At the Interstices of the (Post)-Colonial: Mapping Tradition and Transformation in Ghanaian Maritality from Marita to Changes

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ABSTRACT

The idea of modern postcolonial Ghana as a complex polity forged at the interstices of colonial Encounter, and also one that has a tangible basis in millennia-old traditional African cultural values embedded in institutions that are subject to transformations over time has been argued or suggested by many scholars, prominent amongst whom are Angmor (1996), Anyidoho (2000), Larbi Korang (2009), and Konadu and Campbell (2016). On no other cultural institution have those critical lenses been more focused than the institution of marriage which, for obvious reasons, has tended to be seen as a critical cultural barometer that measures both societal health and the gendered power relations which delicately scaffold it. Not surprisingly, in the field of creative arts, successive generations of Ghanaian writers have attempted to investigate and represent the conjugal union as both the micro-site of the communal essence that ultimately enlarges itself into the nation-state, and also one whose gender-based relational compromises are constantly complicated by the interpellating external ideological forces of colonization, modernization, trans-nationalization and their suffocating necropolitical logic. Our article proposes to investigate the changing representations of marriage in Ghanaian prose fiction with emphasis on transformations in gender relations, and how these are in turn informed by transnationally motivated forces such as colonization, modernization and globalization. More specifically, we shall attempt to map paradigmatic shifts in gender relations within the institution of marriage as represented in two canonical and epoch-defining Ghanaian novels; namely, Marita and Changes while at the same time isolating what, if any, Ghanaian values have survived and can teased out as the enduring markers of gender relations in the institution of marriage, and therefore be counted as part of a blueprint for a future prolegomena of Ghanaian values.

Keywords: changes; gendered contests; Ghana; maritality; postcolonial novel; tradition and transformation.

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INTRODUCTION

Following the works of leading scholars such as Angmor (1996), Larbi Korang (2009), Anyidoho (2000), Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012), and Konadu and Campbell (2016), both A. Native's *Marita: or the Folly of Love* (serialized in two newspapers from 1886 to 1888) and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* (1991) can be described as efforts at narrativizing the evolving story of the gendered nation within the Ghanaian context. This is primarily because of how both works showcase the cultural products at the interstices of the clash between traditional practices and the forces of change that transform those practices. While the *Marita* was published at the turn of the 19th century and comes with the unique distinction of being the first modern Ghanaian novel, *Changes* is arguably the most important Ghanaian novel at the close of the twentieth century and echoes the dominant concerns of late 20th and early 20th century Ghanaian society. Thus, despite being published a full century apart, the two novels are similarly significant precisely because they represent major poles of the modern Ghanaian experience by enveloping the epochal events triggered by formal colonialism on the one hand, and the socio-cultural consequences of late 20th century globalization with its accompanying transnational traffic in cultural and socio-economic transactions on Ghanaian culture, on the other hand.

More germane to our discussions, however, is the confluence of thematic focus across the two works. Considering that a distance of one century separates the two novels, it is all the more remarkable that both Marita and Changes can be read primarily as attempts at portraying conjugal life in cultural spaces heavily interpellated by both local and external ideologies of gendered being and becoming during a time of transition and socio-political change, as Bryce (1999), Yitah and Dako (2011), and others have noted. Maritality in *Marita*, just as it is in *Changes* a century later, is the site of fierce struggles for subjectivity that mirrors struggles in the societies and times within which these two novels are set, and our argument in this essay is that the gendered struggles in the two novels are heavily influenced by transnational, socio-political developments beyond the immediate, localized social settings the texts portray.

In other words, we are concerned with the effect of external forces on traditional African institutions as depicted in the two novels and intend to show how shifts in attitudes to, and struggles over marital relations in both 19th and 20th century Ghana are heavily conditioned by forces other than the local. Our goal is also to show how the dominant discourses of tradition and transformation, as they relate to maritality, evolve in the two novels, informed in large part by pressures external to the newly emerging state. As we shall attempt to show, in *Marita* marital tension is exacerbated by the imposition of formal colonialism through statutes and related instruments of Colonial authority, whereas in

Changes, the drivers of gendered conflict are new factors such as globalization and related transnational discourses such as third wave feminism.

