

## **Consorts and Chicken-Soups: Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* and Amma Darko's *Not Without Flowers***

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### ***Abstract***

*Polygamy exists in many African cultures. Ama Ata Aidoo and Amma Darko are among African novelists that explore norms of polygamy, and acquiescence often associated with women in the patriarchal system. The authors in the chosen texts appear to make loud statements about male traits and marital follies. In addition, the predicament of social imbalance, infidelity, economic subjugation and medical effects of such union are highlighted. The novels under examination are Amma Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story* (1991) and Amma Darko's *Not Without Flowers*. (2007) Both texts explore educated female characters with diverse visions and are to act out their objectives and goals. The female characters are believable and are given real life nuances psychologically and morally in contemporary Ghanaian society. The texts under study also reiterate the picture of liberal, free, educated and sophisticated wives who have strong traits to manage their situations while the disposition of some husbands breeds discord. The subversion of polygamy which draws on postfeminist concepts of 'female individualism' and 'choice' serves as the theoretical basis of the paper. The contention is that the novels reflect the plights, tribulations connected with contemporary polygamy and its disorganization of social life.*

**Key Words:** *Polygamy, Post feminism, Infidelity, Sexual and Mental Diseases.*

### **Introduction**

In many African societies, polygamy is an acceptable and valid form of marriage. Polygamy is a subject of discourse in many African novels such as Mariam Bâ's *So Long a Letter* (1979), Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*, (1979) Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*, (2013) and Akachi Adimorah-Ezeigbo's *The Last of Strong Ones*. (1996) Others. Examine women's social, political, economic and cultural roles in many African communities. "Polygamy can be said to be a marriage which includes more than one partner' (Koktevdgaard, 2008: 2). Generally, it exists in two forms: polygyny and polyandry. Polygyny is when a man is married to more than one wife, whereas polyandry refers to an arrangement where

a woman is married to more than one husband whereas polygamy is defined as “the rule, custom, or condition of marriage to more than one person at a time, or (now rarely) in life; sometimes used for polygyny, we choose polygamy because it seems to be more in use and more familiar to most readers.

Some reasons are given for the practice of polygamy. In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Nwankie is renowned because he has three big barns of yams, nine wives and thirty children and a honourable title in society. Hard work then can earn people a return like having the right of getting many wives in one's household like in Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*. In *So long a letter*, Ramatoulaye is confounded when her husband takes a second wife after thirty years of marriage and twelve children. Bolanle the main character in Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* is the youngest of four wives.

Amma Darko's *Not Without Flowers* (2007) revolves around the story of three generations of women: Aggie, Ma, and Pesewa's wives. Amma Darko depicts the negative aspects of polygamy. The image Amma Darko wants to show of fifth wife is that of a typical postfeminist woman-educated, liberated and progressive and out to recreate new life of her own. The character Fifth Wife makes a deliberate choice by accepting a polygamous family because of her early health history. She gets married to the rich Pesewa who has already four wives. A similar decision is made by the female narrator in Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Life of Baba Segi's Wives* (2010). The protagonist, Bolanle, despite her education, accepts to become the fourth wife of Baba Segi. Then, coming back to Amma Darko's writing, 'Pesewa one of the characters' symbolizing money thinks that money can purchase everything around and he feels happy to have: “They were all taboo to Pesewa; lovers, girlfriends, chicken-soups, concubines. If he wanted a woman, he simply made her his wife.” (Darko, 57) Pesewa has then no time for the syndrome of chicken-soup or concubines (Darko, 65). He usually takes what he desires no matter what and how it costs. Amma Darko draws our attention to the way Pesewa treats women like material collection. He does not communicate with his wives to announce the arrival of a new wife. Just like Pa Pesewa who is presented as a character whose life is ruled by an overriding passion to become successful and powerful by the number of wives he possesses.

### **Theoretical Considerations**

Our theoretical choice for this paper is postfeminism which started in the 80s. It celebrates sexuality and says that women can be empowered, free to choose and liberated (Gowrisankar and Ajit, 2016). Postfeminism is a critical analytical term that refers to empirical regularities or patterns in contemporary cultural life, and agency as dominant modes of accounting (Laura Thompson and Ngairé Donaghue, 2014). The main goal of postfeminism is a woman's individualism. Mcrobbie

introduces a new “female individualism” which dismisses the “old” feminism. The feminist woman is characterized by individuals, sophistication and choice.

