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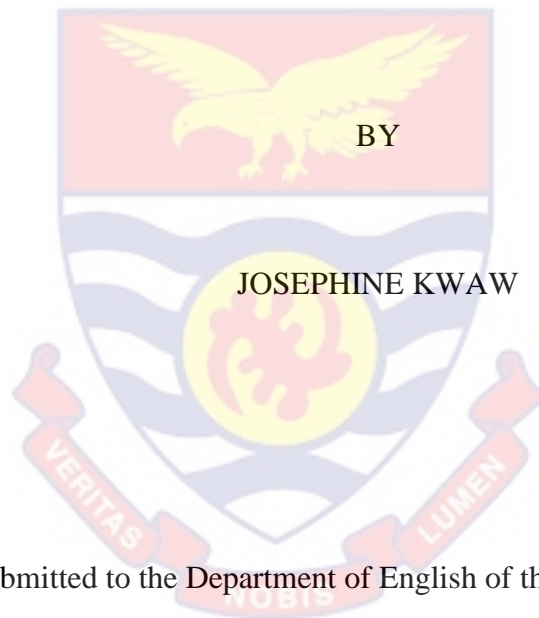
FOREGROUNDING THE OLD WOMAN FIGURE: AN ANALYSIS OF
SELECTED TEXTS OF AMA ATA AIDOO



2025

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SELECTED TEXTS OF AMA ATA AIDOO



Thesis submitted to the Department of English of the Faculty of Arts, College
of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for award of Master of Philosophy degree in
Literature

APRIL 2025

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: Date:

Candidate's Name: Josephine Kwaw

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature: Date:

Name: Dr. Samuel Kwesi Nkansah

ABSTRACT

This textual research is premised on the fact that research on Aidoo's works in recent years has not devoted much attention to the old woman figure who has been repeatedly represented in most of her works across the three genres of literature. The study sets out to examine Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, *Anowa*, *Changes*, *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories*, and "Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks", which are purposively sampled to explore how Nana is foregrounded and the roles assigned her to perform in them. The study is underpinned by ethnopoetics. The analysis reveals that Aidoo's representation of the old woman figure perfectly situates her in an ethnopoetic context to perform the archetypal roles as the repository of wisdom, an omniscient narrator, a historian, the custodian of customs and traditions, and an agent of change. Another outcome of the study is that the old woman is foregrounded through imagery, repetition, suspense, her language, her name, and how she is introduced into the various texts. This research would be one of the references for students interested in using ethnopoetics and foregrounding to explore the old woman figure in other literary genres. In addition, the study is a contribution to the theory by demonstrating the extent to which ethnopoetics is useful to the analysis of Ghanaian texts. It again shows how foregrounding is used as a style to project the old woman figure in the selected texts.

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All my family and my friends, who endured my obsession and solitude with my thesis with patience and understanding, I am appreciative. Thank you for being there for me.

DEDICATION

To Dr. Samuel Kwesi Nkansah of the Department of English, University of
Cape Coast

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Literature grows out of life and social experiences. It is the foundation of life and a gateway to teach the reader about life experiences, a product of art, and a window to an ideology (Ahmed, 2017). According to Ahmed, the primary use of literature in ancient settings was to pass down customs, traditions, beliefs, and feelings to the next generations. Over the years, literature has taken on a comprehensive role of mirroring society for humans to study themselves and understand the underlying truths common to mankind. Irrespective of the quantum of the message concealed in any literary piece, the audience can better decipher it through the characters. Thus, in their quest to produce texts to reflect the reality of life, literary artists create different kinds of characters, which underline the uniqueness of their texts. To this end, an attempt to give an interpretation of a text can be made by doing a careful analysis of the characters.

This is not farfetched from the point of view held by Nurdayanti, Natsir, and Lubis (2020), who indicate that whenever audiences come into contact with literary genres of any form, the dominant element they mostly explore is characters. Vogler (2007, p. 30) also opines, "A character gives the audience a window into the story". This indicates that she recognizes the significance of characters in literary works. The readers' ability to understand the complexity of a plot and the content of a text largely depends on how well the characters are constructed. For this reason, Johnson (cited in Haglund, 2012) indicates that characters should be developed to fulfill high standards to convince the audience of what is presented since the most exciting story would not work if the

characters are shallow and dull. McGovern (2004) also emphasizes that when characterization is well constructed, it makes characters believable, vivid, and alive. These diverse viewpoints show that characters and character development are critical to the foundation of every work.

Moreover, literary texts contain different types of characters. One of them is the archetypal character (Saputro, 2018). The most frequently used ones include: hero, mentor (old man or woman), guardian, herald, shadow, ally, trickster (Guerin et al., 2005; Vogler, 2007), and children (Ibanga, 2022). The concentration of this study is on the old woman archetypal character.

The old woman archetype is a universal figure (Guerin et al., 2005; López-Ramírez, 2020) who is highly relevant for social and scientific examination. She also aids in understanding the changing and diverse phenomena of grandparenting (Vidovićová & Galčanová, 2018). She manifests in various genres of literature, and Akan's literary works are not dissimilar. Commenting on Ghanaian myths, Amenga-Etego (2015) maintains that myths occupy a much holier place and are part of the symbolic representation of old women in the society. This is because myths are closely bound to culture, place, and time. Again, the common experiences of the symbolic figures used in them often help sustain the continuous interest of the people, as seen in the Akan myth below:

An old woman, while making her fufu outside her hut, keeps on hitting Nyame with her pestle. This hurts Him, as she persists. He is forced to go higher out of her reach. Besides, the smoke from the cooking gets into His eyes, so he has to go farther away (Nkansah, 2011:376).

This myth is a narrative of the culture of Akans in that the old woman is used to project one of their indispensable foods: fufu. It also reveals one of the gender roles of women: cooking. That is why, though she is old, the old woman constantly engages in this physically exhausting task with her fragile hands. It could also mean that she does that because the young people are unwilling to help her. This portrays the attitude of the society towards the old woman. Society does not appreciate her significance, hence, it disrespects her. She, therefore, uses her wisdom to widen the gap between the Creator and His creation by constantly hitting Nyame with her pestle. This shows what the society is likely to lose when she is neglected completely. The myth further reveals Nyame's effort to draw closer to mankind. However, the environmental pollution forces Him to withdraw from them.

Folktales also serve as a means for the manifestation of the old woman figure (Shimpock, 2015) as represented in this example:

A thief once stole a church bell, which was later found by some monkeys. They would ring it repeatedly. The people in the village thought it was a demon, so they begged the chief to drive it away. An old woman in the village knew the secret. She, therefore, went to the chief and promised to drive the demon away with her magic. The old woman took some bananas and went to the hills, where the monkeys were located. There, she found them playing with the bell. She threw the bananas to them. They dropped the bell and ran to eat the bananas. The old woman picked up the bell and returned to the village. The people did not hear the sound of

the bell again. “Thank you for driving away the demon,” the chief said. She received a big pot of gold from the chief, and she was happy (McBagonluri, McBagonluri & Aryee, 2005, p. 19).

The old woman in this context is represented as an omniscient figure and a custodian of wisdom that supersedes others. She can use her wisdom to bring an eternal peace into the society. It is worth noting that unlike the old woman in the mythological narrative who is represented at a point in time as a troublemaker who uses her knowledge to bring separation between God and mankind, the one in the folktale uses her wisdom to bring peace to the society.

Also, in the social context among the Akans, whenever people meet for discussions and they find themselves at a crossroads, they indicate that they want to consult “Aberewa” (the imaginary old woman). They believe that she must be the final consultant for a breakthrough (Bonku, Abakah-Yeboah, & Ofose-Marfo, 2016). Aberewa is consulted because her words are sacred. It is, therefore, a taboo to disrespect or disregard them. Thus, failure to go by her word leads to serious repercussions (Chilala, 2014). Undoubtedly, the old woman represented by Nkansah (2011); McBagonluri, McBagonluri, and Aryee (2005); Bonku, Abakah-Yeboah, and Osarfo-Marfo (2016) is a figure who repletes with resources of significant influence in traditional societies, though she has her shortcomings just as other human beings.

In literary writings, the experiences and the representations of old women are the major preoccupations in the works of the early luminary Ghanaian writers: Sutherland’s *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1999), Azasu’s, *The Stool* (2004), and Armah’s *Fragments* (1989) who use them as characters

to highlight different roles they perform. One of the prolific Ghanaian literary writers, apart from the above-listed authors, who has flooded most of her works with assorted representations of the old woman figure is Ama Ata Aidoo.

Christina Ama Ata Aidoo, a Ghanaian dramatist, poet, and novelist, was born in 1945 at Abeamzi Kyiakor in the Central Region of Ghana and grew up in the royal household (George & Scott, 1993). Aidoo attended Wesley Girls High School in Cape Coast, Ghana, where she first decided to be a writer. She continued her education at the University of Ghana, Legon, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Language in 1964. She was then given an appointment at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, as a research fellow for two years (Odamtten, 1994).

In the 1970s, Aidoo accepted a lectureship position at the University of Cape Coast. She was again a visiting professor at the African Studies Department at Brown University. Aidoo also spent part of her time teaching and living in the United States, Britain, Germany, and Zimbabwe. She was later appointed as the Minister of Education in Ghana from 1982 to 1983 (Azodo & Gay, 1999), but she resigned the following year and traveled to Zimbabwe (Fariza, 2015). In 1986, Aidoo delivered the Walter Rodney Visions of Africa lecture. She was a patron of the Etisalat Prize for Literature, created in 2013 as a platform for African writers of debut books of fiction.

Aidoo has written several notable works: *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1956), *Anowa* (1970), *No Sweetness Here* (1970), *Our Sister Killjoy: Reflections from a Black-eyed Squint* (1977), "Someone Talking to Sometime" (1986), *The Eagle and the Chickens* (1986), "Birds and Other Poems" (1987), *Changes: A Love Story* (1991), "An Angry Letter in January and Other Poems"

(1992), *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997), *Diplomatic Pounds and Other Stories* (2012), and “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks” (2017) (Abou-Agag, 2017). Her essays include “To Be an African Woman Writer: An Overview and Detail” and “Literature, Feminism, and the African Woman Today” (Hugon, 2021). She won different prizes: The Commonwealth Writers Prize for best African novel with *Changes: A Love Story* in 1992 and The Nelson Mandela Prize for her collection of poems “Someone Talking to Sometime” (Fariza, 2015).

As indicated by Walunywa (cited in Muneeni, 2014), a good literary work is a fertile ground for continuous analysis, irrespective of how much attention it has attracted since its initial publication. Undoubtedly, since the publication of her first drama, *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, Aidoo’s works have remained the focus of many critics. Focusing on *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, Abdelfadeel (2021) asserts that the text was written eight years after Ghana’s independence. It is consequently used to show how colonial mentality and practices continue to remain deep inside Africans and Ghanaians, even though the continent/country is liberated from colonialization.

In addition, Nnyagu and Lotachukwu (2020) maintain that this text is written to respond to the negative impression about Africa created by some Europeans, such as Joseph Conrad: a primitive and savage continent and a place without any culture and tradition. Thus, it is meant to prove Conrad and his associates wrong by mirroring the good image of the continent, especially Ghana, so that the ill impressions created are corrected.

Gilbert (2013), on his part, indicates that the play reestablishes the link between Africa and the diaspora since it dramatizes the cultural clash between

Western values and native customs. Ennin (2014), on the other hand, asserts that the connection between Africa and the diaspora is significant for the understanding of the importance of memory and remembrance. Abou-Agag (2017) also posits that the text neither offers any form of resistance to the subalterns and the natives nor challenges the superiority of the West. This is because the voice of the natives is so faint that it does not offer them any bright future. The work, according to him, rather traces the steps of the colonizers and nothing more.

About *Anowa*, Dhaliwal (2017) has established that it is also set in post-colonial Ghana, just as the maiden text, to expose the outcome of imperialism, capitalism, and slavery, which are vivid in the lives of Ghanaians. Pujolràs-Noguer (2010) buttresses this claim by indicating that the text has a link with Aidoo's debut text, and this is intentionally done to confront the ghost that haunts Ato Yawson in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. He, therefore, equates the text to a baby slave that has been discarded a long time ago and has come back to disturb the entire nation. From the forgoing discussions so far, it is obvious that the two aforementioned texts share a major common theme: slavery, which is briefly touched on in the maiden text but well- elaborated in *Anowa*.

In the paper *Rethinking the Specter: Ama Ata Aidoo's Anowa* authored by Karavanta (2001), it is revealed that *Anowa* has been neglected by critics, even by those who are interested in black women's writings. Boyce-Davies (1994) points out that this marginalization is influenced by "politics of exclusion" that prevails in the constructed binaries such as masculinity versus femininity. Another reason, according to Wilentz (1992), is the outspoken

nature of Aidoo towards male dominance in African countries, which has earned her a rather antagonistic response from some male critics.

