



GENDER ROLE STEREOTYPING IN AMA ATA AIDOO'S *CHANGES*

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Abstract:

This study focuses on the textual analysis of the representation of female and male characters in *Changes*, a love story by Ama Ata Aidoo. The story depicts male and female characters differently. The findings of this study suggest that the representation of male characters in the selected story is generally in line with the possessor attitudes and reflect women's possessed. The male characters are stereotyped to represent the patriarchal roles that reflect intelligence, triumph and strength and these forms of representation affirm the traditionally held beliefs about men as rulers and heads of families. On the contrary, this study finds that the representation of women differs greatly from that in which males are represented. Women are given feminine roles represented negatively as failures or as being capricious and disrespectful of social norms. The division of labour into gender-specific roles widens the gap of differences in the representation of female and male characters. The author hides behind Ghanaian culture is the major phenomenon that promotes patriarchy and ensures that women remain suppressed by the rule of men because text is a powerful means of sending messages and through that social actions and processes are interpreted and acted. The role represented by Esi Sekyi, one of the female characters in the story doesn't gain the approval of her family and her friends but rather damaged the reputation of women and tarnished their image. This gender role stereotyping which foreground the oppression of women while giving opportunities to their male counterparts to dominate and exercise authority over women that this study concerns itself.

Keywords: stereotyping, old generation and new generation, gender roles

1. Introduction

The people in a narrative are called characters rather than persons to emphasize the fact that they are only representations of people constructed by an author to fulfill a certain function in a certain context. We form a mental construct of characters from the information we are given but also add some ideas from our own experience and imagination. Even though we judge characters in literature according to our experience of real people, but unlike real people they do not exist independently of their narrative context.

1.1 Background to the Study

This study is a literary investigation into gender representation of women and men as presented in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes*. The reason for choosing this story is that the major characters are placed within a marriage setting and it highlights gender roles within this institution. The beliefs held by the characters in this story would definitely be rooted in the traditional lifestyle of the Ghanaian culture which reflects the manner they approach things. The study analysed the image and role of characters in the story since it relates to both rural and urban life. It actually puts these two areas in the centre of the text and looks at the manner in which ideas are constructed about urban and rural female versus the male roles within marriage.

This work also looked at women as key participants in society and in relation to their gender subordination and cultural biases that limit their visibility to the private sphere.

According to Hall (1997), the representation of characters who are stereotyped often reflect patriarchy. The representations of characters in most works of African writers have links to patriarchal mode of behaviours and roles of characters are presented in a stereotypic manner. Cameron (1990) refers to such forms of women representation as silencing of women and infers that such silence of women is above all an absence of female voices and concerns. According to Cameron, women are often explicitly prevented from speaking either by social taboos and restrictions or by the more genteel tyrannies of custom and practice. It is such restrictions imposed by the society and males in marriages that this study challenges and condemns.

Lodge (1992) is of the opinion that of all the elements of fiction which are recognizably discreet, character is the most difficult one to discuss in isolation. The reason being that it is not achieved in isolation but is to a large extent facilitated or co-constructed by other narrative processes: employment of dialogue, narrative voice, point of view and the situation (place and time) in which the narrative unfolds. In the subtle narrative interplay between plot, place and style of mediation, characters emerge as the focus of the novel's animation. They move, speak, interact with other characters and with the world of the novel. Their relationship to others and to their surroundings is complicated; they act on and are acted upon by the world of the not-self in which the narrator finds them and through this process the characters become more distinct. Through characterization some characters are stereotyped so that they can be used to connect with the readers or

the audience and help build an image for readers that they can associate that character with. This can also be useful for directing audience to think about a particular character in a certain way, either positively or negatively. Stereotypes can also be used in literature to help tell a story. Whether they're minor or major characters, stereotypes can help an author construct a story. It may help a writer to explain a character's personality or actions and may be easier to assign a stereotype to a character to work on developing other pieces of the story more fully. It is of this reason that this current study investigated the characterization in Ama Atta Aidoo's *Changes* in order to see if stereotype characters exist in the text.

2. Statement of the Problem

Different scholars have recognized and taken interest in the language use and creative prowess of Ama Atta Aidoo's *Changes*. However, most of the studies available on this literary text are mostly on themes and language use; little attention is given to characterization in this text. This study investigated character stereotypes with respect to this text.