Initially postfeminism focused on the media. There are many types of media available. We have chosen novels that indicate how the texts portray the ideology of post-feminism through the actions of some characters. Postfeminism is fueled by advances in abortion, employment and fertility laws and concentrate on furthering the idea of empowerment, celebration of feminists, freedom of choice and liberation. The postfeminists' 'equality portrayals’ of women are visible in cinema, electronic and mass media advertisements and also in literature in the form of avoidance from depicting a young woman as passive, inferior, weaker and subordinate to a man.

One of the strengths of postfeminism as a critical concept is that it tends to and makes visible contradictions. A growing body of feminist cultural and media scholarship is concerned with postfeminism understood as a contemporary cultural sensibility, proclaiming that women are 'now empowered' and celebrating and encouraging their consequent 'freedom' to return to normatively feminine pursuits and to disavow feminism as no longer needed or desirable.

Rosalind Gill (2007,2008) conceptualizes postfeminism as contradictory sensibility marked by elements such as emphasis on femininity as a bodily property. There is an implication that women's actions can be decided and chosen freely. Most feminist scholarship on post-feminism concerns the “Western” world but Simidele (2015) makes a case for women outside the West reconceptualization of postfeminism as “transnational culture” indicating that as a concept it cuts across geographical boundaries.

McRobbie (2008, 2009) describes a new feminine figure as “the global girl”. The global girl is the non-Western woman increasingly incorporated as worker and wage-earner into the grossly uneven circuits of global capital-hence McRobbie (2008:533-4) also briefly calls her “global girl factory worker”. The global girl like her Western counterpart the career girl is independent, hardworking, motivated, ambitious and able to enjoy at least some rewards of the feminine consumer culture which in turn becomes a defining feature of her citizenship and identity (733-734).

Michelle Lazar (2006, 2009, 2011) also notes the globalized space of postfeminism that is across ethnic, racial, geographic and geopolitical difference especially when it deals with the advertisement of beauty products. Simidele for these among other reasons, proposes a transnational analytic and methodological approach. This entails de-centering postfeminism from the West but theorizing postfeminism with globalization. Arjun Appadurai (1996) succinctly puts it that “Globalization has

shrunk the distance between elites”.

### **Complexities of Individual Choice in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes, A Love Story***

The novel explores the role of female characters that are fully aware of their objective and are acting according to their will and target. Esi, the main character in the novel owns career and ambition without constraints of her family and her husband. She fits into the description of Mcrobie's “global girl” who has transformed herself into a model of modern woman. She is independent socially and also financially stable. She thinks aloud about African women conditions as to why life is difficult for the African professional woman. In addition to Esi Seyki we have, Opokuya Dakwa and Fuesna Kondey, three educated women. They share in common education and the fight for personal independence from men. Esi works as a government staff, Opokuya is a nurse and Fuesna abandons her educational career and works as a great owner of a kiosk. Esi Sekyi however is the paradigm of a self-determining woman who indeed represents the emergence of a postfeminist character.

Esi marries Oko out of gratitude and the reasons why she decides to leave him are linked to selfishness. Her later choice of polygamy complicates her ability to realize her desire to be free. Esi Sekyi's acceptance of Ali's proposal is done in view of her individualistic needs. It is ironic that although Ali is attracted to her because of her air of independence, Esi is not the one who is in control of this relationship. She is ultimately, subordinate to a man, and in her search for independence, she ends the romantic relationship with Ali as well. Despite Ali's love for her, he cannot tolerate her air of independence in relation to him. Esi Seyki is conscious of the presence of Ali Kondey for a first impression and 'his voice was virtually willing her to sleep'. Her unease is identified and had to speak just to feel at ease and prevent an awkward silence. On the part of Kondey he sees their meeting as “a gift from Allah”. Oko's marriage to Esi was at the brink of failure without affection and warmth after about eight years of being together. Ogyaanowa the only offspring of the union is unhappy about tense relationship between the parents. Being an only child of the union makes Oko feel worse as Esi is not interested in having more children. Oko is reluctant to have a broken home as he feels has made a lot of investment in the relationship. What bothers Oko is that Esi puts her career above what he thinks are the duties of a wife. Despite the fact that she cooks well Esi's chores are fraught with endless complaints leaving the running of the home to a house help.