Asiedu (2007) has conducted a study on slavery and folklore in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and *Anowa*. The study reveals that both plays make use of elements of Ghanaian traditional folklore, which Aidoo was introduced to quite early in life by her mother and grandmother. *The Dilemma of a Ghost* has as its central motif of a childhood song about a ghost at Elmina Junction who does not know whether to go to Cape Coast or Elmina- the historic Ghanaian coastal cities that symbolize slave trade. *Anowa* also has its basic source in the folktale of the beautiful young woman who refuses suitors approved by her parents but insolently chooses her husband only to discover that she has made a terrible mistake. These traditional sources, according to Asiedu, are the metaphors through which Aidoo addresses the issue of slavery and its repercussions on Africans.

Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story* has also been subjected to several reviews by critics. Notable among them are Brookman, Gyekye-Ampofo, Gbolo Sanka, and Okyeso Abaka (2019). They maintain that *Changes* dwells on the various turns of situations that suit the modern way of life. They further indicate that the concept "changes" in the title signifies a voice advocating for transformations in the entire society, particularly in the implementing patriarchal ideologies favouring stereotyping roles.

Abdou (2013) similarly talks about the concept of "change". He sees it as a symbol that represents two significant transformations expected to take place: personal and cultural transformations. Whereas personal transformation represents the emancipation of women in the text and the outside world in

general, cultural transformation is associated with the emancipation of the society to freely practice norms and values without any form of restriction. Since Africa, and for that matter Ghana, struggles to break free from colonial rule and oppression, so do women. Abdou further reveals that Aidoo, therefore, does not see the separation between the liberation of African countries from colonial rulers and the liberation of women from traditional patriarchal norms, hence, the two transformations.

Aidoo, therefore, incorporates into the work a representation of women who highlight their place and changing role in post-colonial Africa, specifically Ghana. In an attempt to examine the changing roles of women in the text, Uwakweh (1999) opines that the text is a means to celebrate the modern Ghanaian woman's status as an independent and self-determined entity. He also indicates that even though the changes are bound to happen, Aidoo has taken for granted that marriage is an institution where the emotional, sexual, social, procreative, and reproductive needs of men are satisfied by their wives. According to him, the celebration is void without the fulfillment of the needs of the opposite sex. For Bryce and Dako (2000), the change reflects disillusionment that follows the degeneration of the physical fabric of Ghanaian society and the disappointment in those hopes. According to them, in an attempt to set an African woman free from the norms of the patriarchal settings, Aidoo has ended up stripping the modern concepts of marriage naked and has left the emancipated African woman abandoned and lonely.

Another text to consider is *The Girl Who Can and Other Short Stories*, one of Aidoo's collections of short stories. The short stories are primarily written to be heard. Given this, they are presented as oral performances where

the audience is mostly involved in the narrative process. This makes Aidoo a storyteller (Chetin, 1991). Ekpong (2011) has segmented the stories according to their embedded themes. Some unveil the numerous challenges that the present-day women in Africa face as a result of gender hierarchy. These include *Lice*, *Payments*, *Comparisons*, *Choosing*, and *Newly Opened Doors*. The second category consists of *She-Who-Would-Be-King*, *Heavy Moments*, and *The Girl Who Can*. These texts are about females who can stand on their feet and work harder to overcome the patriarchal ideology meant to limit them.

The next group consists of *Her Hair Politics*, *Some Global News*, and *Male-ing Names in the Sun*, in which the female characters are projected as rivals of men in their fields of endeavor. The women in these texts could excel in the new fields to disabuse the mentality of the general public about the capabilities of women. There is another category made up of *Nowhere Cool*, *Nutty*, and *About the Wedding Feast*. The female characters in them are used as advocates for the need to establish a strong sisterhood among women through the tolerance of one another's culture. Aidoo's presentation of women in *The Girl Who Can and Other Short Stories* is in fulfillment of Ogundipe-Leslie's (1994) requirements for the African female writer: 'as a writer, as a woman and as a Third World person. Kumavie (2011) also maintains that Aidoo uses her works to explore the challenges, hopes, and dreams of African women.

From the reviews, it is obvious that apart from the theme of slavery that is highly reflected in her first two texts: *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and *Anowa*, Aidoo's works also predominantly examine female-dominated issues. That is why she has created enough space for them in almost all her texts to reject the norms of patriarchal ideologies that tend to prevent them from contributing their

quota to the development of their nations. Killam and Rowe (2000) buttress this observation when they intimate that Aidoo's position is because of her endless interest in the feminine cause. Based on her special interest in the affairs of women, Aidoo intentionally creates women as protagonists who are confident and determined to succeed in life in any endeavor. Such exceptional female characters are capable of crossing the rigid patriarchal boundaries and go against the traditional and stereotyped norms established by patriarchal settings (Ekpong, 2011).

In addition, Wilson-Tagoe (2002) opines that her female characters are represented as strong, hardworking, independent, articulate, and smart to deconstruct the stereotypical images of submissive, passive, and battered women. Ennin (2014) adds to the list by stating that such women fashion space for themselves and deal with the dilemma of modernity and tradition. These qualities of Aidoo's women contradict the age-long image that has been created in literary genres produced by male writers such as Chinua Achebe. Esi in *Changes: A Love Story* is a typical example. She boldly divorces Oko, her first husband, and marries Ali. There is also the eponymous character, Anowa, the protagonist of Aidoo's play *Anowa*. She refuses to marry any of the suitors suggested by her parents and the larger society as the custom of the land demands. She finally settles down with Kofi Ako, the man who is disapproved of by her parents because they believe he is lazy and will not make a good husband. We can also talk of Adjoa in *The Girl Who Can and Other Short Stories*. Adjoa can go to school and win the best trophy despite all the discouraging words from her grandmother. There is also Akuba, the protagonist in *Heavy Moments*, who becomes the first female pilot in Africa. Ekpong

believes that Aidoo has given such a projection to these and other female figures because “the improvement of the condition of women’s lives should not be separated from their contribution to nation building through alternative roles other than those of marriage hitherto prescribed by the society” (p. 154).

One cannot deny the fact that apart from the pivotal female characters: Anowa, Esi, Akuba, and Adjoa, among others, who serve as a focal point in highlighting some dominant themes in Aidoo’s text, Aidoo has repeatedly represented an old woman to perform several symbolic roles in most of her texts. The old woman figure deserves attention just as the other female characters, hence, the focus of this study. This study, therefore, attempts to analyze how Aidoo has variously represented Nana in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), *Anowa* (1970), *Changes: A Love Story* (19991), *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997), and “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks” (2017) to find out how Nana’s different representations influence the roles and how she has been foregrounded through the perspectives of ethnopoetics and foregrounding respectively.

Thesis Statement

Characters are entities whose complexity depends on the writer’s creation and what they are made to symbolize (Eyeh, 2002). Commenting on the distinctive elements of Black literature, Morrison (1984) indicates:

There is always an ancestor, which is to say a grandmother. Whether the novel takes place in the city or not, the presence or absence of this figure determines the success or happiness of the character. It was the absence that was threatening. It caused huge destruction and disarray in the work itself. Whether the character

was in Harlem or Aransas, the point was there, this timelessness was there. This person who represented this ancestor... If we don't keep in touch with the ancestor, we are lost. When you kill the ancestor, you kill yourself (pp. 330-131).

It is obvious from Morrison's assertion that ancestors or their representatives are indispensable figures as far as Black literature is concerned, irrespective of where the text is produced. According to Morrison, the absence of an ancestor in a text could have a grave impact on the text and other characters.

Similarly, Osei-Nyame (2020) comments that the early narratives within the tradition of Africa reveal the presence of the ancestors in ways that demonstrate their importance within African society. Kramer (1987) equally emphasizes that writers who represent old women in their works see them as experienced people whose experiences cannot be neglected. They are often constructed to be able to represent the real world as much as possible. One could argue based on Morrison, Kramer, and Osei Nyame's points of view that if a Ghanaian literary writer employs an old woman and assigns her significant roles to perform, it means that such a writer appreciates the valuable status of the old woman.

Ama Ata Aidoo has consistently represented the old woman figure in most of her works: *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, *Anowa* (1970), *Changes: A Love Story* (1991), *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997), and "Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks" (2017). It is my fundamental claim that this figure is a crucial entity for reflection. Despite the increasing interest in the works of Aidoo, an examination of available literature leads to the discovery that most of the studies have been skewed towards analyzing feminist thematic issues: Issa and

Koussouhan (2020); Wilson-Tagoe (2002); Frais (2003); Asare-Kumi (2010); Ekpong (2021); slavery (Asiedu, 2007; Kumavie, 2011; Dione, 2020). Though some studies have been conducted on the old figure in Aidoo's works: Bonku, Abakah-Yeboah, and Ofosu-Marfo (2016) and Osei Nyame (2020), which concentrate on the old woman character in *The Girl Who Can and Other Short Stories* and *The Dilemma of a Ghost* respectively, there has not been a comprehensive study on the old woman where all the three genres of literature are covered and the old woman is considered with an archetypal lens. This leaves a gap in the existing criticism of Aidoo's work. This study sets out to explore, in depth, this seemingly neglected figure to reveal how she is foregrounded and the roles assigned to her in the various texts.

It is worth noting that the present study departs from that of Bonku, Abakah-Yeboah, and Ofosu-Marfo (2016) and Osei Nyame (2020) in terms of theory, scope, and focus. That is to say, whereas Nyame's study is backed by the Marxist theory and Tseney Serequeberhan's argument on European pseudo-humanism to examine the old woman as an ancestral representative, Bonku, Abakah-Yeboah, and Ofosu-Marfo's is anchored on the social representation theory, modernization theory, and the womanism theory to discuss the old woman as a repository of wisdom. This study is based on ethnopoetics to define its cultural boundaries and how the old woman stands out from the other characters. Again, both sets of scholars examine one text of Ama Ata Aidoo in addition to other texts written by other literary writers. This research, on the other hand, concentrates on five texts of Aidoo that cover all three genres of literature. The number of texts involved in this study would lead to a thorough investigation of this figure and also help to generalize the results. Again,

whereas the aforementioned studies situate the old woman within the African context, this study looks at the old woman with an archetypal lens, thus, a character who transcends time and space.

Research Objectives

The prime objective of this research revolves around the use of the old woman archetypal character in the works of Ama Ata Aidoo. The study specifically seeks to;

1. Examine the symbolic roles assigned to the old woman figure in the selected texts of Ama Ata Aidoo.
2. Explore how the old woman figure is foregrounded in the selected texts of Ama Ata Aidoo.

Research Questions

The following research questions give direction to the study:

1. What symbolic roles are assigned to the old woman in the selected texts of Ama Ata Aidoo?
2. How is the old woman figure foregrounded in the selected texts?

Significance of the Study

The study is justified by its significance. First, the study is a contribution to the scholarship on the oeuvres of Ama Ata Aidoo in particular. This is because this study appears to be the only research that has comprehensively explored the old woman as an archetypal figure in the texts selected from the ethnopoetics and foregrounding perspectives. Again, exploring how the old woman is represented in the Ghanaian (Akan) context adds a new dimension to the studies on Aidoo's characters. Analyzing Aidoo's texts that contain the old woman figure allows for more exploration of the relationship between the lived

experience of the old and its perception in the public consciousness. This research is also expected to enrich the knowledge of readers on ethnopoetics, foregrounding, and the old woman figure. Therefore, it would be one of the rich references for students who have an interest in the use of ethnopoetics and foregrounding to explore the old woman figure in other literary genres.

Scope of the Study

This study is an application of one theory namely: ethnopoetics to the study of the Nana/ old woman in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), *Anowa* (1970), *Changes: A Love Story* (1991), *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997) and “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks” (2017). Since the study is situated in the Ghanaian/Akan context, the application of ethnopoetics helps to define the cultural scope within which the old woman is analyzed to reveal the contextual roles assigned to her. Foregrounding is also used in this study as a style to explore how the old woman is projected in the selected texts.

Methodology

This section defines the methodological approach that guides the study. It discusses the research design, sampling and sampling technique, data source, justification of the selected texts, and the analytical procedure.

The present study adopts the qualitative research design. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a phenomenon. The process, according to Creswell, relies on text and image data rather than numerical data whereby the researcher focuses on a single phenomenon to explore in great detail to make meaning of it and also groups the meanings into themes that cut all the data sources. Creswell further asserts that this form of

inquiry supports individual meaning. It is implied from Creswell that qualitative research focuses on meaning-making. This means that in qualitative research, the researcher explores “how people make sense out of their lived experiences, and their structures of the world” (Creswell, 1994, p. 145). Creswell further indicates that the interpretation generated from the data, be it texts or images, cannot be separated from context. This implies that a textual analysis of literary text is context-dependent.

