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The Dilemma of Western Education in Aidoo's Changes: A Love Story, Naylor's The Women of Brewster Place, and Morrison's Beloved

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Abstract: In his article "The Dilemma of Western Education in Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*, Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*, and Morrison's *Beloved*" Solomon Omatsola Azumurana examines the problematics of Western education with regard to Black Africans and African Americans through the creative lens of three prose fictions written by African and African American women. While Ama Ata Aidoo is a West African writer from Ghana, Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison are African American writers. Azumurana argues that Western education poses issues whether for African Americans of Black Africans and whether educated and literate or not, there is an accompanying negative complex for the African and African American characters in the said novels.

Solomon Omatsola Azumurana,

The Dilemma of Western Education in Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*, Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*, and Morrison's *Beloved*

The dilemma of Western education as it relates to Africans and African Americans has engaged the attention of scholars of different bents. For instance, Theresa Parry and Lisa Delpitt, in their attempt to locate the reason(s) behind the poor performance of Black children in US-American schools, contend that: "Not the least of these is the existence of a dominant, powerful conversation about schooling that is shaped by white businessman, white reformers, and white scholars…At the same time, there is the absence of a public counter-narrative about the education of African Americans framed by African Americans and predicated on an acknowledgment of our continuing position as a historically oppressed people" (8). For being the privileged class, the Whites describe and prescribe the school curriculum to be consumed by the less privileged class without taking into account their mental and cultural disposition. Thus, what Parry's and Delpitt's observation points to is that unless African children receive relevant education, their brainwashing and sociopolitical and socioeconomic dislocation would continue. It is in this regard that Randy Lattimore maintains that "The challenge that has always faced American education…is how to create both the social and cognitive means to enable a diverse citizenry to develop their ability. It is an astounding challenge: the complex and wrenching struggle to actualize the potential not only of the privileged but too, of those who have lived here for a long time generating a culture outside the mainstream" (270).

Despite the fact that African Americans have developed a culture different from mainstream US-American culture, the formulation of the U.S. educational system does not take into account this differentiation. Although Lattimore's focus of study is to account for the dismal performance of African American children in mathematics, he agrees with Parry and Delpitt that the US-American educational system is designed primarily for the imposition of the will of the dominant White U.S. culture. Similarly, James Baldwin notes the predicament of Western education in his own life: "I know, in any case, that the most crucial time in my own development came when I was forced to recognize that I was a kind of bastard of the West; when I followed the line of my past I did not find myself in Europe, but Africa. And this meant that in some subtle way, in a really profound way I brought to Shakespeare, Bach, Rambrandt, to the stones of Paris, to the cathedral at Chartres, and to the Empire state building, a special attitude. These were not really my creations, they did not contain my history; I might search in them in vain for ever for any reflection of myself; I was an interloper. At the same time I had no other heritage which I could possibly hope to use. I had certainly been unfitted for the jungle or the tribe" (14). Further, Toby S. Jenkins observes that "From language (education), to religion, from images of beauty to images of success, African Americans have been taught by the dominant society how to speak, what to believe, how to look, and how to define success" (138). Also, relating her experience as an African Diaspora in British schools, Joy Prime relates that at the earliest stage of her life in British schools as an African student, she "was exposed to marginalization, ostracism and blatant discrimination" (153). The Black African also suffers the same educational quandary: "Education, whether state or missionary, primary or secondary (and later tertiary) was a massive cannon in the artillery of empire. The military metaphor can however seem inappropriate, since unlike outright territorial aggression, education effects, in Gramsci's terms, is domination by consent. This domination by consent is achieved through what is taught to the colonized, how it is taught, and the subsequent emplacement of the educated subject as a part of the continuing imperial apparatus (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 425). As long as Western education is the platform around which the education of Africans revolves, they cannot orient themselves to take center stage in their interactions with the West.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o argument is that the more the critical temper of the African is influenced by the Anglocentric critical tradition, the more gradual they become, in the words of James Baldwin, "Black Westerners" (Baldwin qtd. in Tomlinson 143). Since the literary texts taught in African universities are Anglocentric, Africans cannot forge a unique African identity and it is for this reason that Ngugi proposes that departments of English at most African universities as they are constituted be abolished