What has given Esi added confidence is that their accommodation came with her job as a data analyst in a government establishment. In addition she is well respected at work often working long hours as well as regular attendance of international conferences. Oko's raping of her was an act of deliberate provocation. Male ego prevents him from apologizing in the process of leaving the bed with the bed cover

stripping Esi naked in the process. This act of marital rape demoralizes and angers Esi. She envisions herself presenting a conference paper on the act despite not being recognized as rape in the tradition as “sex is something a husband claims from his wife as his right any time”. The incident of rape to Esi is likened to an invasion of her privacy and this eventually makes her decide to divorce Oko.

In terms of temperament Esi is contrast to Opokuya her friend. Opokuya has personal choices to make too but within the confines of her marriage. She makes a choice of having only four children and thereafter submits herself to medical sterilization. Kubi the husband agrees with her decision and is often sensitive to her moods as a wife. The point of disagreement between them appears to be minor and it involves the use of Kubi's official car, an action mocked by colleagues who do not share her sentiments.

Over drinks, Esi confides in Opokuya that she has left Oko hoping to get sympathy from her but is met with disappointment as Opokuya and Esi's relations cannot fathom why Esi opts out of her marriage. Oko's relation are even less understanding as they think she has “turned his head” for refusing to cooperate with them in the project of assisting Oko to have more children other than Ogyaanowa. They even hint that Oko should get himself “an unspoilt young woman” with little education and little money. To Nana a marriage should be based on reasons other than love which Esi hardly agrees to.

The emotional demands of Esi in a marriage is assumed to be unrealistic to Opokuya as Oko's desire to have Esi around him is a source of resentment as Esi prefers independence of a career and choice to make personal decisions concerning her career, social and marital life. She does not want to be part of what is referred to as SWI an acronym for satisfied wives international. Esi kicks vehemently against either going back to Oko or getting married again. The thought of a second marriage seems unbearable as she thinks she would be saddled with another man who often complains. Opokuya affirms that loneliness for a single woman in their environment can be frightening. Her experience as a nurse and midwife has exposed her to women with different kinds of marital problems.

Opokuya clearly spells out her opinion that the kind of freedom Esi desires leads to loneliness as “you can't have everything your way and expect not to be lonely...we can't have it all”. She emphasizes that their society does not allow a lifestyle of so much freedom such as Esi desires for a woman. The suggestion is that for any marriage to work, one party has to be submissive to the point of foolishness. The imprudent party preferably should be the woman which is not agreeable to Esi. She voices her worries about how she can combine the demands of a career and that of a marriage. Esi was resolute and has no regrets sticking to being a professional

woman.

Opokuya sees Esi's interest in Ali Kondey as an “insurance policy” against loneliness. The snag of the matter is that Ali Kondey is married. Aidoo further complicates the issues of human rights by raising questions from African women's perspectives about Esi's decision to be the second wife of Ali. Opokuya questions Esi whether she can see herself as an acquaintance of Ali's wife getting together. While Esi answers in the negative, Opokuya clarifies: “In the village, or rather in a traditional situation, it was not possible for a man to consider taking a second wife without the first wife's consent” (Aidoo 97). Here, from an African perspective, Esi is destroying the terrain of the rights of another woman—Fusena. It seems that Esi is unaware of the African culture, tradition, and ritual of a second marriage as she “conceives of the marriage in very individualistic” manner (Nfah-Abbenyi 295). Opokuya informs Esi of the pre-requisites of happiness in a polygamous marriage: “In a polygamous situation, or rather in the traditional environment in which polygamous marriages flourished, happiness, like most of the good things of this life, was not a two-person enterprise. It was the business of all parties concerned” (Aidoo 98).

Oko is bitter that Esi has chosen his career over him and Oko's relations are furious but she is determined to leave him in spite of his recent promotion. Asking him for a divorce startle him and he takes to drinking more than the usual. He emotionally suffers his sense of loss and he imagines the situation to be that of mere physical separation. Esi is emotionally stronger and she is not even shy to display her nakedness after love making which is different from other experiences Ali Kondey has had with women. Ali often pretends to be asleep to encourage this bold act. Her individual streak also leads her to lay down some rules on herself in dealing with Ali. She was never to phone his home to ask for him and not to embark on unexpected visits to his office. Esi agreeing to marry Ali comes as a surprise to her friend Opokuya. The latter terms this arrangement “an alternative lifestyle”. She avers that Esi finds marriage stifling.