In this study, the qualitative research design is used to explore how meaning is produced in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, *Anowa*, *The Girl Who Can*, *and Other Short Stories*, *Changes: A Love Story*, and “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks”. Again, to explore the old woman figure in these texts and to limit her to the Ghanaian/ Akan context, the qualitative research design is the most appropriate to use since its usage leads to a comprehensive study and analysis of texts before cogent conclusions are drawn.

The application of qualitative research design aids a researcher in engaging in textual analysis (Jackson, 2010) of documents, books, music lyrics, television programs, or other forms of social communication (Ellefsen, 2015) and data generated could be categorized into themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Jackson, 2010; Stemler, 2000) to arrive at a manageable and meaningful set of data. Because of this, after reading the selected texts, the various subtopics in them are discussed based on the research questions that guide this study.

Aidoo’s texts are: 3 short stories: *The Girl Who Can and Other Short Stories* (1997), *No Sweetness Here* (1969), and *Diplomatic Pounds and Other Short Stories* (2012); 2 novels: *Changes: A Love Story* (1991) and *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977); 2 dramas: *Anowa* (1970) and *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965)’4

collections of poems: *Angry Letter in January and Other Poems* (1992), *After the Ceremony* (2017), *Birds and Other Short Poems* (1987), and *Someone Talking to Sometime* (1985). Out of these, I purposively sampled five to constitute the primary data. The texts are *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), *Anowa* (1970), *Changes: A Love Story* (1991), *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997), and “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks” (2017). It must be emphasized that Aidoo’s *The Girl Who Can and Other Short Stories* has fifteen short stories, but three- *The Girl Who Can*, *About the Wedding Feast*, and *Heavy Moment* are considered. These texts are sampled based on the fact that they contain the old woman figure who is the focus of this study. Thus, the old woman who supports an archetypal reading.

One major role of a researcher is to use theories to interpret the data available (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). For this reason, the analysis of the selected texts is also carried out from the perspectives of ethnopoetics. Thus, after reviewing works by earlier ethnopoeticists (Ganyi, 2014; Jose, 2011; Quick, 1999; Tedlock, 1972), it has become clear that one cannot engage in an ethnopoetic analysis without considering the cultural context of the text(s) to discover the aesthetic values. In the same vein, Bonku, Abaka-Yeboah, and Ofosu-Marfo (2016) indicate that old women mostly source their pride and relevance in their cultural setting. Since Aidoo was born and grew within the Akan context, ethnopoetics becomes relevant for this study. I, therefore, situate the old woman in the Ghanaian/Akan context to examine her cultural symbolism. Again, how the old woman has been foregrounded is analyzed based on stylistic elements (Simpson, 2004), the placement of the old woman (Vogler, 2007), the language she uses (Chilala, 2014), and how she is named in

the selected texts. Secondary materials from both manual and digital sources are used to augment the analysis of the primary texts.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is structured into five chapters. Chapter One contains the introduction. This is made up of the background to the study, thesis statement, research objectives, research questions, scope, and significance of the study. The chapter also discusses the methodology and concludes with the organization of the thesis. Chapter Two contains a review of related literature on the topic under investigation. It touches on ethnopoetics, foregrounding, the old woman character, archetype, and the title “Nana” as used in the Akan context. Chapters Three and Four are dedicated to the interpretation and discussion of the selected texts in relation to the research questions that guide the study. Thus, each of the chapters is dedicated to addressing a research question. Chapter Five concludes the study by giving a summary of the work, key findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a general context for the study. First, it has discussed the background of the study. The statement of the thesis, the research objectives, and the research questions that guide that study are also highlighted. The chapter again discussed the significance and the scope of the study. The methodological perspective has also been detailed and concluded with the structure of the thesis. The ensuing chapter reviews related literature on the topic. It specifically contains reviews on ethnopoetics, foregrounding, the old

woman figure, and the title “Nana” as used in the Akan context. The review helps to identify the gap to fill by this study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In the introductory chapter, I discussed the fundamental information necessary for the study. These included background to the study, statement of the thesis, research objectives, and research questions. The chapter also has information on archetypal characters that are mostly employed in literary works, of which the old woman figure is one of them, and the various forms of literary genres the old woman figure manifests. The previous chapter further contains information on Aidoo’s life and studies conducted on some of her works, leading to the gap that this study seeks to fill. I further discussed the significance

and the scope of the study. The methodological perspectives have been detailed. The chapter also contains details on how this thesis is structured.

In this chapter, I review relevant literature on the topic under investigation. The review comprises the theoretical framework: ethnopoetics. It also has information on foregrounding, the old woman figure, and the title “Nana”. The review helps to identify the gap to fill by this study. The next subsection in this chapter is meant for the discussion of the aforementioned theory and relate it to the analytical goals of the present study.

Ethnopoetic Theory

In 1969, Jerome Rothenberg coined the term “ethnopoetics” (Quick, 1999; Jose, 2011; Moore, 2013) when he realized that there was a need to create a better means that could help translate the oral narratives of the natives in America without losing the power and the beauty of such oral performances. Jerome Rothenberg, Dell Hymes, and Dennis Tedlock are the main proponents of ethnopoetics. Along with these, the contributions of other scholars like Robert Duncan, George Quasha, Gary Snyder, David Antin, Victor Turner, and Catherine S. Quick are worth mentioning. Ethnopoetics is a theory that has its main application in folklore, translation, and literature (Jose, 2011). Quick (1999) avers that ethnopoetic discourse has its relevance in the cultural context of its original language. Quick indicates:

Proponents of ethnopoetics analyze texts in their original language and context to discover how individual elements function within a cultural performance of that text...In other words, ethnopoetics must concern itself not only with the text and the words of the poem, but with the performance of the

poem within its situational context. These performance elements are central to understanding not only the role of poetry in the society that created it, but also the aesthetic value of the poem. Of course, the central idea of ethnopoeitic analysis is that every culture has its poetics and can be described... The point is that there are differences; one culture's poetry has different structural and aesthetic standards than another. Ethnopoetics encourages recognition and appreciation of such differences...It is the job of the ethnopoeiticist to discover within the texts the specific standards for that particular culture (pp. 95-98).

Quick further indicates that understanding literary works requires readers to place them in their appropriate contexts and appreciate the cultural elements that make them outstanding. Otherwise, the interpretation of the work will be skewed westward. Here, the work of an ethnopoeiticist is to discover within the texts the specific standards for that particular culture and apply them.

Quick's viewpoint is reiterated by Jose (2011) and Ganyi (2014). They intimate that ethnopoeitic scholars emphasize ethnography, cultural background, and linguistic knowledge of the societies wherein they work and study. By so doing, researchers question and re-examine the traditional way of looking at kinds of literature, the specific cultural context in which the text is situated, and the role of the individual and the community in the given context. Ganyi (2014) again opines that ethnopoetics aids the penetration of the inner complexities of the narrator's manipulation of extra-linguistic properties in performance contexts to explicate the meaning and the relevance of narratives to their cultural context.

From the foregoing perspectives on ethnopoetics, it is clear that in an ethnopoetic study like this, the originality of a language and the specific cultural context within which a text is situated are pivotal elements that must be carefully considered in trying to bring out the beauty and meanings that are embedded in the text. This is significant since each culture is unique in various ways. It is further deduced that the ethnopoetic theory is a technique that gives credit to divergent cultures and affords a researcher a deeper insight into different kinds or genres.

As this study is situated in the Akan context, this theory is the basis for the cultural interpretation and analysis of the roles Aidoo assigns the old woman to play in the texts: *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), *Anowa* (1970), *Changes* (1991), *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997), and “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks” (2017). This would help in setting a cultural scope within which the old woman is analyzed. Since its inception, ethnopoetics has been used by scholars from all over the world who conduct research in oral cultural tradition (Qin & Seah, 2021). A few of such studies have been considered in the ensuing section.

Empirical Review on Ethnopoetics

Tedlock (1972) applies ethnopoetic theory to Zuni performances of the poetry of New Mexico and stories of the Chimiky’ana’kowa to produce a printed version of the oral narratives that could be consulted to enact another oral performance of equal quality. He discovers that when narratives are told in a spiritual context, they contain chanted lines and esoteric language. He further reveals that the manipulation of the voice quality in the performance depends on the situation and not the characters performing.

In addition, Basumatary and Khiangte (2020) in India analyze the ethnopoetic features Leslie Marmon Silko incorporates in her poem “Storyteller” (1981) to trace how the text can be understood in the right context because they believe Leslie borrows heavily from her native Laguna Pueblo culture. The analysis reveals that the poetry is a reflection of the history, philosophy, and culture of the Laguna Pueblo people. The analysis further shows that the poem is adorned with several elements of stylistic characteristics: images, symbols, and repetition. Each has its symbolic significance in bringing out the literariness of the text. The study again affirms the assertion that ethnopoetics acknowledges the existence of different aesthetic standards across cultures and that the typical Western assumptions used in analyzing texts need to be avoided to arrive at a faithful interpretation of ethnic minority writings.

In Nigeria, Onu (2018) employs ethnopoetics to analyze the Igbo oral funeral poetry and uses Elugwu Ezike as the basis for his analysis. The researcher looks specifically at the form and the structure of Elugwu Ezike dirges and the impact of religion and Western lifestyle on the dirges. By so doing, the author establishes the fact that the funeral poetry is deeply rooted in myths and the beliefs of the people that form the basic philosophical foundation of the Elugwu Ezike cultural fabric, hence, it is context-specific. He also reveals that the dirge emphasizes African virtues: bravery, hard work, respect, collective responsibility, communal ties, as well as belief in ancestors and life after death. Again, kingship terms, epithets, and terms of endearment that are typical to the area are used. Poetic elements: imagery, repetitions, hyperbole, personification, symbolism, and metaphors are embedded in the text to express deep feelings about their loss and to enhance the beauty of the genre. He again

notes that the traditional burial rites and their accompanying funeral dirges have witnessed changes due to religious and socio-economic developments culminating in the imminent loss of such a rich culture of Elugwu Ezike.

In Kenya, Keitany (2008) examines the Tugen wedding poetry to unravel its poetic features, the style of performance, and the meaning of the poem. Keitany reveals that the wedding song is an integral part of the Tugen society, and in it are the cultural life and institution, values, beliefs, attitudes, hopes, and fears of the Tugens. It is further shown in the study that the song possesses imagery, humour, and mnemonic effects. In terms of meaning, the songs are used to educate the bride and the groom on peace and the community on how to promote development and social stability. The study also shows that this text acts as a tool to maintain culture and to entertain the public.

In *Ethnopoetic Analysis of the Dagbamba Song Riddles* in Ghana, Rashid (2020) discusses the song “Tuya duyibu” among the Dagbamba in the Northern part of Ghana. He claims that it is impossible to compose and perform such a text without employing any literary device in its right dosage, hence, the use of several stylistic devices. Notable among them is the repetition of indigenous words to make the idea clearer. Alliteration is also used to create rhythmic patterns in the text. The analysis further shows that some of the indigenous words create sexual imagery. Euphemism is employed to avoid profanity. According to Rashid, these devices are meant to achieve a sense of fullness and to impress the audience with an exhaustive wisdom of the performer. Within the riddles are cultural values: intelligence, unity in marriage, and patience; traditional practices: proverbs, taboo, and libation. These are used in the texts to make the Dagbamba aware of themselves. The use of indigenous

words and cultural artifacts authenticates the context. Another revelation is that modernity has become a threat to the continuous usage of the Dagbamba dirge, hence, a need to document such oral literature to prevent its extinction.

More so, Sanka (2010) examines Sisaala dirges to pursue the aesthetic, cultural, moral, socio-political themes and impacts of religion and Western lifestyle on the dirge. She observes that the dirge celebrates national values: respect for the aged, motherhood, motherliness, industriousness, and moral correctness. Sanka again reveals that these values transcend ethnic cultures and can be used to promote national unity and identity. Musical instruments in the form of drums, ululation, rattles, xylophone, and castanets accentuate the poetic and musical content of dirges in Africa. The use of paraphernalia: colourful beads and headgear show that the dirges are performed in an African milieu. In the dirge is the belief in divinities, the history of the people, and philosophical, cultural, moral, and religious lessons. The analysis also reveals that the dirge is imbued with stylistic tools: repetition, parallelism, allusions, imagery, simile, symbols, and rhythm to facilitate the understanding of the meaning of the dirge and to bring out the creative ability of the artist. It is further shown in the analysis that the negative attitude of the youth, the suspicion that dirges reflect a pre-Christian world-view, the absence of cultural awareness on the part of the youth, the disintegration of traditional extended family values, and the use of audio-cassettes recorder challenge the use of dirges.