The Colonial Project and the Marital Fault Line

One of the paradoxes of Ghanaian literary studies is how little studied marriage is in works of scholarship, and how dominant it is the works of creative writers. Despite being largely ignored by the leading scholars, perhaps the conjugal bond —and the literary politics associated with it— arguably deserves to be recognized as the ultimate example of what Anyidoho (2000) has referred to as the metaphors of Ghanaian national identity. In recognition of these gaps, Newell (2000) makes the case for the situation of tales of "conjugal life" at the heart of Ghanaian popular fiction and encourages more attention to their study, while Yitah and Dako (2012: 369) decry how "marriage in colonial Ghana is an under-studied topic in African literature." These scholarly gaps notwithstanding, one would be hard-pressed to find a Ghanaian work of creative literature that does not tackle marriage in one form or another. From its beginnings in the late 19th century to the present moment, marriage —and its various mutating instantiations— has been a dominant theme in the Ghanaian literary imaginary. The fortunes of society itself have been invariably tied to the evolution of the marriage institution and this phenomenon dates back to the very first Ghanaian novel on record.

The enlarged role for marriage in the Ghanaian literary consciousness is evidenced by the choice of titular prelude to the tradition: *Marita*. *Marita*'s place as the first Ghanaian —and West African— novel in English has been affirmed by Anyidoho (2000), Newell (2002), and others. Its publication via serialization in local Cape Coast newspapers in the mid to late 1880s happened during a period of major transition in modern Ghanaian history during which Britain's ambitions of entrenching its colonial agenda clashed with the cultural infrastructure of native Ghanaians in a fierce ideological struggle that ultimately transformed both societies in ways that would continue into present times. But any rounded talk of that clash of cultures, so to speak, needs to name and critically analyze the marital battlefield where it took place.

As part of their strategy of dominance, British colonizers in late 19th century Ghana and elsewhere on the continent chose African marriage as an institution to demonize via sensational reports about its supposed utter depredation citing often made up and exaggerated instances of polygyny, harems, and other deviations from the European norm. It is even more striking that having convinced themselves about all that was despicable and backward about African marriage customs, the British colonizers chose to replace it with Western modes of marriage. Not surprisingly, these moves were so shocking to the intellectual and

psychological systems of the African natives towards whom they were targeted, ultimately giving birth to a literary tradition whose first product would name the main site of that ideological struggle directly by title and content. *Marita,* the title and the struggle over the Natives' rights to name and observe marriage on their own terms are thus direct products of the immediate socio-cultural setting of the 1880s.

To buttress the claim above, the editors of the *Brill African Sources for African History Series* under whose patronage *Marita* was re-issued in 2002 inform us that the original publication of the novel coincided with "the institution of Christian marriage and its relationship with the developing colonial state" (qtd. in Newell, 2002 vii). In making that case, they remind us about the uneasy nexus of the ascendant colonial state, the Necropolitan tendency within the colonial ideology to repress the Native point of view, and the highly contested issue of gender relations in modern society. While it is clear is that while marriage as an institution in the African/Ghanaian space predated the institution of colonial power, the decision on the part of the British colonial authorities to intervene in marital affairs in the 1880s via the direct imposition of their ideas of marriage upon the Natives had crisis-laden implications, one of which was the creation of the vaunted dichotomy between the traditional marriage and the so-called Christian or church marriage and a "dual judicial system which gave precedence to English law and Christian doctrine" (Yitah and Dako, 360).

To more fully appreciate such outbursts of gloom and doom, one needs to take a closer look at the major externally generated historical events that gave birth to them. *Marita*'s immediate historical context is the institution of the Marriage Ordinance by Britain in its West African colonies in 1884. This, according to critics, had the direct effect of challenging and ultimately supplanting time-tested traditional marital customs and mores. To those critics, there was no need for destroying that which, over time, had worked well and sustained family units and the larger society. In addition, the institution of the Ordinance was doubly galling to the educated elites of the then Gold Coast who, as Mann (43) noted of their colleagues in the Lagos colony, saw the so-called Christian marriage practices enshrined in the Ordinance as more Victorian than Christian. Exporting a set of Victorian ideas and ideals into the foreign milieu of colonial Ghana without any attempt to negotiate with precedents was simply unacceptable, beside the general belief that the genteel rituals of Victorian England with regards to marriage were not necessarily superior to African cultural values. Marita, the novel, comes out of this disposition on the part of the male educated Ghanaian at the end of the 19th century to challenge what was seen as the false binaries that glorified foreign, European value systems at the expense of African world views. In the joint attempts by British colonial bureaucrats and Christian missionaries to

