

Innovations

Revolutionizing Narratives: A Postcolonial Re-Reading on black Feminist Empowerment in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*

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Abstract

*In revolutionizing the narratives and stance of black feminist empowerment, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* play a pivotal role in articulating postcolonial literature as a literature that continues to set and retain the gaze of its audience as not just art but as a core representation, in aesthetic and mimetic content. In a literature of this kind, the postcolonial subject is simply left with no option than being a deviant and a non-conformist, whose life is rife with glaring and deliberate contradictions. Women as the feminist postcolonial subject appear to arrest the incompatibilities as they convert their life in the postcolonial and societal otherness. This paper engages the transformative power of black feminist narratives in two seminal literary works: Aidoo's *Changes* and Kincaid's *Annie John*. Focusing on the intersection of identity and otherness, it delves into the ways these narratives challenge societal norms and empower their protagonists. Both texts serve as powerful testaments to feminism, thereby, highlighting the resilience and agency of their protagonists within oppressive systems. This article aims to showcase the transformative power and the voices of black women, highlighting their struggles, triumphs, and the resilience that defines their narratives. Ultimately, it seeks to illuminate the pivotal role of black feminist empowerment in reshaping societal norms and advocating for a more inclusive and equitable future. This paper engages postcolonial feminist theory as theoretical tool for the re-reading of the texts.*

Keywords: *Aidoo, Black Feminism, Empowerment, Gender, Kincaid, Postcolonial Feminist Theory.*

Introduction

The dynamic intersection of black feminist empowerment within Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*, delves into the revolutionary narratives depicted in these literary works, examining the nuanced portrayal of dark female characters as they navigate societal, cultural, and personal challenges. Both Aidoo and Kincaid employ distinct narrative strategies to illuminate the complexities that are related to race, that is of black female experiences. Aidoo's *Changes*, unravels the human structure and life of Esi, a Ghanaian woman, navigating love, marriage, and societal expectations. Her journey represents a departure from traditional gender roles, highlighting the importance of agency and autonomy in defining one's identity and choices. Focusing on the intersection of colour, female empowerment, and identity, Aidoo and Kincaid delve into the ways these narratives challenge societal norms and empower their protagonists. In *Changes*, Aidoo navigates Ghana's shifting socio-political landscape through the eyes of Esi, a woman on a quest for personal and societal transformation. The narrative exposes entrenched patriarchy while advocating for women's autonomy and self-discovery amidst cultural upheaval.

Kincaid's *Annie John* illuminates the coming-of-age journey of a young girl in Antigua. Through Annie's introspection, Kincaid intricately weaves themes of colonialism, female adolescence, and the search for individuality, ultimately advocating for personal liberation from societal constraints. Both texts serve as powerful testaments to black feminist literature, highlighting the resilience and agency of their protagonists within oppressive systems. This abstract seeks to analyze the style that these narratives contribute to reshaping societal paradigms and advocating for empowerment, agency, and equality for black women.

In contrast, Kincaid's *Annie John* intricately explores the coming-of-age journey of a young Antiguan girl, Annie, grappling with the complexities of adolescence, cultural expectations, and the formation of self-identity. Through Annie's perspective, Kincaid sheds light on the intricate web of societal constructs and familial influences that shape a young black girl's understanding of herself and the world. The central themes of empowerment, identity, and autonomy prevalent in both texts, emphasizes the authors' deliberate efforts to challenge hegemonic structures that confine black women. The expedition for women renaissance and empowerment is a prevalent issue in the literature of the postcolonial and culturally dispossessed people of African and the African -American (Caribbean) people. Literary feminist writers like Ama Ata Aidoo and Jamaica Kincaid are profusely obsessed with the despicable plight of the culturally misplaced and dispossessed blackwomen and this obsession is conspicuously injected into her works.

The black race women renaissance and empowerment as a subject of research fundamentally orbits around the inspection of human beings as characters with diverse and individual personality traits. Observing that there is existence of temperament and instances of idiosyncratic traits observed amongst people of the same community or society. The researcher sees the nature and scope of "black women renaissance and empowerment" as an outlining factor in human existence as is suggestively a central point in the study and analysis of global inclinations and creeds. Probing into the nature and scope of black women renaissance and empowerment as a distinct factor in human development and existence is conspicuously a focal point in the study and interpretation of global trends and tenets.