From the literature review on ethnopoeitic studies, it is clear that ethnopoeitics has generated the interest of scholars in diverse contexts. Notwithstanding this, some interesting observations have been made about the works reviewed by this researcher. First, Tedlock's (1972) study acknowledges

the influence of context on performance. Since the data is drawn from the Zuni performances of poetry in New Mexico only, it is not representative enough to generalize the findings. More so, Basumatary and Khiangte's (2020) study claims that Leslie Marmon Silko borrows heavily from her native Laguna Pueblo culture. However, the analysis does not pinpoint the exact cultural elements that the writer has borrowed. The analysis reveals the significance of the poem, the embedded literariness, and context-based examples. They move a step further to speak against the use of Westernized assumptions in ethnopoetic analysis since that could mar the beauty and the originality of the text.

From the studies conducted in Africa, it is clear that all the researchers, just as the aforementioned authorities in the Western countries, emphasized the need to situate a text within a given context when engaging in an ethnopoetic analysis. Onu, Keitany, Rashid, and Sanka contextualize the analysis with context-specific examples to buttress their studies. They have also discussed the literariness of the text and indicated the significance of those stylistic devices in the under-study texts. Onu, Sanka, and Rashid, however, move a step further to discuss factors that challenge the continuous usage of the oral text. It is again obvious that whereas Sanka and Onu generalize their studies to the African context, the rest are silent on it.

From the reviews on the ethnopoetic studies above, several conclusions have been drawn. One, it is clear that literary works, irrespective of the type, cannot be treated as an independent entity if the analysts want to fully obtain the meaning from them. Such works should be analyzed based on the society that informs them. This shows how significant context is to ethnopoetic

analysis. The reviews reveal further that ethnopoetic analysis acknowledges the existing differences in cultures and the need to recognize that when engaging in an ethnopoetic analysis for aesthetic standards. The studies have also demonstrated how the ethnopoetic approach can be applied to a variety of texts in different settings and other seemingly neglected areas in literary studies.

These studies are similar to the present study in the sense that the application of ethnopoetics helps me to explore the old woman in the selected texts by situating her within the Akan context that informs this study and to avoid any form of misinterpretation and Eurocentric bias that can affect the aesthetic standards set in the texts. This stance is backed by Quick (1999) who maintains that every culture has its poetics that could be described.

Several folk/tribal cultures that do not have written scripts make use of oral narratives as a way of establishing their identity. Ethnopoetics is, therefore, a tool that helps to examine such narratives to exhibit their rich and abundant tradition and culture (Jose, 2011). Its application also helps to correct the Eurocentric bias against oral narratives by applying an interpretive framework for discourse in its cultural context (Quick, 1999). Kiura (2019) adds to the strengths of ethnopoetic theory by indicating that in an African context, unique strategies are required in accessing, collecting, and analyzing credible data on the collective cultural wisdom of ethnic communities. In this kind of critical inquiry, ethnopoetics is regarded as an appropriate theory because it provides research strategies that facilitate a fresh look at the cultural aesthetics of literary texts. By so doing, the researcher brings out new knowledge from the cultural dimension. According to Abiola (as cited in Kiura, 2019), through such achievement, the individual joins a new generation of literary scholars who are

giving a wholly new direction to literary expression on the African continent. This, in effect, helps to give recognition to all cultures and provide space for them in literary works.

Kiura (2019) avers that an ethnopoetic analysis could be carried out by either a native: one born and brought up in the language, customs, and life experiences of the community of study, or has lived and interacted with the community, and a non-native: anyone without adequate grounding in the language, culture, and life experience of the people under investigation. He further states that each requires a firm grounding in the cultural experience of the texts. Todorov (1981) also asserts that researchers, despite their best intentions, could enter into cultural situations with expectations already formed. With this, ethnopoetic analysis faces the possibility of promoting false assumptions and stereotyped conclusions. With this, Hymes (1996) and Kiura (2019) underscore the relevance of an insider-informedness to the validity of ethnopoetic inquiry and the interpretation. Here, an accurate knowledge of meaning is *sine qua non* since the problem of accuracy is obvious in the culture we do not know. Since the use of the theory is embedded in cultural studies, it inevitably requires the researcher to be grounded in the culture that forms the basis of the study. This prerequisite is satisfied since the researcher was born, bred, and well-integrated into the Akan culture in which the study is situated. I also consulted some of the indigenes who are well-grounded in the culture of the Akans for authentication's sake.

Another area of concern is the texts that could be used for an ethnopoetic analysis. As discussed earlier, ethnopoetics is a cultural theory that was initially designed by Rothenberg (1969) for the interpretation of oral narratives. Despite

this shortcoming, ethnopoetics has made major contributions, not only to folklore but to anthropology, linguistics, and literary criticism of all kinds (Kiura, 2019). This is so in the sense that Hymes opines that ethnopoetics is an “intervention into the printed form of texts, a way of rearranging the transcript of an event of oral narration to recover the literary form in which the native words had their being” (Hymes, 1981, p. 384). This claim suggests that ethnopoetics is not limited to oral narratives but includes written texts as well. Blommaert (2006) buttresses this stance by Hymes by revealing that ethnopoetics is a useful tool for tracking local patterns of meaning-making in all narratives. Blommaert emphasizes:

I argue that ethnopoetics could be productively applied to data in which different systems of meaning-making meet a condition that defines many important service-providing systems in globalizing contexts...What I want to argue here is that it could be used for the analysis of different narratives” (p.181).

Similarly, Lim (1987) establishes the fact that understanding literary works requires readers to appreciate the cultural elements, whether in content, sound, or structure. Thus, what is required is placing the literary works in their appropriate contexts. Quick reiterates Lim’s view by indicating that this goes not only for written poetry but for prose writings as well.

Though Kiura (2019), Blommaert (2006), Quick (1999), Lim (1987), and Hymes (1981) argue that ethnopoetics could be used in any literary text irrespective of the type, my observation about the reviewed studies is that they have been skewed towards oral narratives while neglecting prose and drama. It

is also revealed that they are silent on character analysis. This is the gap in the ethnopoetic analysis that this research seeks to fill. Thus, this study examines five texts of Aidoo: *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), *Anowa* (1970), *Changes* (1991), *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997), and “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks” (2017) which cover all the tree genres of literature to bring out the symbolic roles Aidoo has assigned to old woman figure within the Akan context. Having discussed the ethnopoetic theory, how it has been applied by various authorities from different settings, and how it is applicable in this study, the succeeding sub-section is also meant for the discussion of foregrounding as a style in projecting the old woman figure to stand out from the other characters in the selected text.

Foregrounding in Literary Works

Literature involves the manipulation of language for creative purposes, and stylistics serves as a buffer between literary criticism and linguistics (Awa, 2015). Simpson (2004) explains stylistics as “a method of textual interpretation in which primacy is assigned to language” (p.3). Nkansah (2016) also sees it as a domain where meaning assumes paramount importance. He further indicates that the meaning does not apply to only words and sentences but also to the manner of expression. Analyzing the meaning of a language in a text cannot be done anyhow. According to Azhar, Shah, Tanveer, Kanwa, and Yasmeen (2014), such analysis is based on rules and principles to define the area of analysis. One principle that could be used is foregrounding.

“Foregrounding” originated from the Czech theorist Mukařovský (1964). It was borrowed from the art of painting where “foreground” was used to describe the part of a painting that was the most prominent. Mukarovský

refers to foregrounding as the range of stylistic effects that occurs in literature. The original term was ‘vydvizheniye’ and, later, ‘aktualizace’. These were later translated into English as foregrounding by Garvin (1964).

Short (1996), Leech (2007), Douthwaite (2000), Van Peer and Hakemulder (2006), and Arnold (2004) have contributed to the development of foregrounding. These authorities have explained foregrounding from different perspectives. Douthwaite (2000), for instance, explains it as “The general linguistic technique by which a marked linguistic expression is produced to make that expression convey a different meaning than its synonymic equivalent the unmarked construction would have conveyed” (p. 93). Arnold (2004) sees it as “The ways of text organization which focus on reader’s attention on certain elements of the message” (p.99). This definition stresses reader’s reaction generated by the foregrounded aspect of the text. It must be stated that the phrase “certain elements” talks about the sticking parts that attract reader’s attention.

Short (1996) also considers foregrounded parts as “the parts of the text which the author, consciously or unconsciously, is signaling as crucial to our understanding of what he has written” (p. 36). Short further indicates that when analyzing the foregrounded elements, “the analysts tries to discover not just *what* a text means, but also *how* it comes to mean what it does” (p. 6). “An artistic communication that a work of art deviates from linguistic or other socially accepted norms is labeled foregrounding (Leech, 1969: 57). According to Van Peer and Hakemulder (2006), foregrounding is an analytic category used to evaluate literary texts, situate them historically, and explain their importance and cultural significance. They are of the view that its application helps to differentiate literature from everyday conversations or scientific reports.

Foregrounding is referred to as a style of making something – a sound, word, phrase, sentence, text, discourse, symbol, image – stand out from the surrounding context to aid memorability (Ufot, 2017), to invite an act of imaginative interpretation, and to make sense of any perceived abnormality (Leech, 2008). It is, therefore, not surprising when Simpson (2004) opines that foregrounding typically involves stylistic tweeting, either through an aspect of the text that deviates from a linguistic norm or where an aspect of the text is brought to the fore through repetition. Bob, Kwekwe, and Godcan (2024) also define foregrounding as a literary technique used to highlight certain elements of a text to draw the reader's attention to them. Still on foregrounding, Zhou and Qiang (2023) maintain that in literary works, foregrounding is a meaningful artistic style motivated by choice, where the author deliberately places certain elements in the foreground to emphasize their importance.

Nkansah (2016) opines that as a style, it helps to highlight specific key points, produce thematic meaning, prompt emotional responses, and yield desired artistic and contextual effects. Short (1996) adds that its usage in a text by indicating that its usage introduces a degree of surprise to the audience, arrests their attention, and sustains it to yield powerful psychological effects. In the words of Bob, Kwekwe, and Godcan (2024), foregrounding is used to emphasize certain words, phrases, or images or create a sense of surprise or suspense. These, according to Azhar, Shah, Tanveer, Anam, and Farhat (2014), call for further interrogation into a text in the hope of giving readers clarity.

The inference that could be drawn from the various perspectives about foregrounding is that it is related to the issue of relevance that is crucial in literary interpretation. It is further observed that foregrounding could be

considered both as a theory and a style. Leech (2008), Leech and Short (2007), and Van Peer and Hakemulder (2006) consider it as a theory used to back literary analyses. On the other hand, Bob, Kwekove, and Godcan (2024), Zhou and Qiang (2023), Ufot (2017), Nkansah (2016), Simpson (2004), Douthwaite (2000), and Short (1996) consider it as a style used by literary writers to highlight an aspect of a text. In this research, I apply foregrounding as a style not as a theory to investigate how Aidoo projects the old woman in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), *Anowa* (1970), *Changes* (1991), *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997), and “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks” (2017) to attract the attention of the audience for further interpretations.

Writers employ different techniques to highlight the elements of importance. One is the strong position of the foregrounded element (titles, epigraphs, prologues, first and last paragraphs of the text), and the ending of the text or a part of the text (Simpson, 2004; Meniailo, 2020 & Arnold, 2004). The second one is the schemes of textual organization, which concentrate on stylistic devices/ elements (Simpson, 2004; Meniailo, 2020; Arnold, 2004; Short, 1996 & Leech, 1969).

Foregrounding does not exist in isolation of language. Thus, language plays an intricate role within the discourse of foregrounding. It is employed as an invaluable tool that serves varying functions (Bob, Kwekove, & Godcan, 2024). Leech (1969) adds that writers who have the intention to use creativity in their writings use a language that is mostly different from everyday language, hence, deviate from the language norms. Zhou and Qiang (2023), therefore, point out that the violation of the norms of language leads to the creation of words and expressions that ordinary people do not use, resulting in the

appearance of foregrounding language that is intentionally applied for aesthetic purposes. These unusual, unconventional, cultural, and attention-grabbing expressions are deliberately chosen by authors to produce special effects.

According to Chilala (2014), the clever language used by characters is not an isolated case. Chilala maintains that most elderly characters in African literature tend to use language characterized by wise sayings, imagery, and proverbs. Such is an elevated language associated with the wisdom of the old in African society. Konadu (2006) comments on the uses of proverbs in the Akan context by stating that the Akan language is saturated with proverbs. This form of oral literature plays an integral role in the processes of socialization and intergenerational culture transmission.