According to Esi's grandmother Esi left Oko because Oko demanded too much of her and her time. But in summation the grandmother states the best husband is the one who demands all of her and all of her time. “Who is a good man if not one who eats his wife completely”(Aidoo132). Part of Esi's attraction for Ali is that he is an only child and may likely not be saddled with interference from siblings like Oko. Esi's mother calls her a witch for not wanting people. Nama expressed the fact that a man with many relations was to be preferred for a husband in her days.

After the initial whirlwind courtship and romance, marriage to Ali and introduction to his relations makes Esi think a perfect marriage routine and work was in place till

she starts noticing “an impatience in his voice anytime she phones him”(Aidoo168). Excuses to see her less becomes a pattern especially with the employment of a female secretary who Ali often takes home at the end of office hours. The effect of this on Esi is noticed by Opokuya who observes there was something “slightly lost in Esi's eyes” (Aidoo169).

Esi becomes desolate and lonely and no personal plans could be made as Ali's routine did not merge with hers and visits to her also become less frequent. This unpredictable pattern makes Esi “a nervous wreck” (Aidoo170). Attempts to have her daughter with her to give her company is fraught with obstacles. The loneliness and quietness of her house she now likens to a “cemetery” Loneliness makes her long to take tranquilizers to calm her nerves and leads her to visit a doctor who is surprised because he thinks Esi to be “a real tough bird”(Aidoo173). By the third year of the marriage Esi declares “this is no marriage”. In the end all she gets are material things and little emotional comfort. Esi and Ali eventually become just good friends and never does she bother about a second divorce. As a liberated woman, she has difficulty seeing herself as an “occupied territory”(Aidoo 91) of Ali. But Ali counters thus: “What difference should that make? And what is this about only a second wife? Isn't a wife a wife?” (Aidoo 89).

Ali supports polygamy as a cultural identity while answering Esi's query about polygamy and its meaning in the modern African context. He is not at all content with Esi's equation of bigamy with polygamy and contends thus:

“When put like that, yes, we are committing a crime. Polygamy, bigamy. To the people who created the concepts, these are all crimes. Like homicide, rape and arson. Why have we got so used to describing our cultural dynamics with the condemnatory tone of our masters' voices? We have got marriage in Africa, Esi. In Muslim Africa, in non-Muslim Africa and in our marriages a man has a choice – to have one or more wives”. (Aidoo 90).

Here, Ali is explaining his marriage to Esi from an African cultural point of view. Esi is frustrated finding Ali's thought grounded on a strong African social perspective as he forces her to wear the ring.

In their effort to get married, Esi and Ali “agreed that since custom did not permit them to drive down in the same vehicle, they would have to travel separately” (Aidoo 91) to Esi's relatives. It's ironic that they are going to be in a non-traditional relationship, but conscious of a tradition to materialize that. Indeed, Aidoo creates a complex web of actions –traditional and non-traditional which complicate the question of women's rights in the text. In effect Esi complicates her life and Fusena's

as well. Esi's marriage is a failure because she romanticizes "love" as "life" by ignoring the "cultural reality" of love. The rights she searches for with Ali, after failing with Oko, are undiscovered. The only thing she develops is loneliness. Individual choices in the second text have similar but grave consequences.

### **Individual Inclinations in Amma Darko's *Not Without Flowers***

The central metaphor in this text is a garden full of a variety of beautiful flowers. Their presence has aesthetic value while their absence can connote several things. Beauty in a marriage suddenly evaporates, when what makes it sensuous is replaced by bitterness, disappointment, madness, suicide and revenge. Aggie's marriage to Idan, her childhood sweetheart is all that she hoped it would be, except that it is a childless one. And when Idan 'accidentally' meets Randa an attractive university student who seduces him with a passion that only reminds him of his youth and fuels his guilt over his affair and childlessness, a chain of events sets in leading to unearth Aggie's past life as a student prostitute and the unwitting part she played in the suicide of Randa's father and madness of her mother. Nemesis comes knocking at Aggie's door in a tumult that involves Aggie, her husband and her polygamous parents, as well as Randa and her two older siblings including her young lover along in a whirlpool of pain, betrayal, and the scandal of living with HIV/AIDS.