2.1 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to

- 1) Identify the elements that constitute characterisation in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes*.
- 2) Establish the character stereotypes in *Changes* by Ama Ata Aidoo.

2.2 Research Questions

- 1) What are the elements of characterization in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes*?
- 2) What are the stereotyped characters in *Changes*?

2.3 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was its potential to identify Ama Atta Aidoo's characterisation and stereotyped characters in *Changes*. The results of this study could assist students to appreciate Ama Atta Aidoo's characterisation and stereotyped characters in *Changes*.

Additionally, this study could be of an immense resource material for prose writers to gain a better understanding, awareness and perception of gender-stereotyped practices.

3. Theoretical Framework & Related Literature

Social Learning Theory is one of the gender theories that this current study hinges on with regard to gender-role orientations and gender stereotype. According to Bandura (1962), learning of gender roles takes place first through observation and then by imitation. Parents play a crucial role in this process because of the amount of time they spend in close contact with children and the emotional relationship they have with them. Parents

reward children for behaviour they consider to be gender-appropriate. Children then learn to anticipate what will produce approval and behave accordingly. Parents and other adults distinguish between males and females in terms of their interaction with them. The child learns the label 'girl' or 'boy' appropriate to the behaviour that is rewarded, learns to apply that label to him or herself and to positively value the label.

According to Heward and Bunwaree (1999) gender identity develops after gender role behaviour has been established. It does not occur at a particular age. Social learning theory states that children acquire sex appropriate behaviour as a result of the rewards and punishments they receive for their behaviour. The theory emphasizes on modeling and reinforcement. Children do not only watch and imitate the behaviour of others, but also receive rewards and punishments for their own behaviour. They learn sex typing, just as they learn other behaviour. From Matlin (1987), the extent to which they imitate an action depends upon the sex of the person doing the action and whether the person is rewarded or punished for that action. They identify themselves with their same sex parents as they see themselves like that parent in personality traits and feelings. Observational learning may not always be reflected in immediate imitation, but may be stored for later use opined by Unger and Crawford (1992). The learning of sex typed behaviour is made easier by parents, who make up the environment in such a way that some activities are much more likely to occur than others; that is, certain behaviours are reinforced. When a boy's room is filled with sports equipment and his sister's room is furnished with a dressing table, he is more likely to engage in sports activities than his sister is. Parents may then notice and reinforce the difference that occurs in behaviours and preferences of their children with comments as, "*My son is a real boy*" or "*She is a real lady*". These words convey information about what parents expect from their children and what behaviours they are likely to reward and punish. According to social learning theory, reinforcement and punishment occur whether or not the parents attempt to influence behaviour. Teaching and learning about gender often seem so natural and unremarkable to both parents and children that, parents may sincerely believe that they treat their sons and daughters similarly.

Social learning theory is a theory on how children learn to behave in different situations. It sees the child as a passive recipient of environmental forces rather than an active agent trying to comprehend and respond to the outside world. Women's experiences are viewed more positively in this theory in that it does not see an inherent inferiority in women.

4. Character and Characterisation

Lotus Illustrated Dictionary of Literature, Richardson (2006) simply defines character as a person in a literary work. They are created by a literary writer to serve as vehicles through which his/her thematic concerns are transported. The appearance of a character, the way she/he behaves and interacts with other characters are the sole responsibility of the creative writer. This explains why critical theorists and analysts can attack a writer for portraying an identified group of people in unpleasant ways, say sexist or racist. Yet

fictional characters are often a reflection of the history behind the story in which they appear and even our own world. Asempasah (2010) notes that characters in literary texts are by their very existence mirrors of people in the real world, even though this world may lie somewhere in history. If we accept that literary works are artistic expressions of human experience, then this observation is not surprising. However, the extent to which a character may be a reflection of a real person varies depending on the purpose of the creative work in which it is found. For instance, DiYanni (2002) observes that "*minor characters are often static or unchanging*" they remain the same from the beginning of the work to the end while Paul and Hunte (1998) observe that major characters grow and change. DiYanni (2002), however, quickly cautions that care should be taken not to automatically equate major characters with dynamic ones or minor characters with static ones.