Postcolonial Literary theory is a literary interpretation of post-colonialism that is, a study of the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies. It is a literary approach that gives a kind of psychological relief to the people (the colonized) for whom it is conceived. Post-colonial literary theory aims at not only to exposing the oddities of colonialism but to reveal and discuss what independent nations especially the African and Caribbean people make of themselves even after the demise of colonialism.

Consequently, Postcolonial subject, as a concept, suggests resistance to “colonial” and a strong quest for renaissance and empowerment the gender in question notwithstanding. The recent transformative positions and its establishments, has transformed and overthrown formal ties to their colonial rulers.

In the general introduction, *The Post-colonial Studies Reader* edited by (Ashcroft et al, 2014) argues that ‘postcolonial studies are based in the ‘historical fact’ of European colonialism, and diverse material effects to which this phenomenon gave rise’ (2). To them however, the term ‘postcolonial’ does not just involve the resonance with all the ambiguities and complexities of the many divergent cultural experiences it implies and its study of all aspects of the colonial process from the advent of colonialism, it actually goes beyond this to study the aftermath of foreign invasion and the neo-colonial shackles in which these postcolonial nations still find themselves. To them:

All postcolonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination, and independence has not solved this problem. The development of new elites within independent societies, often buttressed by neo-colonial institutions; the development of internal divisions based on racial, linguistic or religious discriminations; the continuing unequal treatment of indigenous peoples in settler/ invader societies ---all these testify to the fact that postcolonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction. Postcolonial theory involves discussion about experience of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being.(2)

Interesting to say, they assert that postcolonial critics and theorists should consider the full applications of restricting the meaning of the term to ‘after-colonialism’ or after- independence. For (Homi K. Bhabha,1990), ‘postcolonialism is a theory that rethinks, rediscovers, and refutes all the assumptions of the imperialist colonizers and the domineering European authorities.

It is therefore in the perception of Bhabha’s assertion that a writer like Ama Ata Aidoo and Jamaica Kincaid describe the efforts of the subjugated and dispossessed African women at re-asserting their authorities in their societies. Their works investigate the relationships between the worldview of the colonial operators and those at the receiving end (the colonized). The characters created in her texts are employed in the core representation of the relationship that exists between the dominating patriarchy and the dominated matriarchy.

Changes, tells the story of Esi, a self-empowered, strong-willed statistician with a Master’s degree, employed in a lucrative job at the Department of Urban Statistics. She is unhappily married to her husband, Oko, with whom she has a young daughter. Esi and Oko often dispute over their assumed gender roles within the relationship, such as Esi’s refusal to cook for the family or bear any more children. During one argument, Oko rapes his wife in an angry fit. The assault leaves Esi distressed and secluded from friends and family, as marital rape is not a widely believed perception within her culture. Although marital rape does occur, the patriarchal culture does not recognize the act as violent, but rather as a husband’s right. After divorcing Oko, Esi enters a polygamous marriage with a charismatic travel agent, Ali. Ali’s first wife Fusena accepts Esi as second wife, but reveals her jealousy when she learns that Esi holds a university degree and a career: an ambition that Fusena had held prior to marrying Ali. Fusena feels betrayed by Ali in that he had insisted that she abandon her dreams of becoming a teacher to better fulfill her duties as wife at home. Long before Ali abandons Esi completely, leaving Esi unsatisfied in this marriage as well.