African writers also engage their characters in code switching and code mixing as means to localize the English language, preserve the African culture, achieve certain stylistic effects of the literary, reflect the realities of the use of English in Africa, clarify a point, stress, amplify or reiterate a message, hide information from other characters and readers, and show solidarity and identity. A core stylistic significance of code-switching and code-mixing in novels is that writers use these sociolinguistic outcomes to suit different contexts of situations that characters find themselves in and also to reach a large number of readers or audiences from various socio-economic divides (Afful & Ennin, 2015). Achebe (1989) also argues that African writers should not see the English language as an antagonist to the language used in African literature. Rather, writers should Africanize the English language to communicate African thoughts, patterns, beliefs, and values.

Ui (2014) also comments on the language used in literary works by stating that the use of dialect in a text is a foregrounding feature, an inseparable part of the text's identity, though it prolongs the reading time, and this is an expected effect of foregrounding. Bob, Kwekove, and Godcan (2024) emphasize that the use of an indigenous language is a foregrounding technique since it stands out from the rest of the text, which is written in English. This use of language draws attention to the characters' cultural identities and creates a sense of otherness. Qin (1983) identifies another technique called quantitative foregrounding. He indicates that it involves the recurrence of certain words or key sentences at an extraordinary frequency for prominence, emphasis, and enhancement. He believes that these are sufficient to illustrate a point.

In addition, the specific manifestation of foregrounding involves emphasizing character traits and behaviours. In literary works, characters are the soul of the work, and authors foreground them by giving them some traits to attract the audience and to aid in a better understanding of the connotation of the work. Authors of literary works also use symbols, and this makes it easier for readers to understand the meaning (Zhou & Qiang, 2023). Adding to the use of characters in literary works, Bossan (2020) opines that the names in literary texts are equally foregrounding tools. Adams (2011) maintains that such names are symbolic and contribute to the interpretation of a text. According to Ennin and Nkansah (2016), the names reflect important traits of a character, which means that names are used for various stylistic effects.

It is evident from the various perceptions of foregrounding that it is a powerful tool for every skilled author. This is because it allows writers to guide the audience's attention to significant aspects of a text and creates rich and

engaging reading experiences. It is, therefore, not surprising when Halliday (1994) refers to it as motivated prominence aimed at drawing the audience into a text for an exploration. However, the key to this imaginative interpretation is the issue of consistency. Thus, the image of interest should be consistently represented in the texts. In this study, the analysis is done based on stylistic elements (Simpson, 2004), the name given to the old woman (Bossan, 2020), and how the old woman is placed in the texts (Vogler, 2007 & Arnold, 2004). Primacy is also placed on the linguistic characteristics of the old woman (Chilala, 2014). Several scholars have used foregrounding in their studies. The subsequent subsection reviews some of them and shows how they relate to the current research.

Empirical Review on Foregrounding

A significant amount of research has been done on foregrounding as a style, particularly in the field of literary criticism. One is the study by Bob, Kwekwe, and Godcan (2024), who analyze language and symbolism in Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*. The aim is to explore how Chika Unigwe uses foregrounding to create meaning in *On Black Sisters' Street*. The analysis reveals that foregrounding is key to the novel's impact and message about the human condition, which the author attempts to mirror in the work. Again, incorporating Igbo language highlights the characters' connections to their cultural heritage, adds another layer of complexity to their identities, creates a richly textured and nuanced portrayal of her characters' experiences, and creates a sense of intimacy and connection among the characters. The language used by the characters helps to establish a sense of place and time and creates a sense of authenticity and realism. The study further shows that symbolism helps to

explore themes of identity, loss, and hope. The study concludes that the application of foregrounding in the novel is not just a stylistic choice but a deliberate strategy to engage the reader, provoke critical thought, and evoke emotions.

Yakubu (2015) also adds to the body of knowledge of foregrounding by studying Festus Iyayi's *Violence*, *Heroes*, and *The Contract* to discuss the functions of foregrounding in African literature. One of the findings is that the selected texts contain several images, which are expressed through simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, synecdoche, onomatopoeia, and oxymoron. These stylistic elements are used to produce visual, auditory, olfactory, or gustatory effects to enhance the understanding of the novelist's message. The analysis further reveals that Iyayi has used foregrounding to create characters with emotional attachment to make the audience sympathize with them, and this technique draws his audience to participate in the text. The analysis further shows that images and symbols are also used to project exploitation, oppression, deprivation, and the plight of the underprivileged in society. Another function identified is that foregrounding helps to express Iyayi's feelings, to pass his message successfully across to the audience, and to reveal his ideology, which influences the content. This means that literature is the gateway through which literary writers either directly or indirectly express their ideological positions.

Asika (2011) also examines Akachi Adimora's *The Last of the Strong Ones*, *House of Symbols* and *Children of the Eagle*; Ngozi Chuma Udeh's *Echoes of a New Dawn* and Odili Ujubuonu *Pregnancy of the Gods* to find out the stylistic features that give uniqueness, identity, as well as authenticity to this

Africa literature. He finds out that the writers have violated and defiled the normal codes of the English language. This is because they have made use of direct transliteration, images, and objects familiar to natives, tales, songs, proverbs, and riddles to structure their narratives. By so doing, they have succeeded in flexing the English language to achieve a desired local glamour and flavour that suit the specific purpose of their writings.

Awonuga (1999) also studies Thomas Hardy's "Transformations" to identify those linguistic and literary patterns that stand out. The study reveals those dominant linguistic structures: rankshifted clauses, parallelistic structures, deictic, present tense forms of verbs, expressions referring to the past, and nouns denoting concreteness in Hardy's "Transformations" have been foregrounded. This means that it is not the study of linguistic deviations in literary texts that is the only concern of foregrounding. The paper, thus, demonstrates that foregrounding goes beyond deviation to cover other uses of language, and this makes it a useful tool for the analysis and interpretation of not only poetry but also drama and prose.

It is evident from the above-reviewed studies that the application of foregrounding as a style in the analysis of literary texts is not limited to aesthetic and linguistic appreciation but also takes into consideration functionalism to produce useful interpretation. In this study, the foregrounding is applied to give a textual interpretation of Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), *Anowa* (1970), *Changes* (1991), *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997), and "Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks" (2017). This is to examine the extent to which prominence has been given to the old woman figure to show her functional and aesthetic significance in these texts. It must be emphasized that I have applied

both ethnopoetics and foregrounding because foregrounding gives me the chance to analyze how the old woman is projected, but its limitation is that it does not allow me to engage in a detailed analysis of the cultural aspect of the old woman figure. Since the focus of the study goes beyond the projection of this figure, ethnopoetics is applied to look at the cultural symbolism of the old woman found in the selected texts. These two approaches are likely to yield the most authentic understanding of the question of the old woman in the ethnopoetic context. The next sub-sections look at the concept of archetypes and the roles of the old woman from different contexts, perspectives, and literary works.

Archetype Defined

In literary criticism, archetypes denote recurrent narrative designs, patterns of action, character types, themes, and images that are identifiable in various works of literature (Abrams, 1999), regardless of genre or classification (Fleer, 2009). They are universal symbols with general characteristics and transcend culture, race, and time (Manzoor, Naz & Shams, 2020) to perform similar cultural functions (Al-Jaf, 2017) and to make the world smaller through the similar roles they perform (Jiménez, 2012). As eternal entities, archetypes are older and outlast all generations (Manzoor, Naz & Shams, 2020). They came into being in the time of Philo Judaeus as related to the image of God (Ibanga, 2022), which the ancients called "goddesses" who possessed power and strength (Freiz, 2011). Simply put, archetypes are ageless and repetitive figures in literary works that are recognized universally.

Archetypes are categorized into character, situational, and symbolic archetypes (Jimenez, 2012). Though this study is on character analysis, the

focus is on the old woman who transcends time and space. Therefore, among the three archetypes, the symbolic archetype is the most appropriate category for analyzing the old woman figure in Aidoo's works. It is also relevant to the purposes of this study, which are to find out how the old woman figure has been foregrounded and the symbolic roles assigned to her in the ethnopoetic context of this study. Again, though the old woman is represented as a character, her representation and her repetitive roles in the sampled texts transcend individual character and specific context to the universal figure, hence, a symbolic character. The use of the symbolic archetype, therefore, offers the opportunity to examine the old woman in the selected works of Aidoo at a universal level. Literary writers employ the old woman archetypal character for various roles. The next sub-sections are meant to discuss some of their symbolic roles.

The Old Woman

The old woman figure qualifies as a prototype archetype character as she is found universally within different cultures throughout time, within folktales, and in various literary genres (Shimpock, 2015). Such an image is more symbolic, bears some significance to stories (Freiz, 2011), and performs various tasks in artistic works, though she is often represented as a secondary character (Malikova, 2022). Such a character is not a character with rigid roles. She functions temporarily to achieve certain effects in a text. Looking at the archetypes in this way explains why such a figure can manifest the qualities of more than one archetype. In this regard, the archetype can be thought of as a mask worn by a character temporarily as she is needed to advance the story. She can enter the story performing one function and then switch to perform another role (Vogler, 2007).

As an archetypal character, the old woman performs a psychological function in the life of the protagonist. By so doing, she represents the “Self” within the protagonist and acts as a conscience to guide him/her on the road of life when there is no one available to give protection and tell him/her right from wrong. The “Self” is the center of the psyche, the part that integrates both light and darkness through a process known as individuation (Shimpock, 2015).

Furthermore, the old woman is a guardian of special knowledge and wisdom (Nurdayanti, Natsir & Lubis, 2020), and this makes her offer pieces of advice to help the protagonists (Vogler, 2007) to find solutions to problems in life (Nurdayanti, Natsir & Lubis, 2020). Thus, she always appears when the protagonist is in a hopeless and desperate situation from which only profound reflection or a lucky idea can extricate him (Guerin et al. 2005). According to Bonku, Abakah-Yeboah, and Ofosu-Marfo (2016), it is based on this valuable wisdom that whenever people find themselves at the crossroads regarding decision-making in the Akan setting, they consult “Abrewa”/ the old woman. The perception is that “Abrewa” is the last resort for every complex problem. Morrison (1984), in her piece *“Rootedness: The Ancestor as a Foundation”*, refers to her as an ancestor. According to Morrison, this ancestor is not just a parent but a timeless entity whose relationships with the characters are benevolent. Morrison believes that she is protective and “the presence or absence of that figure [the ancestor] determines the success or the happiness of the characters. It was the absence of an ancestor that was frightening” (p.330).

What is specific about the old woman archetypal figure is that she never tries to hold the protagonist back. On the contrary, she encourages him/her to take all the risks and accept all the challenges that may come in store. She helps

the protagonist to gain the desired autonomy and independence, helps him/her overcome all fears, and raises his/her awareness on intuition that may guide him/her throughout the journey. The modern equivalent of this feminine figure is the psychologist or the psychotherapist (Radulescu, 2014).

Just as learning is an important function of the hero, teaching or training is a key function of the old woman archetype in the life of the protagonist. The old woman is also closely related to the image of the parents. As a parent figure, she continues to remind the protagonists of important moral codes that may influence their actions in a critical period. The protagonist, on the other hand, could decide to either use or rebel against it (Vogler, 2007). This symbolic parent is instructive (Morrison, 1984) and is characterized by her emphasis on doing what is morally right (Block, 2000). According to López-Ramírez (2020), she does not only teach protagonists the code of ethics but also serves as a moral beacon for their communities at large.

In addition to the above roles, this symbolic grandmother functions as a historian (Wilton & Davey, 2006). By so doing, she becomes the embodiment of the historical memory of the people, and this helps to restore family and national history and establish generational continuity. As a mediator, she acts as a painful narrative “core” that must be verbalized (Olga, Anna & Mykola, 2021). Harvey (2010) in his study on “The archetypal wise woman in Rudolfo Anaya's *“Bless Me, Ultima”*, Toni Morrison's *“Paradise”*, and Gabriel García Márquez's *“Cien años de Soledad”* reveals that the old woman archetype advocates the importance of remembering colonial and imperial violence to avoid the recurrent patterns of historical violence.

There is also the mythical supernatural power attributed to this archetype, which renders her adequate for the fictional roles (Freiz, 2011). She is an omnipresent archetype in legends, myths, and fairy tales (Vidovićová & Galčanová, 2018). She often speaks in the voice of a god or is inspired by divine wisdom (Vogler, 2007). Jung describes her as a spiritual archetype who is protective (Garry & El-Shamy 2005). This unique quality enables her to see all present, past, and future events. Her knowledge of the supernatural is at the core of African culture (Hunsicker, 2000).

The archetypal imagery of older women includes ancestors (Freiz, 2011), and in the light of the African concept of ancestry, she has profound knowledge of African practices, hence, the true culture bearer and custodian of it. Her life mission is to protect and safeguard this knowledge and pass it on to the younger generation so that they might have a sense of personal, familial, and community identity (Hunsicker, 2000) and to ensure societal progression. Without it, society cannot survive (Olga, Anna, & Mykola, 2021). With the ancestor in their midst, the people live in harmony with each other and enjoy a collective sense of community (Freiz, 2011).