The term which overlaps with static or stock character is stereotype character. Although stereotypes are often static, they represent a rather different or broader concept than static characters. According to Paul and Hunte (1998), stereotypes are characters based on conscious or unconscious cultural assumptions that sex, age, ethnic or national identification, occupation, marital status, etc. are accompanied by certain character traits, actions or values.

The process of creating and developing character in a work fiction is called characterization. According to Jones (1968), characterization is the depicting of clear images of a person. Characterization, by this definition, means the real description of the characters participating in the story through their actions. The explanation of the effects of characterisation on fictional readers, and its promotion of a feeling of identification or recognition of human attributes and behaviours, has drawn on theories of social cognition, interpersonal communication and sociolinguistics. Culpepper (2001) proposes a model for understanding characterisation in which the process is taken as a communicative act in which the dynamic process of meaning-making involves the writer, the reader, the context and the utterance. He argues that readers use cognitive strategies, reading and life experiences and textual cues to decode the meaning of character actions and behaviours and to predict where such attributes will lead the character in the context of the narrative. Basow (1992) states that textbooks portray female and male characters in stereotypic roles and male characters tend to dominate. In so doing men are portrayed as heroes who save the women's life when trapped in her life. Where women have authority, she is either represented as helpless or foolish.

Millet (2003) states that the patriarchal power of men over women is basic to the functions of all societies and that it extends far beyond formal institutions of power. She infers that sexual politics overrides all other forms of politics such as class or race. She maintains that patriarchy is maintained by a process of conditioning which starts with childhood socialization within the family and is reinforced by education, literature and religion. This socialization happens to such an extent that its values are internalized by men and women alike. It does not appear strange, therefore, for most women to sit comfortably in very oppressive relationships within families. It is because they have been socialized to do so. This study shows women's behaviour are guided by cultural

principles which are the very means through which they are oppressed. Most of our Ghanaian societies do not permit the superiority of women especially within family settings. That is why stories in this study centre on the weaknesses of women which may lead to self-hatred, self-rejection and an acceptance of inferiority. The concept of patriarchy does not necessarily mean that all individual men oppress all women. Indeed, an important aspect of the concept is that it enables us to distinguish between the structures of male domination on the one hand and individual men on the other.

Marshall (2000) advises writers to use a profiling method to enable the successful exposition of the lead character and to allow for a smooth economical binding of character to action. This requires the writer to explicitly describe, in the form of what looks like a database entry. Egri (1946) called this method the three dimensions of character: sociological, psychological and physiological. It is advised that this should be done in advance of the composition of the story. In each case, the objective is the same: what is called intimate knowledge and understanding of character will proceed from understanding their category.

4.1 Stereotyping

Collins' Dictionary of Sociology defines a stereotype as a set of inaccurate, simplistic generalizations about a group of individuals which enables others to categorize members of this group and treat them routinely according to these expectations. According to Jandt (2004), psychologists have attempted to explain stereotyping as mistakes our brains make in the perception of other people that are similar to those mistakes our brains make in the perception of visual illusions. It is a generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by members of a particular social group or the roles that are or should be performed by members of a particular social group. People make generalizations about various groups, gender, certain professions, lifestyle groups, inhabitants of a given area, ethnic groups, cultures, and nations. Such generalizations assume that the members of a group share certain values, certain personality traits and behave in a predictable way, which is in accordance with the group's expectations. Such group labels are unlimited in number and often held unconsciously by members of a given cultural group. They may influence the processes of inference and decision making on a subconscious level. Very often we are unaware what role they play in our opinion formation in everyday situations. A female job applicant who behaves too assertively and a man whose behaviour is too soft, may be regarded in a work interview as socially deficient and less likeable than men and women whose behaviour is congruent with the prevailing gender stereotypes, and they will be therefore discriminated against in hiring decision. In the same way, an assertive female manager who is expected to apply, according to the stereotype, a more people-oriented style, may be evaluated more negatively than an assertive male manager. People's reaction to counter-stereotypic behaviour is termed the backlash effect.

According to Rudman and Fairchild (2004) this kind of social judgment process may, in part, help to promote and maintain cultural stereotypes.