control the meaning and rituals of marriage through the imposition of ordinances based on English law and Victorian values, the educated elites saw the colonizing impulse that unsurprisingly would lead to the sort of anti-colonial, albeit decidedly masculinist, blowback that a premiering work like *Marita* sought to represent.

More importantly, while it is easy to note that the choice of the marriage institution as a site of colonialist imposition in *Marita* —and the circa 1880s Gold Coast society by extension— inevitably opens up complex, multi-layered, gendered power struggles between the sexes, we can also legitimately read the text as a counterpoint to the discourses and textual practices of the colonialist project quite a rewarding one. The narrator of *Marita*, and characters like Quaibu and Bonsoe Penin, acknowledge the utility of a precolonial marital tradition precisely because they needed that as a pragmatic device to challenge the creeping colonial order imposed from abroad.

MAPPING TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE AND CRITIQUING EUROCENTRIC CHANGE IN MARITA

Although it has been critiqued for foregrounding a universe in which male-chauvinist tendencies dominate, even *Marita*'s leading critic, Stephanie Newell is quick to remind us that the work should be read by fair minded critics as being "far more than a masculinist tirade against shrewish wives played out through a rejection of Christian marriage vows"(2). She suggests that we see the novel embracing a wider, anticolonial ideological spectrum through which:

> ...we gain access to the entire Christian missionary project in West Africa, as well as comment on the manner in which the colonial bureaucracy, only a few years old when Marita appeared, propelled into the state books a host of new ordinances based on English law, many of which helped to set up a boundary between the "European" and the "native". ("Introduction," 2)

In other words, while acknowledging the presence in the work of masculinist tendencies and male gendered bias, we ought to understand that "the real villain in [*Marita*], therefore, is not women but colonial laws and courts" (Yitah and Dako 368). The novel is primarily concerned with European attempts to solidify the foundations of the colonial enterprise through interfering with precolonial marital norms and it challenges the imposition of foreign/European colonial ideologies in an essentially African space populated by African bodies and minds. It also confronts this anomalous situation with a vision of traditional African marriage that, according to the novel's leading characters, had stood the test of time and was, despite its shortcomings, superior to the new European models of marriage.

A closing reading of the text of *Marita* will bear this out. On many different occasions in the novel, Quaibu contends that his traditional, precolonial "country

marriage" to Miss Wissah, was respectable and happy, and laments the foreign imposition that "does all possible mischief to that enchanted edifice," corrupts the "unalloyed happiness" he and his wife previously had access to, and forces him to "sell his happiness and freedom" on the altar of church marriage (p. 48). He also voices his anxiety about "the substitution of that which had hitherto proved efficacious in keeping us to our duty towards each other (traditional marriage), for that which may not prove powerful enough to produce the same effect (p. 72). To Quaibu, the villainies imposed by colonial laws and courts are also directly responsible for the absurdity of confessing sins to sinful men or having one's wife subjected to the libidinous glare of men who have a track record in adultery and fornication. Other men in the novel such as Bonsoe Penin and the Old Traveler compare that enforced transition to Christian marriage "a suicidal step," one that resulted in an exchange of "substance—real happiness— for a shadow" (p. 49–52).