or reconfigured in such a way that it will be Afrocentric rather than Anglocentric. It then means that Western education is an instrument of personal and social dis-identification for the Black African. Jamaica Kincaid has noted that the colonialists built schools and libraries wherever they went and that by so doing they distorted and erased the history of the African while simultaneously glorifying their own (94). In a similar vein, writing within the discursive field of the impact of English canonical texts taught in colonial African universities, Helen Tiffin observes that "the function of such a canonical text[1] at the colonial periphery also becomes an important part of imperial practice, in that, through educational and critical institutions, it continually displays and repeats for the colonized subject, the original capture of his/her alterity and the process of its annihilation, marginalization, or naturalization as if this were axiomatic, culturally ungrounded, 'universal,' (and) natural" (98). Constantly exposed to pro-White socialization messages in the church and school, the African and African American develop a negative conception of self. As Benita Parry observes, the African is always prevailed upon through Western education "to internalize as self-knowledge, the knowledge concocted by the master" (38). But how has this phenomenon been represented in fiction? What insight into the subject of Western education as it relates to Africans and African Americans do creative works offer? How is this subject realized imaginatively? I interrogate these questions in the work of selected prose fiction written by African and African American women: while Ama Ata Aidoo is a West African writer from Ghana, Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison are African American writers.

The essence of seeking for Western education either on the African continent or in the U.S. is to change the socioeconomic and sociopolitical circumstance of the individual: in my analysis of Aidoo's *Changes*, Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*, and Morrison's *Beloved* I contend that whether educated and literate or not, there is an accompanying negative complex for the African and African American characters in these texts. Although the selected novels have received considerable critical attention as anticolonial and antiracist poetics, how the educational quandary of the African and African American is implicated in the texts appears to be largely ignored. For instance, commenting on Aidoo's works, Nana Wilson-Tagoe argues that "ultimately, for [Aidoo] it is not the community's historian, but the woman protagonist who can provide a transformative vision not only for confronting the aberration of the slave past but for the crisis of colonial mordernity itself" (97-98). Also, concerning the protagonist of her novel, *Changes*, Jane Bryce posits that "she uses this character to question what constitutes nationality and identity" (Bryce qtd. in Yewah 54) and Maria Olaussen asserts that Aidoo's texts "deal with a postcolonial reality where both customary and common law rules of marriage apply" (61). It then follows that in the estimation of critics, Aidoo's literary project is fundamentally a feminist, national, and anticolonial project. Thus, the theme of the dilemma of Western education as it relates to Africans on the continent has been uncharted.

In their analysis of Morrison's *Beloved* William L. Andrews and Nellie Y. McKay read it as a novel that "acknowledges the horror of slavery and portrays the horrendous treatment and tortuous memories of the slave past while documenting the effect of this history on future generations of African Americans" (x). Relying heavily on Morrison's insistence that racism is always uppermost in her mind (see Showalter 449), Morrison's novels have largely been seen by scholars and critics as one that upholds African American culture, while denigrating Euro-American civilization. Her employment of the *abiku* phenomenon in *Beloved,* for example, is generally seen as one of such attempt to espouse African culture (*abiku* refers to a child who dies and comes back to life repeatedly). But how she subverts and criticizes Western education as a fundamental component of Western and US-American civilization in this novel has been unexplored. Similarly**,** because Naylor claims that she created a woman-centered reality (see Montgomery 100), most scholars and critics of Naylor's novel interpret it as the documentation of the exploitation and oppression of Black women in White US-America. One of such critics is Maxine Montgomery who sees "the brick wall separating Brewster from the larger society (as) symbolic of the marginalized space women are forced to occupy … [Brewster] is outside of the social mainstream that the women experience … describes as 'the distinguishing marks of black womanhood in white America" (94). In like manner, Kathleen M. Puhr sees Naylor's women characters as healers who help one another to endure the strictures of slavery and sexual oppression (519). However, I posit that in addition to the racial and gender oppression of Naylor's protagonists is their ideological suppression through Western education which ought to be paid critical attention to

(on the problematics of gender equality in Black Africa, see, e.g., Akujobi; Olatunji <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss1/9>).