In dealing with the several leitmotifs in *Not Without Flowers*, Amma Darko employs emotional dramatic strategies which highlights thorny matters such as HIV/AIDS in a polygamous marriage in an urban setting, juxtaposing this with the rural setting of Aggie's mother whose relationship with her childless rival is close-knit with support coming from both sides. Aggie treats all two mothers equally and never refers to her stepmother as such. The use of flashback adequately sends the reader back and forth revealing and clarifying past events of an otherwise intricate plot.

Infidelity runs throughout the novel. Almost all the major characters and a few minor ones are unfaithful to their respective partners. Lies and deceits abound as these characters try to make meaning of their current predicaments which they find themselves in as a result of their initial lies. Nothing is as it seems. Closely linked to this is an important power-relation explored in the 'sugar-daddies' and 'chicken-soups' or 'good-time girls' syndrome, something that is on the increase in cosmopolitan cities in the country. The harm that this relation does to wives forms the central issue of the novel. The narration also seems to explicitly explore the harm done by women to fellow women.

Ma's madness as a result of her husband's infidelity and suicide is vividly depicted. In desperation her children seek un-orthodox treatment for her in a prayer camp. Also indicated in the text is the use of superstitions, premonitions that foretell the future, dreams that come to pass, traditional lore and customs. Darko superbly



blends these features with the comic prophecies of Prophet Abednego, manifesting socio-economic and religious deficiencies in the country. The polygamous marriage of Ntifor and his wives (Penyin and Kakraba) solves an important social problem: childlessness. Since one of the cardinal rules in polygamy is that children of such a union belong to all the wives, the inability of one wife to conceive is concealed and she rejoices in the children of her co-wives. This was made known to Mena Penyin by Kakraba anytime the latter tries raising the issue:

“... A little jealousy, yes. Even till today. I am human, Kakraba. You are the mother of all his children. And if...” “Our children, Penyin. The children I bore with him belong to us all. Our children, Penyin.” (Darko 160).

It is also observed that the polygamous family of Ntifor was a closely knit one with support coming from both sides and the unity existing amongst them is unique. The children also treat both mothers equally and this goes a long way to make each of the mothers happy. They accept that both women are their mothers and hence do not discriminate.

However, the polygamous marriage of Pesewa and his five wives cannot be said to be without problems. Pesewa, the wealthy man, contracted HIV, though he was known to be faithful to all five wives and was famous for refusing sex until marriage. Yet, the unfaithfulness of one of his wives costs him and four of his wives their lives. This unfaithfulness arose because the time spent on each wife reduces as he adds on to them. The fifth wife's motive for accepting to be part of a polygamous marriage is compelling and convincing. As a woman who knows she cannot give birth, as a result of a past mistake, marrying into a polygamous family, where child-bearing isn't the goal, is the best that could ever happen to her. Why should she enter a monogamous marriage with all the expectations of children, when you know the truth about yourself? Besides, there are the added advantages of emotional and financial security.

Similarly, even though Idan and Aggie were practicing monogamous marriage, they both were infected with this deadly disease. Idan, being the typical 'man', engaged in an extra-marital affair with a girl who was also in a relationship with a man who had multiple 'sugar' mummies. The love circles show how the HIV virus travels and how fast it could affect an entire population. In the end, we see that mere polygamy or monogamy is not the key to happiness in marriage; happiness in marriage is the duty of the players in that marriage.

The reason for the conflict in Darko's *Not Without Flowers* is no different; 5th Wife is given preferential treatment by the husband because she is the newest wife. As a

result, she has to contend with the wrath of her co-wives and in-laws when her husband dies; a special widowhood right; marrying her dead husband's brother, is prescribed as punishment for depriving others of the attention of their husband. Even though polygamy is traditionally an acceptable practice in many African cultures, Darko, like many female African writers; Emecheta's *Joys of Motherhood*, Aidoo's *Changes* and Ba's *So Long A Letter*, indicates that it always “took a certain kind of woman to agree to become the second wife” (Darko 270) when such traditional conditions as the fertility of the first wife was not the reason. In *Not Without Flowers*, Kakraba's reaction to the visits of 'Teacher', Ma's reaction to Pa and 'Flower's' relationship as well as Aggie's opposition to the relationship between Idan and Randa suggests that polygamy is not entirely cherished by women in contemporary Ghana. Darko presents polygamy as a spectacle of the greed and egoistic control of men over women when she depicts that “they (women) are all taboos to Pesewa; lovers, girlfriends, chicken-soups, concubines. If he wanted a woman, he simply made her his wife. Period.” (Darko 57).