According to Pollick (1999) it is easier to identify behaviours that tend to maintain stereotypes than it is to find out where stereotypes came from. Stereotypes are maintained and transported by various means of communication: everyday talk, cultural jokes, phrases and conceits, the wording of news items in newspapers, cartoons, films, TV ads; practically all acts of communication can include transparent or embedded cultural stereotypes. The wider disseminated a stereotype is in a society, the more inclined the media seems to dispense information confirming that stereotype.

In our societies, the characteristics of competence, instrumentation, and achievement motivation are usually considered to be highly desirable traits, and they are typically associated with masculinity according to Deaux (1976). Females are perceived to be nurturant, dependent, and submissive. Characters who violate a stereotype are interesting and surprising as they arouse readers' interest and make them want to explore. People probably share most of the prejudices and stereotypes of the communities they live in. When a character is presented, readers use those stereotypes to understand that character.

As Suan (1972) states that women internalize the male idea of the feminine and create themselves in the shape of that idea. Because of this re-shaping, many women writers have strayed little from the given stereotypes of the female character to several role models as their guides. While male characters have been given free rein to be and become what they like, even to fail if they choose, women characters have been written to play and re-play the same themes, limited as they are. Thus, when the female character deviates from the norm, from these stringent stereotypes, more attention is then called to the purity of what the female character is supposed to be. The narrowness, the confining nature of the women's stereotypes in literature is as nullifying as are the imagined strictures on her in real life. Men are encouraged to become men in both novels and life. Women are forced to rise above being a woman. Women strive to be more man-like and are condemned when they take on male characteristics: aggression, ambition, etc.

The stereotypes of women's roles in some literary works are often preceded by a view of woman and the traits, more generalized, which she embodies. Ellmann (1976) speaks of certain characteristics associated with women that help form the prime example of what role a female character may take in a literary work. These elements of "womanhood" greatly reduce the possibility of role development for the female character. She describes the way women are seen as formless, that is, a soft body is a soft mind. This can only lead one to believe that a woman's intellect is inferior to the male's clarity and precision of thought. Ellmann writes of women as passive, as unable to move to action, in direct opposition to a man's activity and aggression. The woman who comes to life in the kitchen is symbolic of the narrowness of women's roles. The dullness implicit in the limits of women characters can only lead to tedium for the character and the reader. *Compliancy* in women takes various forms according to Ellmann. Women are compliant as submissive daughters and wives as mothers. These broad categories are precursors for stereotypes in literary texts.

Carol & Pope (1981) state that character development is often caused by the divergent roles and opportunities afforded to the sexes. The roles of women in literature

may be seen as cages, that is, small and unnaturally restricting. And as birds in cages, if one flaps her wings too long and hard against the steel bars, the wings will break. Few women characters are given the strength or courage to resist these limits. Women are kept innocent and ignorant, are protected from all that may threaten the sanctity and purity of what the world (male), wants a woman to be. Anything that punctures the woman's stereotype also invades the male's sacred territory. If a woman is not what she is supposed to be—what then, must a man do to keep up with her? Since women are prevented from being heroes, it is only fitting that men will overdo their own heroic role. A woman is seen as eternally waiting to be saved, constantly dependent, a victim, usually in the name of love.

Ferguson (1973) speaks of several stereotypes: the mother, the wife, the mistress/seductress, the sex-object, the old maid, the educated woman, and the lady. She goes on to delineate and breakdown these terms to include the submissive wife, the dominating wife and even the new-form—the liberated woman. Actually, the example of the presentation style of female characters in textbooks examined through Helvacioğlu's (1996) study is one indicator of how teaching materials deliberately serve for those aims mentioned above. Home is shown as the best place for a woman and it will probably be the best choice for her daughter, too.

Throughout the history, males are viewed as possessing characteristics, such as independence, self-confidence, and aggressiveness that suggest accomplishment and achievement. In contrast, females are viewed as possessing characteristics such as gentleness understanding, and warmth that suggest an orientation toward others. As we see the roles for men are stereotyped positively or negatively whilst at the same time, the ones for women are not. So, it can be said that stereotyped roles are same to define the way that how this tuning of stereotyping should go on in that society Block (1983). Actually, there is no single definition for stereotyped role(s), because this issue changes with contexts, which are dealt with. However, it can be looked at from the basic characteristics of stereotyping process in terms of how stereotyped role is realized and practiced within the gendered context. First, stereotyping involves the classification or categorization of individuals or groups (female or male).