In furtherance, the old woman links the souls of the present to that of the past to ensure a continuous relationship between the two groups in the spiritual and material worlds respectively (Beaulieu, 2003). The souls of the past include ghosts (Nnyagu & Lotachukwu, 2020) and ancestors whose concern is to watch over the affairs of the living, reward and punish them when necessary. It is based on this that the ancestors are highly venerated (Wiredu, 2015). Harvey (2010) is of the view that the old woman is in touch with the natural surroundings. Hence, she remains unburdened by Western beliefs.

Whilst performing the roles assigned to her in the various situations, the old woman sometimes goes contrary to the expectations of the society (Chilala, 2014). She is occasionally represented as a character with evil intentions who does negative things to good characters (Malikova, 2022), temperamental (López-Ramírez, 2020), and harsh (Vidovic'ova & Galc'anova, 2018). It must be emphasized that her placement in a text is a practical consideration. She may show up early in a story or wait in the wings until she is needed at a critical moment. Again, whether she is expressed as an actual character or as an internalized code of behaviour, the old woman archetype is a powerful tool at the writer's command (Vogler 2007).

Guerin et al. (2005), however, note: “the archetypal figures do not necessarily function as archetypes every time they appear in a literary work. The critic interprets them if the total context of the work logically supports an archetypal reading” (p.189). Guerin et al.'s claim implies that though the above-discussed features on who constitutes an archetypal old woman are paramount when analyzing an old woman through the lens of a symbolic archetype, they are not enough for literary criticism. It is equally important to contextualize the figure. This means that being an old woman in a text does not automatically make one an archetypal character. In other words, not every old woman is an archetypal character.

It must be established that though Aidoo has used various women in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), *Anowa* (1970), *Changes* (1991), *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997), and “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks” (2017), Nana: Ato's grandmother, Anowa's grandmother, the bearded old woman, The-Mouth-That -Eats-Salt-And-Pepper, Esi's grandmother, Adjoa's Nana, Mampa

(Akuba's grandmother) and Koli's grandmother are the old women who meet the criteria set for archetypal characters and in this study and are considered for the analysis. The focus is solely on the contextual representation of the cultural strings that hold them in position. The next section of this chapter contains studies conducted on the old woman archetype.

Empirical Review of the Old Woman

First, López-Ramírez (2020) conducts a study on “The New Witch in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and *God Help the Child*” to discuss how the advent of patriarchy has changed societies' treatment of women and their roles and how Morrison challenges this patriarchal notion. The analysis uncovers several findings. First, the witch is represented as a helper and threshold guardian. Second, she symbolizes the nurturing side of the goddess archetype by finding and sheltering those at risk. Third, she is skilled in ancient medicinal arts to cure the injured. Moreover, she has supernatural attributes, is timeless in age, and has sacred wisdom. Fourth, she is an ancestral figure experienced in female rituals, preserves black culture, and recovers the lost past.

The study again reveals that she mediates between death and life and represents an agent of change, awareness, insight, knowledge, and good judgment. She has absorbed lessons from her life and uses her wisdom to guide the younger generation. It could be concluded that the “witch” in this context is useful and has positive connotations. This, in effect, counters the established negative notions associated with the old woman. Again, her roles identified qualify her as an archetypal figure.

Ramaswamy (2014) also works on “Archetypes in Fantasy Fiction in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Rowling's *Harry Potter*” series to reveal

the archetypal elements in the texts. The findings uncover that an old woman is always available to help the protagonist. The outcome of the analysis further shows that this character type is represented as an embodiment of wisdom, the one whose profound knowledge and expertise save the protagonists many times. She is again represented as the one who knows the hidden secret, the past, the present, and the future, an entity who can read people's minds, a teacher with an incisive brain, and the one who has answers to almost every question. Contrary to the above, she is projected as a villain. Ramaswamy believes that the villain in this context is significant in that without her presence, the hero's greatness fails to come to the fore. Just as Ramirez observes, the villain in these two texts differs from what society perceives.

In addition, Harvey (2010) studies the archetypal old woman using Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*, Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, and Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de Soledad*. The outcome of the analysis shows that the old woman archetype permeates through the selected fictions as an entity who possesses timeless qualities as an archetypal character who transcends a specific place and time. The analysis further reveals that her hybrid nature and her ambiguous origin imply that the archetypal character is not limited to a single generation.

Furthermore, Bubel (2006) studies "Knowing God "Otherwise": The Old Woman Archetype in George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin*, *The Princess and Curdie*, and "*The Golden Key*". The analysis of the three stories shows that the old women in the texts possess, along with age and wisdom, great beauty, which does not conform to the typical idea of age. The study further reveals a consistent occurrence of the old women as seers,

encouragers, advisors, and corrective archetypes who are also portrayed as witches, the devils, and dangerous.

Chilala (2014), in Zambia, studies “Standing in the Circle: Images of Old People in African Literature”. She uses John Luangala’s *The Chosen Bud*, Binwell Sinyangwe’s *Quills of Desire*, Gideon Phiri’s *Ticklish Sensation*, Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, Wole Soyinka’s *The Lion and the Jewel* and *Kongi’s Harvest*, Meja Mwangi’s *Kill Me Quick*, and Ferdinand Oyono’s *The Old Man and the Medal* for the analysis. The analysis establishes that the old is regarded as the embodiment of wisdom, a builder of social cohesion, a reservoir of African cultural norms, a mother figure, and the last resort for those seeking guidance on matters of life. The old woman is also associated with a profound knowledge of the traditional ways of the people. Contrary to the above traits, she is projected as a witch, deceitful, wicked, exploitive, and manipulative. It is further discovered that modernization and Western education downgrade the role of the old people in African society. This is because they are not accorded space to play the role of reservoirs of wisdom. They do not even receive the needed respect they require.

Similarly, Ngwoke (2020) in Nigeria studies “The Use of Archetypes in the Drama Clark’s *Ozidi*” to discuss the presence and the roles of archetypal materials in the text. The study discovers that Clark has used several archetypal images. One of them is the old woman, who is represented predominantly as a witch. It is observed that this archetypal character is deployed for purposes ranging from the authentication of the setting, providing entertainment to the audience through their breathtaking actions, inducing comic relief in the tragic plots, and injecting tension and seriousness into the plots.

She also offers help to the character who needs assistance. The old woman is again highlighted as a cannibal and someone who engages in magical activities. The various representations of the old woman elicit diverse emotional reactions from the audience, thereby, instigating repeated reading, listening, and live viewings of the plays. This study creates an impression that the old woman is mostly used in African texts as a witch. This entrenched position makes the analysis biased since some are used to perform significant roles, as shown in the various studies discussed above.

In the Ghanaian context, Essuman (2012) studies “Malezile Defy Master Narratives: Articulating an African Feminism”. In this study, the old woman is represented as a character whose actual date of birth and age remain unknown. Hence, her existence is seen through the traditional stories of the Akonnedi shrine of Ghana. This makes her a timeless entity. She is also the preserver of history and African culture and passes them to generations. She is represented as a figure who continuously fulfills her duties as a communal mother who is capable of satisfying both the spiritual and the physical needs of the community.

She is also a peacemaker and a teacher who teaches the children about the Akan culture. Nana is a cultural mother who transcends cultural norms to perform the role of *okyeame* (spokesperson) to gods, a role that is reserved for men only. She is again represented as an ancestress and a deity. This study has raised the positive image of the old woman and remains silent on the negative attributes. This paints a picture that she is an individual without any blemish, which could not be possible with human nature.

Ampofo, Essuman, Arhin, and Ansah (2020) further add to the scholarship on old women in the Ghanaian context through the article: “A Tool

of Success: A Critical Content Analysis of Naana's Character in Ayi Kwei Armah's *Fragments*" to investigate the roles the old woman plays towards the narrative and thematic developments of the novel. It is shown in the analysis that the old woman is the narrator of the story. Again, the first and the last chapters symbolically bear the same title, "Naana". This indicates that both chapters are dedicated to her. This point is typical of Akan traditional folktale in which the end of the narrative is also contained in the introduction. This is a style that enhances the aesthetic effect of the story. Naana is also made to introduce the other characters in the story, and because she knows them so well, she can provide the reader with a vivid description of them and the events in the story. This act of the old woman gives the story a touch of verisimilitude.

Thematically, the old woman is used to present the prologue and epilogue of the story. That is, her opening address captures the theme of the story. Acting as a social commentator, she presents and gives insight into the main theme and the associated ideas, which include societal decadence, the alienation of the individual from society, modernism versus traditionalism, and the cyclical nature of the universe. Also, as the custodian of her people's customs and traditions, she supervises traditional practices like the naming and the performance of the libation. The character contributes immensely to the success of the story as part of the didactic Akan folktales that teach many moral lessons. Finally, the outcome of the study indicates that the overall portrayal of the old woman is very significant as it authenticates the work and makes it more interesting and attractive to read.

More so, in the topic "A Critical Analysis of the Role of Aberewa (Old Woman) in Bill Marshall's Ghanaian Play *Asana* (2013)", Chiangong (2018)

aims to draw attention to how literary writers conceptualize old age and the process of aging. This paper, therefore, argues significantly that Aberewa (old woman) in the Ghanaian play *Asana* does not illustrate the often-itemized ambivalences: frail, senile, wise, and good that are connected to old age. She rather uses her status in the society to ensure that other characters are nourished with her historical, medicinal, spiritual, and intellectual expertise. Secondly, the paper portrays how Aberewa engages the community not only with her intellect but also through her craft activities.

The Origin of the Name “Nana”

Names and naming practices are worldwide subjects. This is because every society on the earth contains nouns that are tagged with names to give them special identities. By implication, there is nothing on this earth without a name to identify it. It is in line with this that the Akans have the maxim: “Nsemmone nti na yɛkyɛ din”, meaning, “It is because of criminal acts that names are shared” (Agyekum, 2006). Akans, specifically, attach seriousness to naming practices (Ennin & Nkansah, 2016) because names provide special insights about their bearers. Functionally, they are readable manuscripts that educate others about the history, the culture, and the heritage of the bearers (Firth, 1999).

Names also reflect the Akan culture, philosophy, thought, environment, and their interaction with foreign culture. They can be affected by social variables such as sex, hierarchy in birth, circumstances of birth, and status (Agyekum, 2006). Agyekum has identified day names, family names, circumstantial names, theophorous names, flora and fauna names, weird and reincarnate names, achievement names, stool names, religious, occupational,

insinuating/proverbial names, title names, bodily structure and kinship names as the typology of Akan names.

Among the Akans, Nana was a title name. However, it has gained the status of a given and a status name (Ennin & Nkansah, 2016). Expressing his views on the title, Akhan (2007) indicates:

Nana is a gender-neutral title representing the highest office in the society attainable by an individual. Often translated as elders, the term embodies much more. Nana in Akan is one who has mastered life- one who has recognized, embraced, and executed the divine function given by the Supreme Being in the world. A Nana is one who participates in the ritual incorporation of divine law and the ritual restoration of divine balance, the essence of ancestral religion. The qualities of wisdom and intelligence, those qualities which enable one to understand what to accept, what to reject, what to love and what to hate, the difference between order and disorder, and how to function in life accordingly are embodied by the Nana in Akan culture. Nana is the one who harmoniously negotiates the needs of individuals with the needs of the society. This is executed with a keen eye on the development and preservation of the whole. Rooted in the destiny of the individuals, the function of the clan as they relate to our place in creation, Nana naturally becomes an example for others to emulate. Nana is the title given to individuals, males or females who embody these principles. Yet the title is first and foremost part of the title of the Supreme Being, often called Nana Nyame (God). The various Abosom (divinities/divine forces of the Supreme Being) also carry the Nana title, and the same is true for the

honoured ancestors (Nananom Nsamanfo). It is also a term used to denote grandfathers, grandmothers, and elders. The title Nana comes with great weight, even with divine qualities. Thus, only those who have demonstrated their worthiness of the title are properly addressed as such. Fundamentally, they have become part of a divine community after having attained a certain level of spiritual cultivation (p.1).

In the Akan chieftaincy system, this is a royal title given to traditional leaders: kings (Ahenfo) and queens (Ahemaa). Elderly people (males and females) in the society are also called Nana because they are believed to be a source of wisdom in the same way as chiefs who are considered the spiritual heads of a community (Ennin & Nkansah, 2016). The chiefs, queens, and elders are called because they are not to be referred to directly by their names without the title “Nana”. Failure to do so is perceived as ill-mannered or disrespectful (Arko-Achemfuor, 2018). The name also reflects traditional and spiritual leaders: priests and priestesses (Akomfo) who mediate between the spiritual and physical world (Boakyewa, 2014).