Diane Ravitch notes that "African Americans in particular are dissatisfied with the educational achievement of their young people and so are casting about for new approaches that will hasten their entry into the mainstream" (2). This is what Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* portrays with one of its protagonists, Kiswana Browne who rebels against the US-American educational system by dropping out of school because, according to her, "those bourgie schools were counterrevolutionary" (83). By dropping out of school with the belief that her place was in the street with her people fighting for equality and a better community (83), Kiswana questions the structure of US-American education in relation to African Americans. In this context, Walter R. Allen and Joseph O. Jewell describe US-American education as a dilemma and observe that although "schools were to be the great levelers in the American democracy, providing equal opportunity for all without regard to race, gender, ethnicity, region, or class origins, the ideal has not become reality" (94). In an interview with Ethel Morgan Smith, Naylor says that "it is not possible for white teachers to teach black children about their culture" (Smith 1430) and it is thus that in the novel Kiswana opts for the street in place of school since the school has nothing to offer in terms of giving freedom and equality to Black Americans. Instead of bridging the gap between Blacks and their White counterparts thereby enabling platforms for the Blacks to get integrated into mainstream US-American society, the U.S. educational system reproduces the inequities prevalent in the larger society. Thus, education in Naylor's imaginative world is depicted as being provided to sustain the "blindness" of the African American.

The middle-class amnesia Dr. Bledsoe suffers from in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is what Naylor here alludes to. Like Dr. Bledsoe, "the possessor of not one, but two Cadillacs and a good salary"(Ellison 92), all the educated Blacks in Linden Hills pander to the whims and caprices of the Whites in order to maintain their material wealth (on Ellison's *Invisible Man* and race, see, e.g., Bourassa <http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1311>). Although materially comfortable, they have spiritually and culturally castrated themselves by kowtowing to White standards. But in contrast to her parents, Kiswana rejects US-American education and while she becomes culturally conscious of her African heritage, she ends up not being able to pay her bills. Many times she runs to her brother who completed his college education, and is thereby estranged from his African culture, to borrow money. And this is the dilemma of Western education or the lack of it for African Americans: there is always a negative complex. August Wilson, the African American playwright wrote that "Today I would say that the conflict in black America is between the middleclass and the so-called underclass, and that conflict goes back to those who deny themselves and those who aren't willing to. America offers blacks a contract that says, 'if you leave all that African stuff over there and adopt the values of the dominant culture, you can participate'…The ones who accept go on to become part of the growing black middle class and in some areas even acquire some power and participation in society, but when they finally arrive where they arrive, they are no longer the same people … They've acculturated and adopted white values" (Wilson qtd. in Rudolph 565). All the educated Blacks in Lindell Hills have achieved integration into mainstream US-American society and "are no longer the same people." They have denied themselves as they have denied their cultural heritage. What George Lamming notes concerning the West Indian applies to all the educated Blacks in Lindell Hills: "the higher up (the West Indian) moves in the social scale, the more crippled his mind and impulses become by the resultant complacency"(16).