Similarly, in an extended conversation with Penin on the issue, Quaibu laments the deleterious effects of church marriage thus:

> I will not disguise from you that I have had forebodings of evil. Examples are not wanting to convince me of the frightful abyss into which I am plunging myself and Miss Wissah. In my own family, there is my own father, and my foster-uncle, both of whom were living happily with their wives, until Christianity, which they afterwards embraced, compelled them to take unto themselves new wives and marry them according to the Church. In their hearts they soon repented as was evident by the continuous bickerings and rows, and also the consequent illegal separation that took place between their wives. Outside my family there are scores of others who are living witnesses and examples... (p. 48)

This chaotic state of affairs in church marriage is sharply contrasted with an almost Edenic vision of traditional marriage. Even Miss Wissah testifies of her cordial relationship with Quaibu prior to being pressured to embrace church marriage:

> For several years I have lived with this man and I never experienced an unkind word,any ill-treatment or the least sign of a wish to break off the connection between us and above all I have never seen any difference between his conduct towards me, either private or public and other men's conduct towards their wives although married according to the church. I am satisfied with living as we are... (p. 56)

Speaking to his soon to be estranged wife, Miss Wissah, Quaibu explains the principles that underpin the relative superiority of traditional marriage thus:

> In the country marriage the love is fed continually by the FEAR that at the least ill-treatment your wife or your husband might leave you, and marry another; in the church marriage there is no such incentives with us there.

> Whilst in the one (native marriage) we have every reason to be careful how we act, in the other license is given us to do whatever we like. The woman is at liberty to say "I can do whatever I like now so long as my husband cannot of his own wish and inclination divorce me unless he can prove adultery against me. Now love may go to the winds; I will enjoy myself the best way I can…(p. 74)

The general impression one gets from these and other submissions is that the foundation of traditional marriage is the freedom that both spouses enjoy to care for one another without being compelled to do so by external dictats, stiff legalistic contracts such as entailed in the Church-sanctioned marital vow. Church marriages, on the other hand, use the leverage of a forced contract to maintain couples in marriages even when fundamental issues of trust and care are endangered, thus ushering in a new regime "that crosses fixed boundaries between communities and identities, dislodges traditional roles, patterns and values that had hitherto been taken as natural" (Viswanathan 1998: xvii).

Church marriage, in addition, is seen as incentivizing darker tendencies such as a more materialistic focus and a subsequent disrespect for the primary emotional interests of spouses. Protected and emboldened by a contract that could be enforced in courts, wives such as Miss Wissah become "pupils of consummate masters in a fictitious [foreign] religion" and "hypocritical libertines" whose lessons spur them on to subvert the old order of traditional marriage precisely because of seeming advantages in that approach:

> There were many advantages held out to them (the women) in this new marriage, but the greatest among these advantages which takes their fancy the most is the fact that she and her children begotten by me and she alone in the absence of children become entitled to my property should she survive me, whilst she on the other hand has nothing to leave me were I to survive her. This coupled with the fact that you cannot send her away and other advantages this marriage gives her, has made her so proud and unbearably independent of the man (p. 86–87).

If *Marita* expresses the masculine *Zeitgeist* of the colonial period circa 1880 to 1940 as Newell (2002) has suggested, it is also important to add that the work foregrounds the expression of African male masculine concerns against the interference of British colonialists in an African institution that was foundational to the functioning of the society itself; an interference which in many places smacks of the tactics of divide and rule. We can legitimately read the work as a challenge to the ideas of British missionaries and colonialist adventurers who sought to radically alter native societies by stoking tensions between men and women in order to facilitate the imposition of a colonialist order, a development that K.E. Agovi blames for "needless conflicts and utter confusion" (2). We can

even go a step further to praise the visionary resistance of a local intelligentsia class that understood the deleterious implications of this foreign intervention and promptly opposed it using the vehicle of literature because they sought to reverse colonialist gestures that crossed "fixed boundaries between communities and identities" and dislodged "roles, patterns and values that had hitherto been taken as natural" (Viswanathan 1998: xvii). More so, recorded at the estuary of traditional value systems and colonialist attempts to reengineer those values in the latter half of the 19th century, *Changes* —both in title and subject matter— would set the tone for much of the conversations about tradition and transformations in Ghanaian maritality for much of the 20th century, a process that will culminate in that other aptly titled turn of the century work of fiction, *Changes*, to which we now turn our attention.