When Esi decides to accept Ali's proposal for marriage, she attempts to reclaim her sexuality and rights to her own body. Aidoo presents Esi as a young lady who describes the independence she possesses as she walks naked after lovemaking with Ali, and he in turn expresses a great appreciation for Esi's confidence: "He knew very few women from his part of being even tried to be at ease with their own bodies... Most women behaved as if the world was full of awful things- beginning with their bodies" (Aidoo 75). Ali does not attempt to own Esi's body and even allows her to continue living in her own apartment, thereby standing as juxtaposition to Oko's raping of Esi, which intends to strip Esi of her power and independence. Although Esi is ultimately left feeling unsatisfied in her marriage to Ali, it is apparent that she has a strong sense of renaissance and empowerment that enabled her to resist the patriarchal construct of her society and overcome some of the gendered power restrictions she endures as a contemporary woman in Ghanaian society. Outside of the limits of her monogamous marriage, Esi is able to achieve some flexibility in her role as a woman, but continues to feel dissatisfied despite this newfound freedom and renaissance. Even in the polygamous marriage, Esi is expected to perform as a wife by cooking and entertaining her husband. Despite the slight differences in her identity and role as a wife, Esi remains dissatisfied due to the rigid expectations of a second wife. In this way, it appears significant that Esi has merely exchanged one marital power structure for another, thus becoming just as disempowered by established cultural and religious institutions as before. As Connell states in her work, *Gender and Power*, "We cannot understand the place of gender in social process by drawing a line around a set of 'gender institutions.' Gender relations are present in *all* types of institutions".(120). In other words, formal power structures within a patriarchal system, including various forms of marriage, merely replicate the subjugation enforced by the larger society. Aidoo began writing *Changes* as a fictional representation of lovers in Accra society, she ultimately constructed a cultural artifact that contributes to both the urban and local conversations of gender roles and body politics, giving testament to the renaissance and empowerment of transformative influence of postcolonial feminist literature.

In essence, Kincaid's *Annie John*, depicts the politics of renaissance and empowerment knitted into the expedition for selfhood, that is, the de-colonization of her subject; her novels support a possible understanding of her "self-governance" as a political activity. Kincaid in her writing moves away from the field of the so-called First and Third Worlds as always divided in the same way around the poles of the colonizer and the colonized. She emphatically points out in an interview: "as I go on writing, I feel less and less interested in the approval of the First World, and I never had the approval of the world I came from, so now I don't know where I am. I've exiled myself yet again". (506) Through the manifestation of "subjectivity" in Kincaid's writing, rising from the combative site of ideologically reconstituted identities Kincaid presents a new active image of the self. For through Kincaid's female protagonists' journeys in the "in-between' spaces" this indicates that her works are the make-up of the historical setting of the (post-)colonial West Indies where she attempts to define her fictional alter egos against dominant ideological frameworks and institutional practices. This is because, according to Homi Bhabha, the "in-between' spaces" provides border people with "the terrain for elaborating strategies of self-formation— singular or communal— that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and consideration, in an attempt to defining the society". (2) Thus, in Kincaid's fiction, the import of the female protagonists' journeys is never the end point of her destination but the point of departure of her identities- in-process, the on-going contestation of her identities over race, gender, class and territorial nationality in its societal contexts. This critical depiction justifies the need of incorporation of the black women renaissance and empowerment in Kincaid's *Annie John*.

In *Annie John*, Kincaid dramatizes a young Caribbean protagonist's obsessive love-hate relationship with her devouring mother. In this Kincaid's work, the mother embodies the ambivalence of colonial female 'self' because, for her daughter, she is at once a figure of oppression and a potential vehicle for renaissance and liberation. *Annie John* is a coming of age tale that follows Annie's growth into adulthood, beginning when she is young and ending as she prepares to leave her motherland for England at the age of seventeen. Kincaid's

protagonist, as a young woman, forces the Bildungsroman to acknowledge its inherent gender bias and creates a narrative strategy through which Kincaid draws thematic parallels between Annie John and Antigua's struggles for renaissance and independence. Although it was well received among critics, Annie John was often acknowledged as a simple text exclusively exploring the mother-daughter matrix. While Kincaid's interest in the mother-daughter dyad of dependence seems incompatible with the traditional Bildungsroman hero of isolation and self-sufficiency, the two narrative strategies combine to form a novelistic version of a contemporary female Bildungsroman, one where a young female storyteller can narrate her attempts at renaissance and selfhood while trapped in an intersecting system of oppression.

Understanding Black Feminist Empowerment in Postcolonial Context: A Theoretical Approach

A postcolonial feminist theoretical approach to Black feminist empowerment involves scrutinizing the power dynamics, inequalities, and historical trajectories that shape women's experiences within these cultural frameworks. It entails examining the connections of gender, race, class, and culture, emphasizing the agency, resilience, and contributions of Black women throughout history. Postcolonial feminist theory is primarily concerned with the representation of women in once colonized countries and in Western locations. It concentrates on construction of gender difference in colonial and anti-colonial discourses, representation of women in anti-colonial and postcolonial discourses with particular reference to the work of women writers. The postcolonial feminist critics raise a number of conceptual, methodological and political problems involved in the study of representation of gender.