The agony women go through when they have to yield to the control of men this way is evident in 1st Wife's expression of sorrow when she gets to know about 2nd Wife. She resorted to religion often praying to God to make her endure the awkward situation when her husband's attention was turned from her. She prayed to God stating.

“...please God, expand my endurance so that I can bear the pain of his want for this other woman to whom he has legitimize his right to desire, so that as I promised before all who once gathered...” (Darko 272).

Even though, polygamy can serve for procreation like with Agya Ntifor and his two wives, it is worth mentioning that envy and fear are not too far. Mena Kakraba's value in Agya Ntifor's house lies on her childbearing abilities, yet both women fear the intrusion of Teacher who is in fact Cora, Bible in hand for a pseudo research. Kakraba confesses her tight spot any time Teacher is alone with their husband in his room: “It's the woman. That teacher from the city who claims to be doing some research work with him. She was here again. She came when you had gone to the market for the dry plantain leaves for your Fanti kenkey business” (Darko, 151).

Whenever Teacher comes in Agya Ntifor's house, Penyin and Kakraba are troubled and anxious because of the dating possibilities. They all are mindful that the more regular a woman meets a man for causeries and shared interests, the more they get together and close. And this togetherness can engender sympathy and then love or more or less affection to each other. The quotation proves it well: “What if the strange teacher actually becomes our rival? If she proves capable of bearing children

with our husband and goes ahead to do just that, have you thought of the implication?" (Darko, 151). The capacity of childbearing comes back again to demonstrate that women are conscious of the first-hand and significant role that society assigns them.

In a heterogeneous society, the sugar daddy phenomenon is considered as polygamy as far as its aspect of multiple partners is concerned. This is one of the worst social realities with regard to family life that negatively affects most African women in their being yoked to difficulties. The growing predicament of sugar daddy or sugar mummy is to be addressed by all means because it is one of the first root-causes to the HIV pandemic. Amma Darko also paints the picture of the way HIV positives should be viewed by society, not like pariahs but part and parcel of the society. Amma Darko seems to say that no one is protected against the dreaded infection, if someone outdoor is still at risk.

The special touch of Amma Darko lies in the fact that she presents the situation of polygamy as not being bad, but full of happiness and relaxation for the woman in the first hand. On the other hand, she presents a generational sexual relation between men and women in her text to point out the social reality prevalent in modern Ghana in a changing cultural context.

Men and women accept to change sexual pleasures to have money and other privileges. Men and women flirt into a sexual relationship that is denuded of love and self-respect. The relationships are characterized by large age and economic asymmetries between partners and which ended in unsafe sexual behaviour, the main factor in the spread of HIV. The equation is very simple: a young and attractive secondary or university girl signs up for dating with an older and well-off man in which he provides gifts and money and a young man does it with an older woman in need of good and strong sex. The bolt from the blue in the case is that the young girl knows that the man is married but flirts for a sex-money relationship, not for love. Darko calls the phenomenon not prostitution but sugar-daddy or sugar mummy syndrome. By its nature, polygamy promotes multiple sexual partners.

In this scope, the chicken-soup "fulfils for him those sexual fantasies and desires that probably appall his 'ringed' better half at home. In return for which he also provides her with the financial security she craves for: a win-win situation" (Darko, 79). In that so called partnership, "the sugar daddy adds to that energy with the time and attention he showers on with his lack of love and attention and empathy for her, further depleting whatever little reserve the wife may have had" (Darko, 80). It is also called in its light shape concubinage. It is a parasite system that drains the maximum finances from the engaged and then exposes him at a risk of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases. Darko gives further description of the recurrent tasks assured by the engaged sugar daddy:

“Cuddling; the sugar daddies pamper their chicken-soups and spoil them, and who doesn't want to pampered and spoiled? They don't only shower them with cash and presents, but with lots of attention too. Sex is a strong emotionally addictive enticement. (Darko 79)