Changes: An Update on the State of the Battle of the Sexes

In many respects, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* offers a turn-of-20th century update on the gendered battles we see first in *Marita*, or what Jane Bryce, in her astute reading of the novel, refers to as "the battle of the sexes" (2). It also continues the tradition started by A. Native in *Marita* and its title speaks directly to the subject matter of changes in marital relations just as the earlier novel had made marriage its titular focus. Whereas Marita barely hides its intention of introducing us to the state of Ghanaian marital relations against the background of the formalization of British colonialism in the 1880s, *Changes* promises, through its title, a review of how that institution has evolved over a period of roughly one century. The novel largely delivers on that promise, even if in doing so, it leaves us with a vision of late 20th century marital liaisons that is more confusing than enlightening.

Although its author, Ama Ata Aidoo is quick to assure us that her novel "not meant to be a contribution to any debate however current," we know better than to take her at her words. For, hidden in that rebuttal is an unintended admission of the purpose of *Changes*: It is a contribution to the century-old debate on maritality in Ghanaian literature, and it also happens to be a most current update on it. As we intend to show, while demonstrating the evolution of Ghanaian marital practice and the new tensions attendant to it at the turn of the 20th century, Changes also re-emphasizes the influence upon Ghanaian maritality by external forces such as globalization and third wave feminism.

In her Afterword to the first edition of the novel, Tuzyline Jita Allan quotes at length Aidoo's own defense of the feminist motivations of her art, and her position in the broader debates over the battle of the sexes:

> When people ask me rather bluntly every now and then whether I am a

> feminist, I not only answer yes, but I go on to insist that every woman and every man should be a feminist—especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of our land, its wealth, our lives, and the burden of our development. Because it is not only possible to advocate independence for our continent without also believing that African women must have the best that the environment can offer. For some of us, this is the crucial element. ("Äfterword,"168)

To Allan, this and other public sentiments expressed by Aidoo, and crowned in *Changes*, clearly challenge "the unexamined assumptions that African femininity is inherently nonfeminist and that the borrowed elements of Western feminism exhibited in African women's writing are inimical to African nationalism" (167). Embedded in that argument is the germ of an admission that Aidoo's art and ideological worldview is influenced by borrowings from Western feminism and other, putatively progressive movements whose primary sources may not be necessarily African. It is an argument we intend to further expand on in our analysis of *Changes*.

The world of *Changes*, as is the case with the world of *Marita*, is dominated by gender relations that are often rigged in favour of men, and against which women strive. Whereas the attempts by women to subvert the oppressive and ultimately reactionary structures of knowledge and power in *Marita* are set back by various forces, including the mediation of male imaginaries/narrators and the assumed patriarchal cultural norms in which such imaginaries flourished in the 19th century, the narrator of *Changes*, who is presumably female, has no such inhibitions. Living in the rather fluid and radically transformed socio-cultural environment of the 1990s where women's economic and professional opportunities were vastly improved relative to earlier times, her story was essentially about newly empowered women and what they did with their newly-acquired power. Inevitably, the growth of women's power would also redefine their relationships with men whom they hitherto had been subservient to. The evidence of these redefined and quickly changing relationships in *Changes* is a bacchanal of gender-based conflicts that throw light on oppressive patterns that newly empowered women want to change.

We can isolate complex, multilayered, overlapping forms of gendered relationships in Changes that traverse the long continuum from monogamous through polygamous to open relationships and everything in between. For instance, polygamy is exemplified by Ali Kondey who marries his childhood sweetheart Fusena, and later adds Esi Kondey as a second official wife. Although Ali attempts to compensate Fusena materially, we know material considerations were not part of Fusena's psychological make-up precisely because as a young woman, she rejects the advances of a rich suitor and settles for Ali who had just secured a

scholarship to study in England. It is obvious that for Fusena, his marriage was a choice motivated from within, or as Odamtten says concerning her, "material wealth is no substitute for a fulfilling life" (167). The other prominent couples are Kubi and Opokuya, and Esi and Oko. They are contrasting examples of good and bad monogamous relationships respectively.