Montgomery observes that "A generational rift stemming from class as well as ideological differences separate the two women [Kiswana and her mother]. Because of her identification with the black revolution, Kiswana feels compelled to reject her mother's conservative ideal in favor of a lifestyle that allows her to live and work among (her) people" (92). Although Montgomery further notes that "together with her boyfriend Abshu, [Kiswana] lay the groundwork for a cultural awakening on Brewster based on an identification with Africa and its cultural artifacts" (98), she does not identify what exactly is responsible for this generational rift and for Kiswana's rejection of her mother's conservative ideal. I assert that more than the normal evolutionary change is Kiswana's refusal to buy into and participate in the ideology of Western education in the U.S. in contrast to her mother who wholly accepts what she has been taught in school. Alexander Mathäs maintains that subjects who buy

into the dominant ideology "are not simply victims who have been deceived by the dominant ideologies, but [are victims] who actively participate in the distortion process" (316). This is particularly true of Kiswana's mother, Mrs. Browne, whose characterization can be regarded as emblematic of middle-class Blacks. Because she "actively participates in the distortion process" of western education as disseminated in America, she asserts that there was no revolution…and there will be no revolution" (84) thereby undermining all that the various Black movements have fought for. By her utterance, she insinuates that nothing would change the status quo: the Whites would continue to lead, while the Blacks would continue to serve. Accordingly, all the educated Blacks in Linden Hills represented by Mrs. Browne have accepted their inferior status as normative just as they have been taught in school.

In *Beloved*, Morrison — like Naylor — argues against the un-critical consumption of US-American education by African Americans. As already I indicate above, despite the plethora of readings *Beloved* received as an antiracist novel**,** the theme of Western education as it affects African Americans has escaped the attention of scholars and critics. For instance, Elaine Showalter maintains that the novel's infanticide "has a historical and racial meaning: just as Sethe's mother 'threw away' all the infants she bore to white rapists during the middle Passage" so does Sethe (491). It is obvious from this passage that Showalter's focus is on Sethe's infanticide and it is this same subject/action that seems to have attracted most attention. For example, Kathleen Marks describes this novel as an apotropaic imagination, one in which to ward off or resist the danger and threat of slavery, Sethe had to kill her daughter (2). However, in addition to Sethe's infanticide, which is a fall-out of the trauma of US-American slavery in Morrison's imaginative world, is her (Morrison's) concern with US-American education as it affects Blacks. Deploying the character of Sixo, Morrison suggests that US-American education creates confusion in the minds of Blacks. Unlike other slave owners, Garner treats his slaves not as "boys," but as "men" and his thinking is that by offering his slaves the privilege of answering to the appellation of "sweet home men" and some form of western education, they would be able to live up to their appellation as men. But Sixo thinks otherwise: "it would change his mind — make him forget things he shouldn't and make him memorize things he shouldn't and he didn't want his mind messed up" (*Beloved* 218). In this vein, in *Beloved* Morrison narrates that US-American education is provided to "mess up" the minds of African Americans and it is for this reason that Sixo — like Kiswana in Naylor's novel — rebels against US-American education by rejecting it.

Apart from Sixo, there are other "sweet home men "who reject slaveholder Garner's offer to teach them for a different reason. In the case of these ones, the assertion of Micheal Gomez seems applicable: "But the facing of so vast a prejudice [by African Americans] could not but bring the inevitable self-questioning, self-disparagement, and lowering of ideals whichever accompany repression…we are diseased and dying, cried the dark hosts; we cannot write, our voting is in vain; what need for education, since we must always cook and serve?" (51). Muyiwa Falaiye echoes this sentiment with the argument that "It is a fact that in most American colleges, male African American students hardly stay in schools … because of the bleak future … after acquiring necessary education" (20). Since education would do little or nothing to change their circumstances as Blacks, the other Garners of the novel reject "schooling" on the plantation. Yet no matter the effort to change their individual circumstances through education, they will remain inferior citizens as a result of their skin color. Kenneth Clark in his personal memoir wrote that "Reluctantly, I am forced to face the likely possibility that the United States will never rid itself of racism and reach true integration … I am forced to recognize that my life has, in fact, been a series of glorious defeats" (Clark qtd. in Allen and Jewell 93). Clark's life is "a series of glorious defeats" because despite his accomplishments educationally, he is still treated as a second class citizen owing to his skin color.