The sex-for-money engagement ruins Pa completely, leaving him with a huge debt and a desire to commit suicide. This extramarital relation of Pa with Aggie renders Ma (Pa's wife) mentally sick because of Pa's permanent absence and neglect. “Ma was crying because Pa was not sleeping beside her on the bed” (Darko 120). Randa decides to avenge by befriending Idan, Aggie's husband making her suffer the neglect of her husband. To make matters worse, Aggie bears no child for her husband Idan, being conversant with the importance of children in African society. Moreover, Randa is HIV positive, a disease she carries through her relationship with Dam, her fiancé. She generously spreads first to Idan and subsequently to Aggie. Darko proves through these lines her feminist stance. She warns the Ghanaian and African society that the retribution for this is twofold; either the man falls sick with HIV and commits suicide or is completely ruined. Yet, in this representation, men are shown as a threat to women's health and welfare. That is the reason why the emphasis of Edna Buchanan (Darko, 20) in the beginning of the novel has all its sense as the caution message to those want to engage in multiple relationship.

Furthermore, the scapegoat of all the mess is well indicated in the text: Agnes. For Ma, Aggie is the cause of Ma's aversion and severe paranoia for flowers as Aggie loves being called Flower by Pa. The hatred is so harsh and general that all that grows in her garden must be cut off to obey her interior voice. The passage gives us much insightful idea on the prevailing loathe:

Following the orders that the voice was issuing inside her head, Ma surveyed the compound, taking in all the varied and beautiful flowers that were in plentiful bloom. ...

Ma Froze. She stared at the purple lily in her hand, severed from its stem. Blood. Where was the blood? The blood must be somewhere, Ma panicked. She couldn't trace the blood. She whirled around. No blood. She sniffed into the air, searching for a scent of the blood. No scent. She began to tremble. She had failed. The voice had ordered for blood. Where was the blood? Whoosh! Whack! Whoosh! Whack! Blood! (Darko, 169-70)

Then the first punishment issued on Aggie's head for having been the main cause of Pa's financial, physical and mental annihilation begins during her wedding day. So

Ma like a *maharishi* (Darko 432), forecasts a curse that it will rain on that very day because she (Ma) sheds hot tears during the time of Pa and Aggie relationship. Marital bed being sanctuary, grubby and polluted sexual encounter must not be played on. Ma wishes with all herself that the exploiter of her husband must endorse all the responsibility of her act. The role of wife should normally be difficult to play, irrespectively Ma tries and even succeeds so artistically. She prays for her husband everyday they meet but with no word to share. She tries to bring him back to reason by crying desperately.

Ma as well, cannot fathom an intruder in her marital home either. She also falls on her religious faith which teaches her to pray with the hope of receiving an answer: Ma had been married to him for too long not to notice. She sensed his agony at forcing passion where it had ceased to exist, his desperate attempts to right the wrong done her by clamoring to inject life into what was long dead at its roots. Ma's prayers slowly began to find voice. And when she prayed, it was no longer only for the easing of the pain in her heart, but also for survival of her mental faculties, because she began to feel and sense it slowly and gradually slipping away. (Darko 339) Most African female writers present polygamy negatively, with respect to women. They suggest that polygamy as a form of marriage has come to stay. However, Darko, in addition to this negative presentation, grants women with alternative uses of polygamy; for their betterment. To her, polygamy is not entirely disadvantageous to women; it is within the powers of women to make it beneficial to themselves: for emotional support, financial support and motherhood. For instance, in *Not Without Flowers*, fifth Wife agrees to a polygamous marriage because she needs to be attached, have emotional support and not be bothered with having children:

“I mentioned emotional security as being one of my reasons for marrying my late husband. That was it. It alleviated the misery of unfulfilled expectancy with a younger man looking forward to having children.” (Darko 95)

The polygamous marriage of Ntifor and his wives solves the problem of childlessness. Since one of the rules in polygamy is that children of such a union belong to all the wives, Panyin's inability to conceive is concealed and she rejoices in the children of her co-wife. This is made known to Mena Penyin by Kakraba anytime the latter tried raising the issue, saying:

“A little jealousy, yes. Even till today. I am human, Kakraba. You are the mother of all his children...The children I bore with him belong to us all. Our children, Penyin.” (Darko 160)

On the other hand, polygamy involves having multiple sex partners and this is often blamed, by the medics, for the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. However, Darko rather blames such disease infections in any marital set-up on conjugal infidelity and not its polygamous nature. She reminds us that had 2nd Wife been faithful to her husband, the infection would not have occurred. More importantly, had Pesewa maintained just one wife, 2nd Wife would not have existed let alone be unfaithful. Therefore, Darko advocates conjugal fidelity in marriages, whether polygamous or monogamous.