Revolutionizing narratives for black feminist empowerment is a prevalent issue in the literature of the postcolonial and culturally dispossessed people of the Africa and African- America (Caribbean) women. Literary artists like Ama Ata Aidoo and Jamaica Kincaid are profusely obsessed with the despicable plight of the culturally misplaced and dispossessed black women and this obsession is conspicuously injected into their works. In his treatise (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1963), the academic juggernaut, Frantz Fanon, asserts that the anticolonial struggle does not end with the exit of the oppressor from the occupied territory. He maintains that in order for a true decolonisation to take effect, the formerly colonised must 'unlearn' the ideologies and myths generated by the coloniser through hegemonic and epistemic violence. (33) He declares that the colonised subject must 'ensure that all the untruths planted within him by the oppressor are eliminated' (48). Decolonisation thus requires a violent purging of colonial ideas from the mind and the imagination of the colonised. Fanon locates the possibility for a new subjectivity in this form of counter-violence, suggesting that violence does not merely entail exiling the colonial master, but also ensuring agency and self-determination. It is only after the colonial master's implanted worldview has been completely effaced that a new self can emerge for the colonised. Therefore, Fanon insists, 'total liberation' from internalised colonialism 'involves every facet of the personality'. (49) This notion extends to literary praxis, as his fellow Afro-Caribbean writers Jamaica Kincaid, George Lamming, and many others. Postcolonial literature embraces the colonized intending to commune with them. It aims at entering their inner sanctum and bringing into being their cries of loss and their proclamations of birth. It is not a literature to show the colonized as the victims, but it shows their resuscitated sense of belonging. Through the postcolonial feminist discourse colonial violence is deciphered as including as 'epistemic' aspect, which is an attack on the culture, ideas and value systems of the culturally dispossessed people. Homi K. Bhabha's work on the ambivalence of colonial discourses explores the relationship between a 'colonizing' subject and a 'colonized' object without reference to how the specifics of gender might complicate his model.

Certainly, Postcolonial feminist theory examines the connections with gender, postcolonialism, and cultural identity. Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* delve into such themes, exploring the

complex experiences of women within postcolonial contexts. Aidoo's *Changes* portrays the challenges faced by women in Ghana as they navigate traditional societal expectations versus modern influences. The protagonist, Esi, grapples with societal norms and expectations, highlighting the tension between tradition and modernity, particularly, as concerns women's roles and intervention on a altering society. Aidoo critically examines the influence of colonialism on Ghanaian society, especially on women, shedding light on issues of cultural identity, patriarchy, and the scuffle for independence.

On the other hand, Kincaid's *Annie John* explores the coming-of-age journey of a young girl in Antigua addressing themes of colonialism, identity, and the complexities of growing up as a girl in a postcolonial society. Kincaid's narrative navigates the protagonist's journey to self-discovery while examining the influence of colonialism on personal and primordial identity. Through Annie's experiences, Kincaid delves into themes of autonomy, colonial legacy, and the constraints placed on women within patriarchal structures. In a Postcolonial Feminist analysis of these works, one might explore how gender roles intersect with postcolonial influences, examining how women navigate their identities within patriarchal structures influenced by colonial legacies. The texts highlight the scuffle for autonomy, agency, and the intricacies of cultural identity formation for women in postcolonial societies, offering rich ground for a detailed theoretical study within the framework of Postcolonial Feminist theory.

Undeniably, the findings of postcolonial feminist theory formed an important framing and structural apparatus that illuminated the inner life of Aidoo and Kincaid's young protagonist. This being the case, after the initial attempts to bring postcolonial feminist theory to bear on Aidoo and Kincaid, their work found itself under the nationalist critical trend and its preoccupation with the search for national and cultural identity and with the basis of national tradition that was supposed to offset imperialism. Nationalistic and cultural critics enquired in the strategic ways Kincaid has secured the ingenious re-workings of mother/daughter tensions within the culture of her homeland. Their reading concentrated on the cognitive growth of the girl-child or the acquisition of suitable gender roles, as on how Kincaid imaginatively combined the subject matter of the daughter's confrontation to the mother with the theme of her resistance to the colonial culture.