This idea that US-American education cannot change the circumstances of Blacks (whether they are educated or not) is demonstrated in the life of Haile, who accepts the offer for education in *Beloved,* because he argues that "if you can't count they can cheat you — If you can't read they can beat you" (218). Although for being able to count and read, he is able to buy his mother, Baby Suggs's freedom from slavery, yet with all his education he is still cheated and beaten. For seeing two white boys rape his wife Sethe in the barn, Haile goes mad (72-73). He is like Richard, who with all his knowledge ended up like a common criminal in Baldwin's *Go Tell It to the Mountain* and like the

Invisible Man of whom Ibe Mogu writes that "despite his lofty intellectual quest…he became barbaric and nihilistic" (103). For example, despite not attending a college like Ellison's protagonist and Richard in Baldwin's *Go Tell It to the Mountain* who seeks the White man's education as best as he can in his circumstance: "I told you [Elizabeth], my mama died when I was born. And my daddy, he weren't nowhere to be found. Ain't nobody took care of me … When one set of folks got tired of me they sent me down the line. I didn't hardly go to school at all …I just decided me one day that I was going to get to know everything them white Bastards knew, and I was going to get to know it better than them, so could no white son-of-a-bitch nowhere never talk me down, and never make me feel like I was Dirt, when I could read him the alphabet, back, front, and sideways. He weren't going to beat my arse, then" (193-94). This is Richard's response to Elizabeth's questions: "did you go to school much when you was little? … Then how come you got to be so smart? how come you got to know so much?" (193). Therefore, Richard, like any other Black character in Naylor's Linden Hill is an educated African American in his own right and his dilemma is that although "he got to know everything the white man knows," he did not achieve the freedom and equality he thought the White man's education was going to afford him. Charles Scruggs puts it succinctly that although "Richard strove to achieve an intellectual equality with the white man…there was a fundamental flaw in his plan. He had subscribed to the ideal of Western civilization, the life of the intellect, without ever ascertaining whether it would be recognized in a black man" (11). Despite his lofty intellectual quest, Richard ends up dying like a common criminal. He was unjustly arrested by the police as one of the robbers who robbed a White man's grocery store because the White man could not distinguish between him and the three Black boys who were the actual robbers (*Go Tell It* 199). Following this experience, Richard commits suicide because he realized that "no matter how smart (or knowledgeable and educated) he is, he remains a nigger" (Scruggs 12). Although Richard "knows all the white bastards know" and assumes he has an edge over other "niggers" and could compete favorably with the Whites, unknown to him it is not what one knows that makes one a "nigger" or otherwise, but the color of one's skin. Thus, Richard in Baldwin's *Go Tell It to the Mountain* attempts to circumvent his blackness through education, but ends up in the lower rungs of the ladder and this is his dilemma. Likewise, Haile's education in Morrison's *Beloved* does not prevent him and his family from being treated like "common niggers." The observation of Allen and Jewell that US-American education does not offer escape from the "ranks of society's despised, deprived, and degraded" (96), applies to Morrison's Haile and other educated Blacks.

The character of the schoolteacher is also germane to our understanding of how Morrison perceives US-American education in *Beloved*. That he is so-named and so-called by the inhabitants of sweet-home is suggestive of his being a stock character who represents the expectation of White teachers. While Sethe is not in a formal educational establishment, to reinforce her argument that US-American schooling is not for Blacks, Morrison creates a situation whereby the schoolteacher's teaching "puts Sethe on the edge." Whereas Sethe is not one of the pupils of the schoolteacher, it is overhearing him tell his students to categorize Sethe by setting down her animal characteristics on the right and her human ones on the left that makes her feel as if somebody was sticking fine needles in her scalp (202-03). Eusebio L. Rodrigues remarks that it is the "schoolteacher who had created a 'jungle' in Sethe, in whom the jungle of hate and terror had entered" (77). In this vein, Sethe accumulates negative emotions of hate, hostility, and resentment from US-American education. Instead of Western education improving her lot in life, it disorients her. However, the focus of Morrison in this narration is the condition of the African American under slavery. Although the novel was written in 1980, the setting is Cincinnati in 1873 with frequent flashbacks to the early 1850s. In her treatment of the impact of Western education on the African American, her emphasis is on the fact that Blacks were denied education under slavery and that without it, they could not function effectively despite their "freedom."In fact, the benevolence of the slaveholder Garner in terms of offering education to the "sweet home men" is portrayed to intensify this denial. Thus, the Black characters of the novel are reminiscent of Frederick Douglas who is denied education simply because he is a "nigger."