Second, stereotyping involves the assignment of a dispositional quality (e.g., trait, attitude, intention) to an individual or group based on their membership in various categories or subcategories. Thus, stereotypes may be viewed as judgments that a given individual is likely to possess a certain characteristic based on their placement in a particular social category. However, female sexuality is usually presented as reproductive (about having babies rather than pleasure) and submissive. Thus, while little children carry on learning these stereotyped roles from their families, peers and during their formal education. According to Delmont(1990), it is really difficult to change the stereotypes since in time they will be reinforced by the society and so the chance of being changed will not be obtained easily.

4.2 The Role of Parents in Gender-Role Identification

The family as a component of society, is the first medium where internalization of social norms and values take place as a result of interaction with family members. In a family, parents and parental attitudes towards gender-role have great effect on the early learning of sex roles. Starting from the moment of birth, parents tend to treat boys and girls differently. Although there are a few behavioral differences between male and female babies, most parents will describe their daughters as cuter, softer, or more delicate than their sons. Fathers tend to emphasize the beauty and delicacy of their newborn daughters while they stress the strength and coordination of their newborn sons (Krieger (1976) cited in Dworetzky (1981)).

5. Methodology

5.1 Introduction

This section is aimed at discussing the procedure and steps taken to discover the findings on the different aspects of this research and the methodology that are employed in the data collection and analysis.

5.2 Method of Data Collection

The literary text *Changes* by Ama Atta Adioo was selected as the sources of data for this study. The data were purposively selected from the dialogues (exchanges) between the characters and their roles in the text. The main task of analysis for this study, therefore, is to find out how characterization stereotyped characters in the selected literary text.

6. Data Analysis

6.1 Characterization in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes*

Changes tells the story of Esi, a self-empowered, strong-willed statistician with a Master's degree, employed in a lucrative job at the Department of Urban Statistics. She is unhappily married to her husband, Oko, with whom she has a young daughter. Esi and Oko often dispute over their assumed gender roles within the relationship, such as Esi's refusal to cook for the family or bear any more children. During one argument, Oko rapes his wife in an angry fit. The assault leaves Esi devastated and isolated from friends and family, as marital rape is not a widely accepted concept within her culture. Although marital rape does occur, the patriarchal culture does not recognize the act as violent, but rather as a husband's right. By using stereotyped characters, Aidoo is able to connect the readers with her characters in the text. It also creates a common ground for the readers to think about a particular character in a certain way, either positively or negatively. At the initial stage snippets of protests manifest in complaints by Esi about masculine oppression – taxi drivers shouting 'obscenities about "women drivers"' (3) and 'why couldn't she ever prevent her (male) colleagues from assuming that any time the office secretary was away, she could do the job?' (3) – these, however, do not adequately prepare a reader for the torrent of anti-masculine tirade that will characterize the omniscient narrator's prejudices

and Esi's general attitude. Key (1971), reviewing this literature through the 1960s, showed that males redominated in situations with active mastery themes (cleverness, adventure, and earning money), while females predominated in situations with "second-sex" themes (passivity, victimization, and goal constriction).

Ama Ata Aidoo's portrayal of Ali Kondey as a polygamous character is accepted as normal behaviour as compared to Esi Sekyi's rejection when she divorces Oko Sekyi and marries Ali Kondey to become a second wife. Given this long-term influence of books, there can be no doubt that the characters portrayed in this text confirm the readers' conception of socially accepted roles and values, and indicate how males and females are supposed to act.

The author uses social level of characterization which includes economic status, profession, religion, family, and social relationship and all those factors which place a character in his environment to stereotype Ali as a polygamist because he is a man who comes from an Islamic background marries Esi after she divorced Oko. Through this characterization, Aidoo demonstrates this by representing Ali as a man growing up in a strictly Muslim family and carrying on the polygamous tradition of his father.

Another instance of stereotyping Ali's resistance that Fusena abandons her dreams of becoming a teacher to better fulfill her duties as wife at home which goes to confirm the belief that Muslim communities do not encourage girl child education.

