good marriage constantly plagued by battles with her husband over some issues like the use of the car. She realises that, in this world, women who live in accordance with tradition are just the unluckiest ones. As such she ironically concludes that: “the best husband always seems to be the one some other woman is living with” speaking of Oko. She contends herself with her situation and lives the ways she is expected.

What unites all these women (Nana, Ena, Adah’s mother, Francis’ mother, Fusena and Opokuya) is that they conform to the conventional way of life, accepting an inferior position in relation to their husbands and other men. As Maria Olausson, quoted by Stephanie Holmgren, in her paper, writes “Their strength lies in their resignation and their power in their cynicism that makes it possible for them to pay lip service to high ideals while gaining what they may from any form of double morality and duplicity”¹³⁰. This statement is seconded by Fusena’s relatives realising that “it is a man’s world. You only survive if you know how to live in it as a woman.”¹³¹.

This passivity of women and their acceptance of their roles as something quite natural sustain Acholonu’s concept of motherism. In her opinion, the roles assigned to women are part of the African society’s organisation. They are not designated for any subjugation purposes; rather, they enhance collective wisdom, peace and love. Then, she dismisses the terms “patriarchy” and “matriarchy” which she considers Eurocentric, and opts for *patrifocality* and *matrifocality*. To her mind, men and women are complementary opposites in traditional African society, so that no gender dominates the totality of the social life of the

¹³⁰ Stephanie Holmgren. To Be A Woman in a Man’s World: Gender and National Identity in Aidoo’s *Changes: A Love Story*. Södertörns Högskola University College. English Department. Spring 2007. P 12

¹³¹ *Changes* p107

people. Men are dominant in socio-political spheres of life while women have the upper hand in spiritual and metaphysical segments. Acholonu articulates it as follows:

Patriarchy, the system that places men on top of the social and political ladder seems to be an inappropriate term for describing the organization of the social systems of the African peoples. This is because several African societies reflect systems with ranging degrees of dual-sex hierarchies in which men and women exist in parallel and complementary positions and roles within the society ¹³².

All in all, Acholonu perceives motherism as a model of human love, peace and fruitful interaction with the environment. And a motherist author is an embodiment of values necessary for co-existence between men and women. Acholonu is convinced that no women have to lament herself. They have to keep to their roles. This is part and parcel of the African society. Claiming for the opposite is destroying the social organisation. The sooner a woman resigns herself, the better it is. What then about women who have chosen the opposite lifestyle?

6-2 DIVORCE AND THE CONCEPT OF WOMEN'S MADNESS

In this section, I am going to tackle the root cause of educated women's divorce. Usually, some men and women stick to the recurring idea of educated women eagerness to divorce. They associate it to their economic independence, which is not actually the leitmotiv of their departure.

Divorce is the legal ending of a marriage. In Africa, there are very few cases of divorces as defined by the laws. Anyway, either legal or not, divorce is not appreciated. What matters is that educated women record the highest rate on this ground. That is why they are

¹³² Chidi, T, Maduke. "Feminism, Womanism and Motherism in African Literary Discourse" p17

presented as ostracised people in the African communities. In other words, divorce is seen as a rejection of one's womanhood and an irresponsible act.

The problem is that people do not investigate the actual causes of such a difficult decision. Most educated women sincerely wish they would have their own households and end their days in their husbands' houses. But life proves to be so tough for them that unwillingly they leave their husbands. Buchi thinks, for instance, that family life is the best one. Then, she disagrees with women who leave their husbands for no obvious reasons. Women like Esi, for instance, in *Changes*. At the same, she urges those who feel suffocated to put an end to marriage. This is what Emecheta confesses about women's unfair situation in her article, *Feminism with Small f*, "I write about women who try very hard to hold their family together until it becomes absolutely impossible. I have no sympathy for a woman who deserts her children, neither do I have sympathy for a woman who insists on staying in a marriage with a brute of a man, simply to be respectable."¹³³

It can be seen educated resort to divorce when it becomes absolutely impossible to live with a rogue. In most cases educated women's divorce stems from a lack of mutual understanding because the husband always relates any act of her wife to her education. Francis thinks that it is unbelievable that his wife refuses to cater for him and he wonders:

What was the point of marrying an educated woman? Why had his parents been asked to pay a big price if all she was going to do was to come to England and start modeling her life on that of English women, not wanting to work, just sitting there doing nothing but washing the babies' nappies? To him, he was being cheated.¹³⁴

This passage proves that African women have always worked to fend for themselves and their children. Their decision to keep her money for themselves and children leads to the

¹³³ Kristen Holst Petersen. "Feminism with Small f" in *Criticism and Ideology*. P175

¹³⁴ Second class citizen p180

collapse of her marriage. What Emecheta means, is that each spouse in a couple has to play the roles assigned to his gender. As Adah fails to enforce these rules at the very beginning, her marriage ends in a chaotic way. Her husband does not lose any opportunity to harm her. The burning of her manuscript corroborates the death of her marriage. This story is her hope for a better future as it can be read:

The story on that she was basing her dream of becoming a writer upon. The story that she was going to show Titi and Vicky and Bubu and baby Dada when they grew up. She was going to tell them, she was going to say, 'look, I wrote that when I was a young woman with my own hand and in the English language. And she was sure they were going to laugh and their children were going to laugh too and say 'oh, Granny, you are so funny.'¹³⁵

At the same, he gives up his work because his wife gets a new job and earns a great deal more than she had ever done in the past. There are constant fights to the extent that the landlady calls the police who order Francis to relinquish a box of clothes for the children. Adah is back in the streets surrounded by her children; homeless for a while her children's father has a room to sleep in. She eventually gets a two-room flat which she has to share with rats and cockroaches. On these conditions, any safe woman has to live as Buchi says in her article *Feminism with Small f*: "My first attempt to write a book called *The Bride Price* was resented by my husband. He too, like my English teacher, told me that 'Pride goeth before fall'. I left him and I found myself at twenty-two, husbandless with five young children."¹³⁶ Owing to these conditions, can Adah be labeled a mad woman?

Madness is a recurring theme in African women writing. It has been addressed in a number of writings by African and African American women like Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, Bessie Head and Alice Walker. Due to historical and cultural differences, the theme of madness has been addressed differently depending on where the author is originally

¹³⁵ Second Class Citizen p187

¹³⁶ Kristen Holst Petersen. "Feminism with Small f" in *Criticism and Ideology*. P174

from. In *Eva's Man* (1976) Gayl Jones deals with the theme of madness, but her presentation is very different from that found in Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* (1991).

In this section, I am interested in madness as it is dealt with in the writings of African women. In "*Madness in The African Novel*" (1979) Femi Ojo-Ade observes that the African novel in dealing with the question of alienation has depicted two types of alienated heroes: the first one manages, in spite of overwhelming pressures of his situation, to stay on what could be termed 'the right side of the fence'. On the other hand, there is the second one who finds it totally impossible to adjust to the inhuman situation existing in his society.

More specifically, I am concerned with the second type of heroine, the one branded mad or insane by society. This, in fact, is not so much a mental disorder but a cultural disturbance. As such, she is seen as a threat for her generation and the younger ones as well. She is a nuisance that the society should get rid of.

In *Changes*, Esi is the most independent woman who feels dissatisfied in any ways she chooses to associate herself with a man. She has her own lifestyle that nobody, even the womenfolk, finds acceptable in the African context. She is convinced that, in the twenty-first century, there are new challenges for women more exciting and stimulating than wifehood and motherhood. On this assumption, Opokuya, her best friend, really wonders whether there is something wrong with Esi. The following dialogue between the two friends shows that madness in Africa has nothing to do with medicine but rather the non-compliance of women.

Esi: I have told you that I was already beginning to feel fed up.

Opokuya: Yes, Esi. But why? Is it other women?

Narrator: Opokuya hated to, but couldn't prevent herself from repeating the question

Esi: Oh no. To be fair to old Oko, it was never that. In fact, sometimes I wished he would behave like other men in that respect.

Opokuya: Esi, you are mad

Narrator; opokuya truly couldn't believe her ears

Opokuya: How many women wouldn't give everything they've got to have a man like that?¹³⁷

Esi's life is plagued with constant failure in marriage. As the Malinke in the West Africa say "by running away from death, she hides in a tomb". Esi sinks into desolation and loneliness; she is almost on the brink of depression since she resorts to tranquilisers. These tablets are, in fact, good only for unhealthy human beings. Esi's use of them denotes that she can't bear too many restrictions on her. Through the use of tranquilisers, which signify Esi's dependence no longer on herself but on drugs, Aidoo hints at the damage of psychological pressure upon women.

Seeing the unfair conditions, Aidoo and Emecheta convey a message to their sisters which is to count on their own strength. They must learn to live in accordance with their social values. At the same, they must know what suits them best. They must not remain in marriage for the sake of social achievement.

¹³⁷ Changes p44

CONCLUSION

The present DEA thesis has set out to show how Aidoo and Buchi have taken upon themselves the duty to awaken humanity's and, more specifically, the female gender's consciousness to the ambiguous daily life of the educated African women who, paradoxically, are still oppressed and subjugated. In that respect, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A love Story*(1991) and Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* (1974), through the living and working conditions of the educated women highlight the pitfalls and sorrows of this category of African women. It is obvious that Aidoo and Buchi are not the only ones on that leading road but their ways are particularly realistic and the issues they address are those of the African ground as a whole.

In fact, Buchi and Aidoo have explored in the two novels, the state of the educated women in Nigerian, Ghanaian societies and the African community in Europe. Their own backgrounds as scholars and writers have provided interesting outlooks in this study since they are believable examples of men's chauvinism and African rigid traditional beliefs. This is an indication that the educated woman's life is the worst one. Hence, masculinisation is still the rule in both public and private spheres.