Talking about the title, Yankah (1995) reveals that Aberewa, who is equally referred to as Nana, is the epitome of wisdom and oral history. She is also a chronicler of genealogies on important occasions. That is why when men are stepping out of a formal meeting to deliberate and take a decision, they are, in idiomatic terms, said to be consulting Aberewa. Again, an eloquent and witty youth well versed in traditional lore and logic is referred to as Aberewa Nana, a grandchild of Nana, implying that wit and wisdom have been passed down to the youth by the Nana figure.

From the various point of view on the title, it could be said that “Nana” has different connotations: Supreme Being (Nana Nyame), gods (Abosom), ancestors (Nananom Nsamanfo), kings (Ahenfo), queens (Ahemaa), priests and priestesses (Akomfo), elderly people (old men and old women), and those who have demonstrated their worthiness of the title. In this study, “Nana” refers to the old woman (Aberewa) who is the epitome of wisdom, oral history, chronicler of genealogies on important occasions, and the one who speaks with the voice of divinities and performs any other divine function bestowed on her.

It is observed from the review that the old woman analyzed from the various contexts has both positive and negative representations. This study examines the sampled works of Ama Ata Aidoo from the various perspectives to find out whether the revelations could be obtained since this study, just as the above-reviewed ones, is tailed towards the analysis of Nana/old woman, who is assumed as an archetypal character. The conclusion that could be drawn from the entire review is that though studies have been conducted on the old woman archetype from various settings and in different literary texts, and the old woman in Aidoo’s works and other Ghanaian writers, there has not been a study where the old woman in Aidoo’s works only has been analyzed with an archetypal lens just as the study of López-Ramírez (2020) and this is the gap in the criticism of Aidoo’s works that this study seeks to fill.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has focused on the review of literature that is related to ethnopoetics, foregrounding, old woman archetype, and the title “Nana”. In essence, this literature review helps to show how the present study is both similar to and unique from previous research. Thus, the present study departs

from the reviewed works in relation to scope and theory. It is similar concerning the key variables: ethnopoetics, foregrounding, and the old woman archetype. However, the review carried out reveals that though there is a substantial amount of literature on Aidoo's works, the old woman archetype, ethnopoetics, and foregrounding, none of them has a combination of the three key variables: old woman archetype, ethnopoetics, and foregrounding that are core to the study. To this end, there is a conceivable dearth that needs to be filled, hence, the essence of this research. The next chapter discusses how Nana (the old woman) in the selected texts has been represented to perform the roles assigned to her.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the review of related literature on the topic under investigation. Adopting the ethnopoetic theory, the present chapter looks at how Aidoo has represented the old woman figure in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, *Anowa*, *Changes: A Love Story*, *The Girl Who Can and Other Short Stories* and "Ghana: Where Bead Speaks" to perform the roles assigned to her as set in the Akan context specifically. As a symbolic character, the old woman is not made to perform rigid roles. She, rather, switches her roles whenever it is required to advance the story, and this also influences how she is introduced in the texts. The analysis and the discussion are done by looking at the old woman as the repository of wisdom, an omniscient character, a historian, a custodian of culture and tradition, and an agent of change of traditional practices.

Analysis and Discussion of the Symbolic Roles Aidoo has Assigned Nana/ (Old Woman) to Perform in the Selected Texts

To begin with, the old woman is represented as a repository of wisdom, a figure who uses her knowledge to guide the younger generation and the society as a whole when the need arises. In *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, she is referred to as Nana. She is an eighty-plus-old woman with five children: Akyere, Esi Kom, Mansa, Petu, and Akroma. She also has grandchildren: Ato Yawson, the protagonist, and Monka. Aidoo describes her as a short, dark, and petite femme with a will-like iron (p. 8). The old woman performs this metaphoric role when Ato, her grandson, has a dream. She is projected as the only knowledgeable person capable of offering an interpretation of Ato's dream. The dialogue between Ato and his elder uncle, Petu, is for further clarification:

ATO: I had a queer dream.

PETU: An afternoon dream? What was the dream?

ATO: I dreamt that there were two children in this courtyard singing that song about the ghost who did not know whether to go to Elmina or Cape Coast.

PETU: Ei, this needs a thinking about. Do not be disturbed. Although I do not like afternoon dreams myself, I will tell your grandmother and hear what she has to say about it (p. 49).

Within the Akan context, "Petu" is an archetypal bird believed to possess supernatural powers. The expectation is that he should be able to interpret Ato's dream. It is, however, shown in the excerpt that though Petu knows that Ato's dream is a bad omen, he cannot give the exact interpretation of it. He believes it calls for a deep-minded and experienced person to give a better interpretation,

and the only person he thinks could help is Nana. Petu tells Ato not to “think too much about the dream” (p.50) because he knows that this all-knowing figure would have an answer to the dilemma at hand. For Petu to accept Nana as the only person capable of interpreting the dream disputes his powers and elevates that of the old woman.

This role is further performed in *Anowa* by an old woman who is referred to as the Bearded Woman. She resides in Kwaakrom. She is the oldest and the wisest person on the land. Nana comes into the scene when a misunderstanding erupts between Kofi Ako and Anowa. Here, Kofi alleges that Anowa is childless and a witch. He, therefore, decides to send her back to Yebe. Of course, in the Akan context, divorce cannot be granted anyhow. Though childlessness, willful neglect, prohibition of sexual intercourse, infidelity, cruelty, and other related factors are the grounds for divorce, the party seeking divorce must have sufficient justification for his/her action. Failure to do this is a breach of the customs of the land. Anowa, in this context, believes she is not guilty of any of them, and her stance is confirmed by the old woman:

Oh Kofi Ako! Some say he lost his manhood because he was not born with much to begin with, that he had been a sickly infant, and there was only a hollow in him where a man's strength should be. Others say he had consumed it to acquire wealth (p. 63).

It is revealed in this excerpt that Anowa's childlessness is borne out of Kofi's greediness and his ill health. The question then is that if Kofi feels he is innocent and that Anowa is responsible for her predicament, why has he refused to marry another woman as Anowa suggests? After all, he is rich enough to take as many

wives as he wants. More so, Akans accept polygamous marriages and this is buttressed by Esi's Nana in *Changes: A Love Story* when she says: "Warriors and our kings married more women than other men in their communities. To prove that they were, by that single move, the best on the land" (p. 125). Anowa, therefore, expects Kofi to sufficiently justify why he wants a divorce. This is because apart from the above-stated issues that are connected to Kofi's manhood, Anowa interrogates Kofi further and finds out his priest is the main architect behind his action. Anowa, therefore, decides to bring on board the wisest and the bearded old woman to handle the case, as shown in the dialogue between the spouse:

ANOWA: Why are you sending me away from you?

KOFI AKO: Just go away and leave me alone, woman.

ANOWA: I cannot, my husband. Because I have nowhere to go....

Have you heard of a man who seeks to divorce his wife and will not say why?... I am sending you to the oldest and wisest people on this land. You go to the bearded woman of Kwaakrom (pp. 57-58).

From this extract, it is clear that Anowa is in a desperate situation. She believes she is not treated fairly by her husband, hence, the need for a non-discriminatory judgment by a third party, which is the old woman. The description given mystifies the referent and also shows that Anowa's consultant has grown beyond expectations. Because of this, she has witnessed a great number of such proceedings, which has helped her to acquire sufficient experience and wisdom to offer a just verdict for both to have a lasting solution to the problem at hand.

Furthermore, in *Changes: A Love Story*, this symbolic figure is named Nana. She is Ena's mother and the grandmother of Esi, the protagonist. Nana

performs the role of the repository of wisdom in the life of Esi when the latter is in a dilemma and does not know what to do concerning her decision on Ali and Oko. Esi runs to consult the old woman for advice. Nana says: “You are asking me whether you should marry this Ali of yours who already has his wife and become one of his wives?” (p.124). Since Nana is knowledgeable about divorce in the Akan setting, she puts Esi on the spot and engages her in interrogations:

NANA: So, does your husband smell? His body? His mouth?

ESI: No, Nana. In fact, for a man, he is very clean and very orderly.

NANA: So...does he deny you money, expecting you to use your earnings to keep the house, feed him, and clothe him too?

ESI: Nana, we are not rich, but money is not a big problem.

NANA: What is the problem?

Esi had to tell the truth. Her husband wanted too much of her and her time. Are you mad?...

NANA: How could she tell them she did not want Oko? Where was she going to get a man like him again?...

At the end of the discussion, her grandmother had told her the matter sounded too much for her ears. Finally, Esi got into her car and drove back to Accra (p. 41).

Nana engages Esi in this dialogue to identify the root cause of the problem to give a befitting piece of advice. The dialogue reveals that the reasons given by Esi are flimsy. According to Nana, Oko, just as Anowa, is not guilty of any of them. What Esi uses as an excuse is, ironically, what makes a good

husband in the Akan context. It could be deduced that Nana does not support her. So, she remains silent and allows Esi to go to Accra, not because she does not know the kind of advice to offer. Nana rather takes this position because she wants Esi to reflect on the issue. Probably, she could change her mind about the divorce. It could also mean that she wants Esi to gain direct autonomy over her decisions. According to Guerin et al. (2005), the gift of insight and intuition causes elders to behave in this manner.

In *About the Wedding Feast*, one of Aidoo's short stories in *The Girl Who Can and Other Short Stories*, the symbolic figure is referred to as grandmother. She is Mary's mother and the grandmother of Mary's nameless daughter who is about to marry. Grandmother serves as a repository of wisdom when Mary needs urgent answers to certain questions while both are in a meeting with the mother-in-law-to-be. The old woman has this to say:

The man my granddaughter is going to marry is from one part of Africa that is quite far from our country... Since there was not going to be a grandmother from the boy's side at the meeting, Mary and I agreed that even though I would sit in the discussions, I would keep a respectable silence... However, now and then, my daughter whispered questions to me to which I gave discreet answers (pp. 88-89).

It is seen from the excerpt above that the grandmother of the would-be groom is not present at the meeting. It could mean that her presence in such gatherings and her pieces of advice on marital issues are not recognized, unlike in the Akan context where the views of the old woman on marriage are cherished right from the beginning to the end. It is further revealed from the excerpt that even though

Mary and her mother have unanimously agreed that the latter would not comment on anything concerning the topic under discussion, she (Mary), eventually falls on Nana for answers to questions, which grandmother gives them wholeheartedly without any hesitation. Nana, in this context, is an indispensable figure who cannot be ignored.

The next old woman figure to consider is found in the poem, “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks”. In this text, she is called Nana. She is Koli’s grandmother and a storyteller. Her uncle is the prophetic one who uses beads to divine, foretell, warn, and promise. The name “Koli” has different interpretations: knee, earthenware bowl, and little. It is also a name given to blue beads. Since traditionally, Akans believed that names have influence on their referents, one expects Koli to be knowledgeable about beads, and she should be in a better position to educate others about beads, just as Petu in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* who is expected to interpret Ato’s dream.

Contrarily, Koli consults and pleads with Nana to enlighten her more about the beads, as shown in the excerpt below:

My uncle was the prophetic one,
throwing his beads this way and that,
diving, foretelling,
warnings galore, sweet promising.
One eye on the past, four to the future,
Half a dozen or more for now.
He was good if the news was good,
for evil news, we blamed the beads (lines 1-8)
Speak to me of beads, Grandma,

speak to me.

 Talk to me of beads, Nana,

 talk to me (lines 33-36).

It is shown in the extract above that Koli yearns for more knowledge about the beads, and she believes it is Nana who can offer the needed information. This, in effect, foregrounds Nana's level of expertise on the beads.

 Grandma is so versed in the subject that she requires enough time to take Koli through all that she needs to know:

 You and I shall surely need

 more than my life in hours and days,

 more than your life in weeks and years

 Koli's life in weeks and years

 A million lifetimes is not much (lines 46- 50).

Nana uses this proverbial utterance to create the scope of relevance of beads and the quantum of information about them. According to Nana, the information about beads is comprehensive, that there would not be enough time to talk about everything. Through Nana, Koli, together with the reader, is exposed to the materials used to prepare beads: bones, glasses, stones and brass (lines 9-12), diamonds, opals, and gold (line 16); the difficulties the bead makers go through: It's the many human hours, Sister. It's sweat and blood (lines 13-14); the users of beads: infants and mother (lines 55-56), lovers (lines 72), warriors (line 81), kings and queens (lines 80-81; 167-168), and the dead (line 84).