Aidoo in the text has created an impression that a married woman can only be happy if she lives up to this belief and this idea is grounded in Opokuya, Esi's friend who occupies a more feminine role as a nurturing mother, nurse, and midwife. Like Esi, Opokuya has created a career for herself, but manages to also fulfill cultural expectations of a woman as a subservient wife. Every morning Opokuya and her husband, Kubi, argue over the use of the car: a dispute that nearly always ends with Opokuya's defeat.

Although Opokuya frequently relents to her husband during this common argument, she describes the matter as "*one of the few areas of friction in their otherwise good marriage,*" suggesting that she experiences contentment in other aspects of her relationship with Kubi (Aidoo 17).

This idea of "*woman's place is the kitchen*" is seen in Okos's lamentations with his wife, Esi. Before the rape, Oko argues to his wife. "*My friends are laughing at me... They think I am not behaving like a man*" (Aidoo 8). This demonstrates that Oko is being subjected to ridicule for fulfilling a traditionally female or non-masculine role of caring for the couple's child and home, leaving him feeling ashamed and emasculated. This kind of gender stereotype is a generalised view or preconception about attributes, or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by women and men or the roles that are or should be performed by men and women. Gender stereotypes can be both positive and negative for example, "*women are nurturing*" is a negative stereotype.

In fact, Aidoo puts into play patriarchal tendency in Oko as he forcibly sleeps with his wife which is both physical and psychological in nature and a means through which Oko intends to reclaim ownership of his wife and masculinity. In this way, the act becomes a patriarchal ideology. With regards to his societal standards that Oko adheres to, taking ownership of his wife's body, regardless of her consent, is his right and privilege

as a man and husband. The act empowers him at the expense of his own wife. The act of forcibly sleeping with his wife serves as the ultimate example of embodied patriarchy. Its very nature gives power to the rapist which disempowers and humiliates the victim regardless of her rights. This is confirmed by Nnolim (2009) observation that: *"there is no happy marriages in Achebe, no soft and romantic moments between husbands and their wives, no intimate family counsels involving a father, his wife and children..."*. Women are called after their husbands. In a similar vein, there are no soft and romantic moments between Esi and Oko, Kubi and Opoku, and Ali and Fusena.

Following the traumatic marital rape scene, Esi imagines how she would be ridiculed if she were to present the idea of the prevalence of marital rape to a group of her academic peers:

There are boos from the men, and uncomfortable titters from the women. At the end of it, there is predictable hostile outrage. Yes, we told you, didn't we? What is killing us now are all these imported feminist ideas (Aidoo, 11).

It is clear from this reflection that Esi acknowledges that her culture does not accept the notion of marital rape and regards it as a useless novelty of the West. This internal monologue of Esi reveals how stereotyped her character is as a reflection of the thinking Ghanaian societies. This narration reinforces the old long idea that marital rape cannot stand of time in our cultural milieu. This means that women are defined in relation to men and do not seem to have any identity of their own. Brown (1981) advances argument that life's options include: deciding whether and whom to marry; deciding to terminate a union; controlling one's sexual freedom both pre- and extramarital; controlling one's freedom of movement; have access to educational opportunities; enjoying a de facto share of household power. Many of these options are utopias not only for the African woman, but the African man as well. However, the plight of the African woman is decidedly worse. The African woman, according to her representation in many male produced texts should not even dream of getting access to most of these options. Some of the recurring images of women that appear in African male-produced literature include: women as parasites, goddesses, wives, mistresses or prostitutes. African women are rarely portrayed except in relation to men, or their otherness to men. They are seen in Ghanaian cultural milieu as extensions of men.

From the beginning of *Changes*, Aidoo reinforced the idea that Ghanaian men will always be in dominion when it comes to conflicts in marriage with regards to decision taking. Oko Sekyi is stereotyped or portrayed as an embodiment of patriarchy where Aidoo constructs this vivid scene of marital rape for readers:

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

*of a particularly grueling race, he got off her, and fell heavily back on his side of the bed.”
(Aidoo 9)*

The disturbing scene exemplifies the trauma of stereotyping gender role as the possessor as against the possessed not only as a fictional event, but also as a reflection of real cultural issues. Oko's act of rape was performed out of the desire to reestablish himself as the dominant male figure in his marriage. He perceives Esi's educational and professional success as a threat to his masculinity, and in response, turns to sexual violence to reassert himself as a male.