Marital Rape: a Postcolonial Renaissance of the Female Body in Aidoo's *Changes*

The subject matter of marital rape is a critical element in exploring the postcolonial renaissance of the female body. The novel delves into the life of Esi, a Ghanaian woman navigating the complexities of marriage, societal expectations, and her aspirations. Marital rape, depicted in the novel, is presented as a lens through which Aidoo exposes the power dynamics entrenched within patriarchal structures. Esi's experience reflects the struggle of many women who face sexual violence within marriage, often overlooked or excused by societal norms. The novel being a postcolonial feminist novel adds depth to this exploration, as it intertwines with the legacy of colonialism, traditional values, and shifting societal norms. Aidoo portrays a conflict between traditional expectations of a wife's subservience and the evolving desires for autonomy and agency among women.

The depiction of marital rape in *Changes* underscores the necessity for a reevaluation of cultural norms and traditions that perpetuate gender-based violence. Aidoo's narrative offers a platform to challenge and question these norms, advocating for the acknowledgement of women's rights and bodily autonomy within a postcolonial framework. Through Esi's journey and the subject matter of marital rape, Aidoo prompts a renaissance—a rebirth or reawakening—of the female body, reclaiming autonomy, dignity, and respect for women within a changing postcolonial society.

The expedition for female body and renaissance are prevalent issues in the literature of the postcolonial and culturally dispossessed people of African and African-American (Caribbean) people. A literary artist like Ama

Ata Aidoo is profusely preoccupied with the despicable predicament of the culturally misplaced and dispossessed Ghanaian people and this obsession is conspicuously injected into her work, *Changes*.

The female body as a subject of research fundamentally orbits around the inspection of human beings as characters with diverse and individual personality traits. Observing that there is an existence of temperament and instances of idiosyncratic traits observed amongst people of the same community or society. The researcher sees the nature and scope of “the female body” as an outlining factor in human existence as it suggestively a central point in the study and analysis of global inclinations and creeds. Probing into the nature and scope of female body as a distinct factor in human development and existence is conspicuously a focal point in the study and interpretation of global trends and tenets. The researcher, therefore, applies principles of black women renaissance and empowerment that seek to overcome the patriarchal paradigm and regard the two existential components of mind and body as indivisible.

The protagonist character (Esi) in the novel is not only oppressed by the patriarchal or postcolonial societies in which they live, but they are also subjugated physically by other gendered and racialized bodies. Instances of rape, imprisonment, disease, and violence mark the style the body becomes as much a victim to internalized cultural norms as the mind. Aidoo explains that she seeks to capture these social dynamics of Accra society in writing *Changes*; The different voices in the novel represent different sorts of renaissance, empowerment and possibilities for different women in the African and African-American society, including the diaspora society. The situation is volatile and at root, the researcher sees the challenges women encounter in a course of empowerment in the recent times as a hydra-headed canker-worm in contemporary male-chauvinistic society that needs to be reversed with women renaissance and empowerment.

From the beginning of *Changes*, Aidoo brings the matter of embodied patriarchy to the forefront of the novel, a subject matter that is apparent throughout the story’s entirety. Within the first pages of the novel, the author constructs this vivid scene of marital rape for readers:

Oko flung the bed cloth away from him, sat up, pulled her down, and moved on her. Esi started to protest. But he went on doing what he had determined to do all morning. He squeezed her breast repeatedly, thrust his tongue into her mouth, forced her unwilling legs apart, entered her, plunging in and out of her, thrashing to the left, to the right, pounding and just pounding away. Then it was all over. Breathing like a marathon runner at the end of a particularly grueling race, he got off her, and fell heavily back on his side of the bed (*Changes*, p. 9).

The disturbing scene exemplifies the trauma of embodied patriarchy in the novel is not just a fictional event, but also as a reflection of real cultural issues. Oko’s act of rape was performed out of the desire to reestablish himself as the dominant, male figure in his marriage. He perceives Esi’s educational and professional success as a threat to his masculinity, and in response, turns to sexual violence to reassert himself as a male. Ironically, these are also the same traits for which he claims to love her. The position that Esi takes as a fulfilled career woman and breadwinner can be categorized as Western and is thereby at odds with the traditional gender and social structures that is valued by many in post-colonial Accra society.