The general impression one gets from the multiplicities of relationships in *Changes* is that gender relations, and marriage in particular, is in a precarious state, and married couples are the new precariat because of complex socio-economic realities. The dangers come, not only from the differences between various marital partners but also via the complicated overlaps between characters who constantly renegotiate the bounds and extents of filial love and/or conjugal bonds. While still married to Fusena, Ali woos Esi Sekyi and succeeds in convincing her to become his partner in what is effectively an open relationship. Ali is able to do this in large part because he is economically capable, and economics in large part explains why Esi abandons her husband Oko for Ali. Fusena, on the other hand, has little room within which to manoeuvre because she does not have the economic freedom to do so. Subsequently, she withdraws into a space of silence and inertia that is supposed to be characteristic of dependent, Muslim women, but her silence fools nobody: she is not accepting of a cultural arrangement that allows her husband to philander his way through all sorts of women —both married, unmarried, and those in-between— while she plays the role of a forced hermit, a gatekeeper to a harem that her natural instincts forbid. We know this because she married Ali out of love, as a fellow student in a Teacher's Training College. The dream of a husband as a co-partner and a companion on the journey of life, for Fusena, becomes a mirage precisely because of a toxic, patriarchal environment that literally cheers on masculine disloyalty and emotional profligacy. The death of Fusena's dreams coincide with a new attitude of carelessness, an almost thanatos-complex that reveals itself in her embrace of an asexual, unhealthy lifestyle while her husband, flush with the knowledge of killing her dreams, explores sexual and emotional conquests.

The pheromone trails of labyrinthine gendered relations in postcolonial Ghana demonstrated by the likes of Ali and his various paramours and the unfortunate Fusena are contrasted by the curious case of the two ultimate urbanized marriage warriors, Opokuyaa and Kubi. Despite being aware of the expectations that the dominant patriarchal world order makes of them, Opokuya and Kubi somehow seem to have found the formula for relatively stable marriage compared that is consummated through the sphere of gendered *agon*. They realize and show that marriage is a struggle between the sexes, but a struggle which, if approached with mature lenses, would potentially transform both partners and even creates conditions for the self-realization of both parties. Both Opokuyaa

and Kubi recognize themselves as creatures of self-interest, but in doing, they also recognize each other in the same way and thus moderate in their expectations. Their mutual respect, understanding and tolerance contrasts sharply with the rocky relationship between Esi and Oko.

Global Sisterhood for Local Change: Esi and the Future of Ghanaian Marriage

In many respects, Fusena represents the traditional past, Opokuyaa and Kubi are emblematic of the negotiated present, and Esi is the face of the militant, feminist future that is still resolving itself. Esi knows the old order does not suit her, and yet she is not altogether sure of the future, and yet she would draw on all resources to make a relatively better future possible. And it is fairly easy to understand why. When Robin Morgan's edited volume of women's writings, *Sisterhood is Global* (1984) was published, it signaled a new, internationalist turn in the feminist movement by invoking an internationalist platform and constituency that would become the discursive space for third wave feminists and their successors. *Sisterhood is Global* would also serve as an inspiration for other paradigm shifting feminist events as the Beijing Conference of 1995. Incidentally, Ama Ata Aidoo was the most prominent African contributor to the volume with her essay, "To Be a Woman" in which she essentially outlines her radical vision of a new African woman who transgresses "local exploitative systems" and embraces a transnational liberal agenda to do so (264). It is possible to argue that events like the publication of *Sisterhood is Global* and the Beijing Conference also signaled a shift in the consciousness of the feminists such as Aidoo who embraced a broader, transnational agenda of sisterhood in the process. It is also the broader context that produces works like Aidoo's *Changes* and iconoclastic characters such as Esi who threaten all received wisdoms in Ghanaian female-male relationships and demand to write the script of gender relationships anew.