The attitudes of the majority of the African men in the two novels are assertive of the African educated women's plight. Though educated, men stick to their patriarchal privileges wherever they are. At workplaces, they have never missed any opportunities to express their manhood. Women are still believed to be useful mates, good for menial tasks that require less thinking. Household is the only sphere where they are said to be good performers. In this vein, all educated women's devotion to good work and professional integrity have been

undervalued since they are subjected to wage discrimination and other professional disparities. Thus, Aidoo and Buchi convey that modern career-oriented women are caught between contradictory values as their education encourages self-determination while their culture preaches patriarchal domination. Struggling to eke out an existence, they are frustrated by patriarchal ideologies regarding women's status. They are still seen as intellectually inferior, professionally ineffective and treated accordingly.

What Aidoo and Emecheta suggest women under these circumstances is that they should stick to their objectives. They must never put an end to their career on husbands' request or hold the type of job he wants as the narrator says in *Second Class Citizen*:

Working in a factory was the last thing she would do. After all, she had several 'O' and 'A' levels and she had part of the British Library Association Professional Certificate, to say nothing of experience. Why should she go and work with her neighbours who were just learning to join their letters together instead of printing it.¹³⁸

Besides, Aidoo and Emecheta show that the marriage institution must remain a man's domain. It reinforces women's servitude by granting men all the rights to maintain educated women at a woman's place. Education and profession have nothing to do with marriage. That is why there are some guardians of the traditions in the two novels to remind educated women of its importance and the self-sacrifice pertaining to it. The representatives of the old generations have helped Buchi and Aidoo criticise severely the ways in which marriages are arranged in the African urban areas. These contradict all the requirements parents have established. For instance, dowry is made optional in *Second Class Citizen*. As a consequence, men do no more care for their wives; they do not pamper them as recommended by the African custom. And this affects children whom men see as women's. More and more, young educated men are interested in educated women to unload themselves onto their wives.

¹³⁸ *Second Citizen* p44

Paradoxically, this reversal of role is not an open room for women to underpin men's authority over them.

Through the reversal of role Aidoo and Emecheta show the whole world that African women are hard working women. They are not accustomed to fending for themselves as Buchi writes in *Feminism with Small f*: "This we must remember is not new to the black woman, because her kind has always worked. In the agrarian setting women do petty-trading. Being successful in whatever we undertake is not new to the women of Africa"¹³⁹

Moreover, in this century, educated women are sexually, physically and psychologically abused. For these women sex is part of the life. It is not the life. That is why they do not see polygamy as a means of oppression. They think it can be stimulating since it allows women to use their energy elsewhere as Esi says in *Changes*, about her husband's faithfulness: "In fact, sometimes I wished he would behave like other men in that respect"¹⁴⁰

This is Buchi's opinion too as she confesses in *Feminsm with Small F*

In many cases polygamy can be liberating to the woman, rather than inhibiting her, especially if she is educated. The husband has no reason for stopping her from attending international conferences like this one, from going back to University and updating her career or even getting another degree. Polygamy encourages her to value herself as a person and look outside her family for friends. It gives her freedom from having to worry about her husband most of the time and each time he comes to her. He has to be sure that he is in a good mood and that he is washed, and clean and ready for the wife, because the wife has now become so sophisticated herself that she has no time for a dirty, moody husband. And this in a strange way, makes them enjoy each other.¹⁴¹

The problem is that no matter how determinate these women are to be successful both at home and at work, the community perceives it as an attempt to undermine men's authority. Consequently, men develop new strategies to make them be compliant. Actually, educated

¹³⁹ Buchi Emecheta. "Feminism with Small f" in *Criticism and Ideology*. P180

¹⁴⁰ *Changes* p44

¹⁴¹ Buchi Emecheta. "Feminism with Small f" in *Criticism and Ideology*. P p178-179

women are not looking for men's place in the society. What they need is a little confidence and consideration. They just want men to let them work and exercise their rights.

Then, it can be acknowledged that the African educated woman suffers a lot at men's hands. People are still dragging feet, developing chauvinist attitudes around the world. That is why, I think, there is still a long way to go. Several generations of women must struggle and persist before a woman and more particularly an educated woman has the same options and opportunities as a man in all life sectors. This desperate situation is not peculiar to the African countries. It is a worldwide problem since European women known to be the forerunner of emancipation have only succeeded to equal men theoretically.

In a word, educated women have been subjugated worldwide. There is no ideal society where social and structural constraints have been totally removed so that all individuals, regardless of their category memberships such as sex, race, religion, ethnic origin or social class can have equal access to a wide range of options in life. Sex discrimination has not been eliminated and probably it has not even decreased. It has only changed form: from open, direct sex discrimination to subtle; sophisticated sex discrimination which tends to be more effective and difficult to fight.

Nonetheless, they should always dream of a better future. There are always solutions for any problems. They must hope that they can have a better life. Nothing is impossible. But it must take too much time. That is why each of the novel ends on optimistic words as Nana said in her blunt speech:

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

Otherwise, it is very possible for life on this earth to be good for us all. My lady Silk, everything is possible.¹⁴²

Aidoo and Emecheta are convinced that the day must come when educated women would enjoy a better life. The time must come when both men and educated women would work hand in hand for a prosperous nation.

¹⁴² Changes p.107-108

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