Ironically, these are also the same traits for which he claims to love her. This is an instance of gender role stereotyping because it results in a violation or violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. An evidence of this act is the failure of Esi's family to fault Oko Sekyi of marital rape based on the stereotype of women as the sexual property of men. Another example is the failure of the justice system to hold perpetrator of sexual violence accountable based on stereotypical views about women's appropriate sexual behavior.

Another gender role stereotyped characters in the novel are Esi's mother and her grandmother. When Esi informs her mother and grandmother of why she desires to divorce Oko, to which they respond with anger: *“What is the problem?” both her grandmother and her mother really screamed this time: the former with her walking stick raised as though to strike her, and the latter bursting into tears... ‘Are you mad?’* (Aidoo 38).

Although Esi hopes to have the support of her family in dealing with the assault, the mother and grandmother's reactions demonstrate that marital rape is not considered to be a violation of the wife's body; instead, Esi is chastised for her selfishness. This stance taken by Awo and Esi's mother against Esi is in conformity with the belief in our Ghanaian traditional cultural milieu and values. Even in the Bible wives are perceived to be nurturing, dependent, and submissive (Ephesians 5:22-33 NIV). Dino, Barnett, & Howard (1984) and Spence & Helmreich, (1980) research found that females exhibit traits that are viewed as less desirable. These stereotypes already exist in the portrayal of males and females in children's literature (Child, Potter, & Levine, 1946; Hillman, 1974; Jacklin & Mischel, 1973; Key, 1971; Kingston & Lovelace, 1977-1978; Purcell & Stewart, 1990; Tetenbaum & Pearson, 1989; Women on Words and Images, 1975).

Fusena is limited both corporeally and intellectually in the role assigned to her by Ali. Although Fusena's character is not nearly as developed as other key female characters, her contribution to the novel undeniably valuable. Fusena struggles with Ali's decision to take Esi as a second wife demonstrates Aidoo stereotypes woman as an oppressed partner in a relationship. When Ali's first wife, Fusena, is informed about Ali's decision to marry a second wife, Esi, the women in Ali's own family lament: The older women felt bad. So, and understanding that had never existed between them was now born, it was a man's world. What shocked the older women though, was obviously how little had changed for their daughters, (107) not only because of the issues she might hold with polygamy, but also because the second wife holds prestige as a statistician with a master's degree. This prestige comes from Esi's fulfillment of a role that has been

traditionally masculine. In this way, Fusena and Esi seem to be exact opposites in terms of assigned gender roles, as Fusena gives up her dreams of an education and career to appease her husband. Esi, on the other hand, is unrelenting in her pursuit of success in the professional realm to the point that it destroys her initial marriage to Oko.

It is clear in *Changes* that Fusena resents her restricted role in her polygamous marriage but maintains an obedient demeanor that is mandated by patriarchal social conventions. Her discontent in the marriage brings irony to Esi's own situation that finds her unhappy, despite her freedom and ability to pursue her career. This communicates a resounding message: because the women are unable to make choices without the disdain of their husbands, families, and society, they cannot achieve true freedom and contentment in their social and familial roles- physically, intellectually, sexually, and otherwise. It is clear that each female character is discontent in her circumstances, as they are all complicit in the patriarchal system of which they are a part.

Aidoo does not describe or delve into the aftermath of Kubi's sexual advance on Esi, but it can be assumed that Kubi's final betrayal of Opokuya at the end of the novel is due to a sense of male entitlement that it reappears throughout the story, such as the rape of Esi, Kubi's refusal to let Opokuya drive the car, and Fusena's assigned role as a housewife. Although the reader does not learn how the encounter between Esi and Kubi affects Opokuya and her friendship with Esi, or even whether Opokuya ever discovers this incident, Kubi's actions demonstrate a social inscription of male-dominance as he freely begins to advance onto Esi without prompting. As Esi pushes out of Kubi's embrace, she hears her Nana's voice: "*Remember that a man always gains stature in any way he chooses to associate with a woman-including adultery... But in her association with a man, a woman is always in danger of being diminished*" (Aidoo 164). Esi's refusal of Kubi's advance serves as a disruption of existing gendered power structures that give precedence to male desire, as she demonstrates her unwillingness to participate in the act of adultery and betrayal of her friend. Esi's defiance does end the novel on a hopeful note, as it potentially foreshadows a discovery that she does not need a male presence in her life in order to be fulfilled and actualize her potential.