In the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, he himself informs readers about this development thus "Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words … Just at

this point of my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words…he said, 'If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an all. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master — to do as he is told to do. Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world" (Douglass qtd. in Appiah 42). The dispensation that Douglass writes about informs the setting of Morrison's *Beloved.* In effect, like Douglass, Morrison contends that to sustain the continued subjugation of Blacks during slavery, they were denied education.

According to Allen and Jewell, "During slavery it was forbidden to teach slaves, or for slaves to learn; they lived constantly with the fear of death or torture if caught reading or writing" (94). Commenting on this reality, the narrator of Morrison's *Beloved* observes that "The colored population of Cincinnati had two graveyards and six churches, but since no school … was obliged to serve them, they learned and died at home" (260). There is the tendency to ignore the significance of this passage because of its off-handed nature. There is every reason, however, to believe that following the thinking of Mr. Auld in the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, the rationalization of the Whites in *Beloved* is that "if you teach niggers how to read, it will make them to be unfit for slavery and they will become unmanageable, and this is what is responsible for the lack of a single institutional setting in Cincinnati. It is then no wonder that in this narration "the print (in the newspaper) meant nothing" to Paul D (163); Stamp Paid also could not read the newspaper; and Sethe could barely stick two words together and couldn't read clock time very well" (84,198). For this, Amy in reference to Sethe concludes that "You don't know a thing. End up dead, that's what" (84).The death to which Amy refers to is not physical, but sociopolitical and socioeconomic death. Thus, in the context of the selected African American narratives apart from those who receive "subjugating" or "subjugated" education, there are other characters whose educational predicament is the total denial of formal schooling.

Like the African American narratives, Aidoo depicts in *Changes* the educational quagmire of the African on the continent. Aidoo creates an educated woman protagonist in the person of Esi who attempts to apply her Western education to her relationship with her husband only to regret it afterwards. As an African woman, the cultural prescription and expectation is that she should be ready at all times and in whatever circumstances fulfill her husband's sexual pleasures and desires. But as a Western educated woman, Esi thinks otherwise. She believes, in opposition to her culture and in tandem with her Western education, that a woman also reserves the right to exercise a measure of authority over her body and decide when and how she can and should make love with her husband. Having accused her husband of "marital rape" and in a bid to legitimize her decision to divorce her husband, Esi travels to her mother's village to consult with her grandmother Nana. Nana, who can be described as a pragmatic traditional woman who has not been corrupted by White man's education, responds by asking Esi some rhetorical questions: "But Esi tell me, doesn't a woman's time belong to a man? … Who is a good man if not the one who eats his wife completely, and pushes her down with a good gulp of alchohol? … Esi, why do you think they took so much trouble with a girl on her wedding day?" (109-10). Seeing a different mental disposition from hers and acknowledging that there must be something responsible for this difference, Esi cannot but reason that

> Why had they sent her to school? What had they hoped to gain from it? What had they hoped she would gain from it? Who had designed the educational system that had produced her sort? What had that person or those people hoped to gain from it? For surely, taking a ten-year-old child from her mother, and away from her first language — which is surely one of life's most powerful working tools — for what would turn out to be forever, then transferring her into a boarding school for two years, to a higher boarding school for seven years, then to an even higher boarding school for three or four years, from where she was only equipped to go and roam in strange and foreign lands with no hope of ever meaningfully re-entering her mother's world…all this was too high a price to pay to achieve the dangerous confusion she was now in and the country now was in. (114)