In the final analysis, while we recognize Esi both as the central character of *Changes* and perhaps the most complex female character in all of Ghanaian literature, we must also acknowledge that much of her stature derives from her ability to wrestle subjectivity from a social space that had hitherto minimized her. She is willing to risk destroying the very cultural architecture of the society that produced her to achieve this. Esi Sakyi is first and foremost a self-made intellectual who, from humble beginnings, has worked her way up the career ladder to a place of leadership and prominence in her workplace. Career-focused and unapologetically ambitious, she is also a case study in the modern Ghanaian woman who seems to have no place for a talentless, ambitionless partner who sits easy and presumes to benefit from the strictures of a patriarchal order. Esi's a career that had broadened her worldview on opportunities and rights for women

especially because she had travelled to various conferences and made all sorts of presentations on topical issues, and professional development is accompanied by a parallel stream of growth in consciousness as a woman and a free agent determined to assert her subjectivity.

Perhaps because of her wide exposure to these internationalist influences via her many conference experiences, Esi's epiphany takes place quite early when she discovers that she is a victim of *marital rape* from her husband Oko, and decides to sever conjugal bonds with him. This moment is presented as a moment of profound, spontaneous discovery, and so it is. One could even read it as a symbolic crisis point, the consequence of an accumulation of the various eye-opening experiences Esi had had in the various conferences she had attended throughout her career up to that point. More to the point, Esi the well-traveled intellectual woman, having had her eyes opened by her interactions with other women/victims of patriarchies in various jurisdictions across the world, now acquires the shared vocabulary of victims: she can name her oppression as a first step leading to resistance. Marriage, as it is constituted in Ghana circa 1991, is mostly a form of organized rape; a forced arrangement that overlooked the rights of women and Esi's interactions with women across the world had made this recognition possible for her.

Esi's cry is that she exists as an independent individual, one whose rights as a woman and an equal of a man are universal and need to be respected irrespective of national boundaries. The old nostrum so glorified in the Ghanaian or any such past, by which women were expected to "respect" men in exchange for "protection" was not good enough for the new, self-made woman. The twin forces of globalization and third wave feminism had taught her enough to make her strong in her rejection of that order. Of course, in rejecting the old order, she is now faced with what would come after. *Changes* the novel does not resolve that for us: it assures us though that women like Esi, supported by a global sisterhood whose influences far beyond the confines of the nation and whose actions have consequences for members of the nation, are on the move. The ultimate consequences of their Movement for relations between men and women in the Ghanaian context is too hard for even Esi to fathom, but as the Yeatsian persona would put it, *Changes*, buoyed by the waves of global sisterhood of the third wave feminism variety that is marked by both transnational reach and influence, presents to us a startling vision in which all is changed entirely and in the place of the old patriarchy, a necessary and yet terrible beauty of marriage equality is born. In *Changes'* central heroine we see the performance of what Aidoo herself meant when she wrote in *Sisterhood is Global*: "One must resist any attempts at being persuaded to think that the woman question has to be superseded by the struggle against any local exploitative system, the nationalist

struggle or the struggle against imperialism and global monopoly capital" ("To Be a Woman" 264). The woman question, to Aidoo, is a universal one, and the Ghanaian setting of Changes, if anything provides a case study for a vision that is indubitably transnational and global.

CONCLUSION

We have attempted to show how the idea of modern postcolonial Ghana is a complex and still evolving polity forged at the interstices of several contending forces, chief among which is the fight between external influences such as colonialism and globalization, and traditional African ideas of being. We have also tried to show how critical the institution of marriage in particular and gendered relations in general have been in the heated culture wars that scaffold the nation and often times threaten to overthrow it. By paying close attention to two strategically placed, canonical and epoch-defining novels, *Marita* and *Changes*, we have tried to analyze how Ghanaian writers have attempted to investigate and represent the conjugal union as both the micro-site of the communal essence that ultimately enlarges itself into the nation-state, and also how gender-based relational compromises are constantly complicated by the interpellating external ideological forces of colonization, modernization, trans-nationalization and their suffocating necropolitical logic. Whereas *Marita* gives us a vision of Ghanaian marriage as a theatre for anticolonial struggles in which women's subjectivities are generally repressed to foreground Ghanaian male desires in conflict with a British imperial agenda, *Changes*, published a full century later amidst all the transformations in gender relations both in Ghana and on the global stage, performs a feminist manifesto that subverts categories of patriarchal oppression and could well be read as a template for a future prolegomena of a more balanced society in which gender equity and mutual respect across the sexes is a key component of a progressive national —and global— agendum.

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