Ama Ata Aidoo's character names such Ali Kondey, Fuseina, Kubi, Opokuyya, Esi and Oko Sekyi is one of the strategies of stereotyping in her literary text, *Changes*. This is because the name, being the first mark of identification, works on a number of levels: referential, connotative and sociological allows the reader to automatically identify and assign certain roles to these characters. The author uses social level of characterization which includes economic status, profession, religion, family, and social relationship and all those factors which place a character in his environment to stereotype Ali as a polygamist because his economic status is high and comes from an Islamic background marries Esi after she divorced Oko. Esi enters a polygamous marriage with a charismatic travel agent, Ali. Another instance of stereotyping Ali's resistance that Fusena abandons her dreams of becoming a teacher to better fulfill her duties as wife at home which goes to confirm the belief that Muslim communities do not encourage girl child education.

6. Findings and Recommendations

Although Aidoo's novel is a work of fiction, the characters and events of the story hold immense worth as a reflection of numerous stereotyped characters who present issues that are real in our Ghanaian societies for readers. *Changes* serves as an ideal example of how literature can raise consciousness of cultural and social issues for its audiences. The novel demonstrates the role of literature as consciousness in that it communicates Aidoo's own experiences for readers. The analysis has shown that the representation of female and male characters is different and not equal. Roles assigned to characters are gender-specific. Equality is not maintained and bias is also prominent in the manner characters are represented. In *Changes*, male and female roles adhere to the stereotypes in our society that most often positively portrays men.

According to Dzokoto (2007) as cultural products, emotion narratives form part of the common ground from which people appropriate to make sense of their own feeling and experience. Stereotyped character is one which relies heavily on cultural types or names for his or her personality, manner of speech, and other characteristics. Although stereotypes are often frowned upon in daily life, in literature stereotyped characters are considered helpful plot devices. They help build tension, interest and even attraction for the reader. Writers also sometimes introduce stereotyped characters only to break their stereotypes later in a work to cause dramatic irony and plot twists to occur. Some of the most popular works of fiction are well-loved because they offer surprises through stock characters. "*Keenly aware of the societal changes affecting Ghanaian women in the 1980s and 1990s and the new dilemmas they faced, Aidoo creates female characters such as Esi, who claims that in the cultural, ideological, and social context of post-independence Africa, there is no place for single women*" (Aidoo 180). The events of the novel and Esi's struggles confirm this aspect of fictional Accra, which stands as testament to Aidoo's awareness of women's situated perspective in the grand scheme of Accra's unique society and how it stands in comparison to the gender structures of other cultures.

Gender stereotyping is exercised within the parameters of culture and puts women in a marginal position. Within the cultural framework women are denied access to some duties while men sit in top positions of those duties; for example, making decision within the family still remains the man's responsibility and this behaviour is reinforced in the text. Marriage and home are institutions where gender role stereotyping is exercised and women fall victims of such practices. Generally, women's roles are domestic and in the private sphere and are represented as not fitting to the public sphere for men. For instance, Oko Sekyi, Kubi and Ali Kondey are the chief male characters in the novel whose roles stereotypes and self-centredness. Oko enjoys the benefits that come with Esi's position in the office; the car, the house, and the several pecuniary allowances and grants accruing from the office. Yet he detests her drive for promotion and her attempts to be competitive in the office. Obviously, he thinks the more promotion she gets at work, the more difficult and self-assertive she will become. Eventually, his fears are confirmed.

6.1 Recommendation

There are other areas of investigation which arises from this study that can be explored to enrich the gender role stereotyping in the text by investigating the language features of both gender. It would be worthy to study other areas like critical discourse analysis, ethnomethodology of speaking, gender-specific vocabularies, gender language differences in both cultures: old generation/traditional and modern generation. It would also be useful to carry out the conversational analysis of gender language use on the assumptions that females use inferior language while men use superior language features since language carries our personalities, hence, helping to build their minds and integrity as it determines in their English Language Use.

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