There is so much that is condensed in this passage. The first is that Esi acknowledges her mental disorientation as a result of Western education. The second is that she is conflicted not knowing the culture to privilege between the African and the Western one. The third are the questions asked by Esi as to which would be the indicators of the predicament confronting educated Africans who have succumbed to Western ethnocentrism. The fourth is that the White man's education alienates a child from his/her parents. As Esi herself admits, "she could never be as close to her mother as her mother

was to her grandmother" (114) and for this reason she wonders what her parents hoped to gain by sending her to school. Moreover, there is the acknowledgement that the colonizers use education as a form of cultural instrument. This is embodied in her rhetorical question: "Who had designed the educational system that had produced her sort?" Ngugi sees language as an important component of culture, which when destroyed is tantamount to destroying the entire fabric of ones culture. This is the realization Esi achieves from her consultation with her grandmother. She realizes the fact that once a child has been taken from her mother and from her first language — which she regards as "life's most powerful working tools" and introduced to Western ways — he/she cannot re-enter into his/her parents' world. Therefore, her alienation from her culture is responsible for her conceiving of a Western concept, "marital rape." She herself observes that her mother and grandmother can never envisage such a notion since they are not products of Western education. Nada Elia posits that "Esi's mother and grandmother cannot understand 'marital-rape' as a problem" because they are not recipients of western education (144). Hence, in addition to Patrick Oloko's position that "the promise and problem of an economically empowered African woman is, at a level, the subject of the novel" (111), the subject of this novel can be read at another level as the promise and problem of an educated African woman.

Aidoo stretches the above argumentation by narrating that Western education is a price too high to pay not just for the individual, but also for society and she argues that the confusion in Ghana, which she takes as her setting, is attributable to imperialist education. Although a country is a geographical entity, Aidoo sees the confusion of the citizens as that of the country at large. In Aidoo's novel it is characters like Esi, whose education results in "dangerous confusion" (114) and another protagonist's — Fausena's — attitude which incites her mother to observe that "being foolish is a sickness so many [Western] educated people seem to suffer permanently from" (60) are the leaders of the society. Hence, what Aidoo demonstrates is that for Black African characters the problem is not so much the denial of Western education, but the kind they receive as a result of the colonial engagement. The clash between what they know as Africans and the Western education they acquire create a crisis and their inability to harmonize the two modes of education impedes their quest for sociopolitical integration. It then follows that their policy formulations cannot escape their intellectual crisis and this is the context in which the country also suffers from Western education.

While in her "prefatory confession, "Aidoo claims that her novel is not meant to contribute "to any debate, however current," the turn of events in the narration proves otherwise (133). In the context of the foregoing, she has either wittingly or unwittingly contributed, among other things, to the debate on the promise and problem of African women educated elites in relation to African tradition. It is then not a coincidence that she presents her readers with three educated women protagonists — Esi, Opokuya, and Fausena — who "regularly bruised traditions" (133). However, this should not be taken to mean that Aidoo condemns her protagonists for their education; rather, it is "to reveal painful truths, to name the disease as a first step towards curing it" (Aidoo qtd. in Elia 143). In this vein Patrick Oloko states that "*Changes* demonstrates that as access to quality education improves for Africans regardless of sex … African women have returned from the work place to see their homes from a newer perspective … This … entails coming to terms with the reality of a new life for the woman, a life which significantly challenges the traditional responsibilities of women in unanticipated ways" (112).

In conclusion, it is paradoxical that the above discussed writers — who are beneficiaries of Western education — would condemn it, for it is certain that without Western education they would not have been able to craft their stories. What their narratives, therefore, reveal is that they are not offering a blanket condemnation of Western education, but what they are against is the uncritical adoption of Western values. What is demonstrated in the three novels is that while Western education and literacy is important, total submission to it is dangerous as the total lack of it is inimical to the socioeconomic and psychological wellbeing of the African and African American character.

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