In *Not Without Flowers*, it is important to state here that the author's position is quite different from the other female feminists. Taking differently each female character bears a special mark from the author. This is the reason Amma Darko leads Aggie into polygamy to liberate all the vengeful spirits to clash with Aggie's destiny. The attack is launched in an enclosed envelope out of which flipped through NEMESIS, the Greek word for retribution, punishment. Aggie should reap what she takes years to sow. Like a boomerang effect, Aggie should suffer to the same extent to which she made Ma suffer. Amma Darko appropriates a biblical passage in Matthew 7:2 KJV which states:

“For with whatever judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with whatever measure you measure, it will be measured to you”.

To appreciate how much this is a statement of positive or negative income from an action, we have to keep step with Aggie as she traverses Darko's forged story of polygamy, as gender issue in a post-independent Ghana. In her narrative, Darko sheds light to the inner causes that fertilize men's desire to look for other sexual fantasies while still living as couple. In fact, at a time of their life, some women think that sex is no more the essence of marriage, so much so that they stop putting spices in their relationship and craving for sex with their husband. Darko shows that it is a big mistake from women. Ma's devotion to romance wanes and blazes off while at the same time, Pa is in need of fantasies and new patterns. The following passage is a dramatization of Pa's desire for a sex-life laced with assortment and not the ordinariness. Pa confesses:

“When she gets into bed with me, all she wants to do is to go to sleep,” he complained to his friend. “And on the rare occasion that she gives in to me, she leaves me feeling like the whole activity was just another household chore. It is becoming too frustrating and difficult to bear.”(Darko 311)

Pa's frustration gradually developed into a tension that was waiting to erupt. Everyone lusts in the heart one time or the other. Some suppress and keep it in check.

Initially, just occasionally. Then gradually it gathered momentum. Eventually it became a pre-occupation. The absence of nurturing and intimacy began to eat him up. He began to fantasize about sex with another woman and felt guilty about it. (Darko, 328) On the one hand, Darko warns wives who take for granted their outlook on sexual life once they begin to make babies and ageing. In this case, polygamy is depicted as a scope of exploitation. The women who choose to be in polygamy are only junior wives (respectively 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Wives) who purposely involve themselves in these relationships at the expense of the joy and security of senior wives (1st wife and Ma), who never seem to choose polygamy marriage as what is good for them. Polygamy is forced upon them, often secretly, and they suffer severely when they find it out. For example, the first wife of Pesewa was not informed that Pesewa would take on the second, the third, the fourth and the fifth wives in their home.

Amma Darko wants to show that in polygamy, falsehood and dishonesty represent the foundation, for at the beginning of Pesewa's marriage with his first wife, "other wives were never envisaged" (Darko, 269). The additional pain that the first wife has to bear is that of sharing his intimacy with more women. As the first wife is a good Christian, she confides her situation in God. In a polygamous household, the reign of the favorite wife has its expiration date, just like the time the man dates another woman for his bed. As a matter of fact, at a certain level in the text, there is no more a win-win partnership between the two, but a 'hit and run' question. The expression 'hit and run' refers to the quickness of effect and the malevolent intention of their relationship rather than for permanency and real love.

### **Conclusion**

In view of the foregoing discussion regarding the social, economic and health experiences of polygamy, it is difficult to draw a single, clear conclusion as to whether life in a polygamous marriage is harmful to women. Whether women suffer or benefit from plural marriage actually seems to be the improper query through which to investigate the consequences of polygamy for women, since it is far too general. It implies that women in polygamy share uniform realities, regardless of the communities and cultures in which they live, and regardless of the particular relationships formed within their families. This is in fact not at all the case: an array of factors might give rise to substantial diversity within the experiences of women in polygamy worldwide.

Thus, while some women encounter bitter animosity and rivalry with co-wives, others might enjoy genuine friendship and support from this network of women. While some women might face abject poverty as a plural wife, others might garner economic security and stability. Finally, while some women in polygamy might face a heightened risk of exposure to sexually transmitted disease, others might never

have to deal with this concern. In view of this, policy responses to polygamy must be sensitive in diverse realities that women in polygamy encounter.

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