It is clear from this reflection that Esi acknowledges that her African culture does not admit the concept of marital rape and regards it a chronic social construct established by the patriarchal society. The disdain for the issue of marital rape is not confined to the mere admonishment from her educated colleagues rather, the concept is completely absent from the characters’ Ghanaian language, Akan. Esi is asked, “How would you describe ‘marital rape’ in Akan?” (*Changes*, p.12)

Though Esi is chastised for her **otherness**, it is conspicuously commendable that her resisting and unyielding action to the patriarchal culture, did pave way for the establishment of the postcolonial renaissance phrase **marital rape**. For Esi, to the disdain of many, chooses to desert her husband, in a bid to reclaim independence

and fulfillment of her own body. Her actions are emblematic of the greater renaissance and post-colonial society in its defiance of colonial hegemony, reclaiming its inherent rights to traditional cultural. Unlike those who criticize her for divorcing her husband, Esi finds the source of her oppression in her husband, not in her reception of Western values. Ultimately, Esi is liberating herself from social restrictions and reclaiming her own body and identity as a black woman of renaissance and empowerment.

The Voyage for Separation and the Establishment of Renaissance in Kincaid's *Annie John*

Kincaid's *Annie John* is a poignant narrative that delves into the journey of self-discovery, exploring the subject matter of separation, identity formation, and the nuances of the Renaissance period in the life of the protagonist, Annie. Annie's voyage for separation unfolds through her growth from a child deeply attached to her mother and her island home to an independent young woman forging her identity. The novel beautifully captures the complexities of this transformation, examining Annie's evolving relationship with her family, her cultural heritage, and her personal aspirations.

The formation of the Renaissance in Kincaid's work reflects Annie's emerging to new ideas, perspectives, and experiences beyond the limitations of her childhood. This period of renaissance and enlightenment parallels Annie's own intellectual and emotional awakening as she navigates the complexities of adolescence and embraces a broader worldview. In the novel, Kincaid intricately weaves through the central ideas of colonialism, cultural identity, and the scuffle for autonomy. Annie's departure from her homeland, her encounters with different cultures, and her quest for individuality all suggest the overarching theme of separation and the development of a renaissance within her. The novel's exploration of separation and the development of a renaissance in Annie's life mirrors the broader historical and cultural shifts occurring during the Renaissance period. Annie's personal journey reflects the universal human experience of moving away from the familiar, embracing change, and ultimately discovering one's true self amidst a backdrop of societal and cultural shifts. Kincaid's portrayal of Annie's voyage for separation and the formation of her renaissance resonates deeply, inviting readers to contemplate their own journeys of self-discovery, independence, and the independent and empowerment position of embracing change is worth having for the novel.

In *Annie John*, Kincaid dramatizes a young Caribbean protagonist's obsessive love-hate affiliation with her devouring mother. In this Kincaid's work, the mother embodies the contradiction of colonial female 'self' because, for her daughter, she is at once a symbol of oppression and a potential vehicle for a postcolonial subject of renaissance. Kincaid's protagonist, a young woman Annie John, forces the Bildungsroman to acknowledge its inherent gender bias and creates a narrative strategy through which Kincaid draws thematic parallels between Annie John and Antigua's struggles for separation and independence.

In Caribbean women's literature, when the biological mother, nearly crazed with her yearning to control, manipulate, and dominate, she fails her daughter, the girl requires a magical other-mother who can help her embark on a voyage of separation and a formation of renaissance for an enabling establishment of a new selfhood. In the novel, Kincaid depicts that as new medicines from an English physician fail to revive Annie from her prolonged illness, her mother sends for Ma Chess, a knowledgeable Obeah woman whose powers derive from her acquaintance with the pre-colonial past, one where the influence of the colonizer was rejected and despised. While Annie's attempts at womanhood through the mimicking of her mother focus solely on heterosexuality and are mediated by the colonizing forces that have repressed Annie's mother's sense of her true self, Annie's affiliation with her other-mother remains unaffected by issues of sexuality and imperial intrusions. With the acquaintance and belief in African traditions, Ma Chess rejects the British traditions that

have informed Annie's mature identity: her school lessons, her mother's strict moral code of behaviour, her isolation from certain girls, her style of dress, and her language. Ma Chess feeds and bathes Annie, comforts her in warm and inviting silence, and sleeps with her during Annie's long periods of delirium. Because of Ma Chess's care, Annie begins to depend on her as fetus depends on her mother:

Soon I began to count on her smells and the sound her breath made as it went in and out of her body. Sometimes at night, when I would feel that I was all locked up in the warm falling soot and could not find my way out, Ma Chess would come into my bed with me and stay until I was myself--whatever that had come to be by then--again. I would lie on my side, curled up like a little comma, and Ma Chess would lie next to me, curled up like a bigger comma, into which I fit. (*Annie John*, p.125-126)

The fetus-like comma is symptomatic of Annie's fetal position with Ma Chess, who, as the bigger comma, becomes Annie's other-mother. On the verge of death, she is brought back from the land of the dead by her other-mother and leaves the influence of her mother, who can only lay the dead to rest. As imperceptibly, as Ma Chess arrives at Annie's bedside, she disappears at the signs of Annie's recovery of herself. It is clear, however, that Annie's recovery is not one that will stabilize her identity within the tainted Antiguan culture, rather, it helps her understand more clearly that gender divisions and colonial impositions could not permit her to attain self-affirmation on the island. Thus, we read:

I was feeling how much I never wanted to see a boy climb a coconut tree again, how much I never wanted to see the sun shine day in, day out again, how much never wanted to see my mother bent over a pot cooking me something that she felt would do me good when I ate it, how much I never wanted to feel her long, bony fingers against my cheek again, how much I never wanted to hear her voice in my ear again, how much I longed to be in a place where nobody knew a thing about me and liked me for just that reason, how much the whole world into which I was born had become an unbearable burden and I wished I could reduce it to some small thing that I could hold underwater until it died. (*Annie John*, p.127-128)

Annie John's self-acting solution is a desire for transition from the physical, maternal, and sociopolitical world she has grown up in is alluringly expedient here. Annie John's desire is to relieve herself of the "unbearable" burden of her life.

Conclusion

We have established in this research an existence if not an establishment of colour (black) women renaissance empowerment in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* and Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John*. Seeking to institute a distinct self-oriented art, create a postcolonial feminist tradition of aesthetic expression and novels (art) relevant to the prevailing social-political realities of our day, which have an indelible composition. Challenges and changes, explore issues surrounding a discourse on black women renaissance and the struggle of African and African-American women for self-acting ego and self-liberation.

Aidoo and Kincaid are one among the renowned African and Caribbean women authors who explore the female- body and girl-child's social locations through the overlapping lens of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. In their works, it is conspicuous that the dispossessed and displaced becomes the symbolic object of struggle between racial ambiguity, gender stratification, and class differences. Aidoo's *Changes* demonstrates the perception through which the female body becomes an inscribed surface of patriarchal values. Aidoo creates and writes characters that are victimized and complicit in a patriarchal system. By portraying how these characters are not only psychologically oppressed, but also physically inscribed by

male-biased systems, Aidoo draws an attention to the predicament of the female existence that is largely ignored by feminism.

Kincaid's *Annie John* for instance, centres on the mother-daughter matrix as a figurative depiction of the colonized West Indian motherland. The novel illustrates Annie's tumultuous journey to maturity, the roles British colonialism plays in her psychological development, and the numerous approaches of resistance she employs in her exploration for separation and formation of renaissance.

In this study we have attempted to uncover and develop the theory inculcated by Aidoo and Kincaid's ongoing narrative. We have argued that their fiction is strongly feminist and anti-hegemonic, that their works constitute a linear progression towards the principles of black women renaissance and empowerment in a post-colonial geography, and that the articulation of a decolonized female subjectivity is achieved through a policies of confrontation both at a physical and a metaphysical level. Through parallel formulations of marriage, motherhood, and colonialism, where the conflict between an overbearing wife, mother and her self-assertive wife and daughter may be read as a larger metaphor for the conflict between the motherland and the colony. Through memory, historical revision, and a repositioning of the outsider as a privileged cultural subject of the borderland as a creative site, Aidoo and Jamaica Kincaid succeed in building up a discourse of opposition and counter knowledge. Kincaid in one of her interviews said: "I suspect that if I wasn't writing, being the person I am who has become politically conscious, then I would be throwing bombs. If I didn't have the pen, I would certainly be someone who would take up the sword". (26) These are, without doubt, a work of revolution and empowerment.

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