These series of instances reveal that among the Akans, almost everybody makes use of beads irrespective of their status. Apart from these

pieces of information, Nana again talks to Koli about the different kinds of beads: tame, wild, lion's teeth, lightning struck, and waist beads (lines 57-61). Nana further maintains that the occasion and the purpose determine the colours involved. Thus, white is used to welcome the newly born baby into the world, whereas black is used when one dies (lines 83-86).

Looking at the substantial amount of information Nana has provided on beads to Koli, the reader is indeed not surprised when Nana indicates that she requires more than "A million lifetimes" to lecture Koli on the subject. The excerpt also shows that beads are used for communication.

Another thing to note is that in the Akan context, beads are used by both sexes. However, they are extensively used by females than males. Women use them on their hair, ears, necks, arms, ankles, and waists for beautification. Since Nana has used this artifact for ages, Aidoo makes use of her to provide the needed information to Koli. This is because she is more knowledgeable in this subject, and the tool that she uses to chronicle this information to the younger one is storytelling. This is one of the media that is used among the Akans to socialize, educate, and transmit culture to the younger generation.

From the foregoing discussion, it could be concluded that the stance taken by Ato, Anowa, Esi, Mary, and Koli to consult Nana on different issues that bother them reaffirms the views of the Akans that Aberewa/ Nana is the final consultant on problematic issues that need to be resolved. The revelation here is in line with views of Akhan (2007) and Yankah (1995), who also assert that the Nana/Aberewa in the Akan context is an epitome of wisdom, thus, the final consultant for breakthrough for answers to every complex issue. Morrison (1984) also maintains that in Black literature, there is always an old woman

whose presence brings about happiness to the characters around her. The finding rather contradicts that of Bonku, Abakah–Yeboah, and Ofosu-Marfo (2016) whose study reveals that the old woman is not a repository of wisdom that Akans are made to perceive.

In addition, Nana is represented as an omniscient character who moves from character to character, place to place, and from time to time to provide vivid and comprehensive information about other characters and events. Morrison (1984) refers to her as a timeless figure whose genesis is not easily traceable to any particular generation, hence, she belongs to all generations. Given this, Nana can link the past to the present and even talk about the future.

She executes this role in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* when she realizes that Akroma's wife has a health-related issue, which eventually affects him greatly. The dialogue between Nana and Akroma lends credence to this:

NANA: Akroma, how is your wife's stomach?

AKROMA: It is a bit better.

NANA: ...Have we not had enough of the white man's medicines?

Since –they do not seem to do anything for your wife, why -don't you take her to Kofikrom? The herbalist there is famous (pp. 30-31).

Nana, in the excerpt above, is projected as a figure who has witnessed the period where the local people solely depended on traditional medicines for survival. She is also with the current generation that uses orthodox medicine introduced by the Westerners. Since she is a woman with children and grandchildren, she must have used traditional medicines during her child-bearing stage. Hence, she knows the environment, and this places her in a better position to engage in a retrospective analysis of both the indigenous and the orthodox medicines.

She, therefore, comes to a firm conclusion that the healing power of the traditional medicine outweighs that of the orthodox. She admonishes the indigenous people to go back to their roots and embrace the traditional medicine that they were blessed with. Nana's position regarding traditional medicine is not different from the position taken by Nana in "Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks" about the chevron. It must be emphasized here that the potency of traditional medicine is equally highlighted in Armah's *The Healers* (1979) and Parke's *Tail of the Blue Bird* (2009).

In *Anowa*, the role of the omniscient character is further performed by an old woman who is one of the elders of Yebe. According to Ama Ata Aidoo, "She is wizened, leans on a stick and her voice is raspy with asthma and a life of putting her mouth into people's affairs" (p.5). Her role as the omniscient character is observed when Anowa defies the tradition of the land and her parents' wishes and marries Kofi Ako. Anowa's attitude baffles the old woman and this causes her to compare Anowa to other girls as shown in the excerpt below:

OLD WOMAN: That Anowa is something else! Like all the beautiful maidens in the tales, she has refused to marry any of the sturdy men who have asked for her hand in marriage.

No one knows what is wrong with her (p.7).

From this excerpt, the old woman is portrayed as a character who knows all the tales on the earth, irrespective of the time and the place of their inception. She also knows all the young girls cited in such tales. It is based on this that she is capable of comparing Anowa's attitude with theirs and draws a conclusion on Anowa's. Among the Akans, folktale is one of the tools for day-to-day

socialization and education. For the old woman to situate Anowa's behaviour in local tales means that she is well-versed in this oral narrative:

In *Changes: A Love Story*, Esi decides to go home one weekend and be with Ena, her mother, and Nana, her grandmother. Nana sits her down one Sunday morning to solicit information from her about her divorce:

You had a husband of your own whom you have just left because you say he demanded too much of you and your time...In our time, the best citizen was the man who swallowed more than one woman... My lady Silk, they say it was always like this. I mean about men and women. But it has been as it is for far too long for it to matter how it was like then. Certainly, from as long as our ancestors may have been able to remember, it seemed to have always been necessary for women to be swallowed up in this way. For some reason, that was the only way societies were built, societies survived, and societies prospered (pp.124-125).

In this extract, Nana engages in a comparative analysis of how women were subjugated by men during the ancestral era and how they are subjugated now and concludes that the situation is the same, and it is also traceable to the ancestral era. She also indicates that this position of women in traditional society is determined by the entire society. That is why she does not see why Esi should divorce Oko. After all, in the Akan context, Oko's demand is not unusual when it comes to men.

Aidoo reaffirms the domineering nature of men over women in our society by stating: "Who is a good man if not the one who eats his wife completely and pushes her down with a good alcohol" (p. 124). The implication

here is that among the Akans, whenever a woman marries, she must be submissive to the man and go by his dictates. Anything different is a taboo. Nana, in this context, represents the traditional ideology that women hold against men.

Nana, in another instance, takes Esi to the creation era when God was creating man as she says:

Men were the first gods in the universe, and they were devouring gods. The only way they could yield their best and sometimes their worst too was if their ego was satisfied too regularly (p.126).

Nana maintains in the extract above that she was present when those gods (men) were being created. It is further deduced that she has been with them all through generations, just as the bearded woman at Kwaakrom whom Anowa consults for a fair judgment, Koli's Nana who witnesses the manufacturing and usage of beads in the period that pre-dates the arrival of the Europeans to the Gold Coast, and the old woman in Anowa who knows the tales of all ages and origins. For this reason, Esi's Nana can analyze the lives of men and gives a concrete judgment about them.

This representation is not different from what the reader again witnesses in *The Girl Who Can* while the grandmother is with the family members planning her granddaughter's marriage:

It had begun with the announcement itself. That those two were going to get married. My granddaughter just came in from her workplace one early evening and told us. No asking. It was just telling. That was when something hit me. Yes, from that early.

That there was something not right already. In the olden days, when things were done properly, a girl did not just announce that sort of thing in that sort of way. But later, when I pointed that out to Mary, she said that things have changed (p. 87).

In this excerpt, the old woman compares how marriage announcements were made in the olden days and how it is carried out now and again reveals that the present generation has altered the process. She can do this because of the quantum of information she possesses on marriage, just as the beaded old woman at Kwaakrom. The excerpt further reveals that the extended family that is represented by the grandmother has lost its weight in the choice of a spouse for family members due to time variation.

As Nana continues to lecture Koli on the Ghanaian beads in ‘Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks’, she establishes the facts:

For each colour in the rainbow,
There is a bead somewhere on earth
a million years old, if a day,
or shy in its newness, and this dawn (lines 164-167).

Nana, in this extract, wants Koli to know that her knowledge about beads is not limited to this current generation. It rather transcends countless generations that could not be easily traced. This is reinforced in her metaphoric statement when she compares beads with a phoenix: “You, bead, are an awesome one, you are the phoenix of the years” (lines 173- 174). Phoenix is a bird that dies in its nest, rises, and is reborn from its ashes. It has witnessed the passing of the ages. The bird is all around us in words and images (Nigg, 2016). As the phoenix continues to reincarnate, so does Nana’s knowledge of beads. She knows all the

beads that are produced across time and space. None of them escapes her knowledge, wherever and whenever they are manufactured. Nana's knowledge on beads in the ethnopoetic context is solidified by Affum (2009) who says that the manufacturing and the usage of beads in the traditional context have a remote antiquity and pre-dates the arrival of the Europeans to the Gold Coast at the close of the fifteenth century A.D. Nana's use of apostrophe also draws her close to the addressee to create a mental picture that there is no barrier between her and the addressee, hence, an omnipresent figure.

Apart from connecting the past to the present time, Aidoo has again projected this old woman as an oracle capable of predicting what is likely to happen in the near future. A typical example is found in *The Girl Who Can* when she realizes that Mary and her in-law have had a lengthy discussion about the wedding preparations. She cautions them to take a breather to avoid unwanted occurrences:

I had been thinking, and even told them, that if they did not stop for a little rest and get something to eat, something nasty was going to happen... Then it happened, and I was not at all surprised... All I saw was Mary and the boy's mother standing up at the time and each of them shouting... 'What do you mean?' shouted one... You can't tell me what to do, one wailed (p. 91).

Grandma analyzes the situation, taking into consideration the amount of energy and time that the planners have used at a sitting, and concludes that they are exhausted, therefore, they need to rest for a while. Nana cautions them because she has read into the future to determine the possible looming misunderstanding

that is capable of degenerating into a fight between the two discussants. A similar situation occurs in *Changes: A Love Story* when Esi prepares to marry her second husband, Ali. Nana also reads into the future and predicts about the marriage. She, therefore, forewarns her about it. Esi has this to say about this claim:

She remembered some of the advice... grandmother had told her... One was never to forget that she was number two... It had not even taken half a day for her to know what is being number two means... what made everything bad was that she had been aware that her grandmother... had tried hard to warn her. She had just been a fool (pp.132-181).

As shown in the two separate situations, both Esi and Mary pay no heed to Nana's words and have to face the consequences. It is worth noting that Nana acts as the oracle in these instances based on the rich experiences she gains from the varied generations, different moments of life, and different people she encounters. Nana's position brings to mind an African proverb which says that what an elderly person sees when sitting down, a child cannot see even when he climbs a tree. As Akans living in Africa, this proverb binds us.

Aidoo's deliberate attempt to move Nana from one place to another and from one generation to another to bring into focus what happens through the consciousness of Nana helps to bridge the gap between generations and different locations. This technique also helps the audience to draw conclusions on the differences and the similarities in what transpires in each time and space. The findings of Ramaswamy (2014) and Hunsicker (2000) also reveal that the old

woman is someone who knows the hidden secret, the past, the present, and the future.

Nana is again represented as a historian who passes on some aspects of the historical events of the Ghanaian/Akans human race to the younger ones. In *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, for instance, the family gathers in their clan house to welcome Ato back home from America only for the family to be informed by Ato that he is married. While every member tries to find out from him about the woman: her name, where she comes from, and her tribe, Nana listens carefully to Ato's submissions and concludes:

ATO: Please, I beg you all, listen. Eulalie's ancestors were of our ancestors. But, (warming up) as you all know, the white people came and took some away.

NANA: And so, my grandchild, all you want to tell us is that your wife is a slave?... My grandson has gone and brought home the offspring of slaves. A slave, I say. [Esi Kom enacts horror and great distress] ... Even when the Unmentionable came and carried off the children of the house in shoals like fish, Nana Kum kept his feet steadfast on the ground...refused to let any of his nephews take a wife from a doubtful stock (pp. 35-38).

It is through Nana that the entire family gets to know that the woman their son has married is a slave. It is also revealed through her utterance that the Odumna Clan, which represents the Akans, suffered from slavery. Nana equally talks about the repercussions of this irreversible horror: mass displacement of large numbers of the clan. Ama Ata Aidoo again uses Nana, Anowa's grandmother

and a storyteller, who has the experience to throw more light on slavery as shown through the dialogue between Anowa and Nana:

ANOWA: Tell me, Nana. Who built the houses?

NANA: The pale man.

ANOWA: Who are the pale men?

NANA: They are the white men...

They came from far away. Far away beyond the horizon...

ANOWA: Nana, why did they build the big houses?...

NANA: They said they built the big houses to keep slaves.

ANOWA: What is a slave, Nana?...

NANA: A slave is one who is bought and sold...

You must be a witch, child...

No one talks about these things anymore! They have forgotten!...

All good men and women try to forget;

They have forgotten (pp. 44-46).

This dialogue reveals those who built the houses (castles) and why they were built (to keep slaves to be transported to their final destination). Slavery is again highlighted in the poem “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks” by Koli’s Nana:

As barter for my life and yours,
no gem on earth could fit the bill.
Not gold, and if not even gold,
then what on earth is a chevron?
It was a weapon
of oppression,
and not at ...a bead

Seven whole humans for one bead? (lines 101-109)

In the excerpt above, Nana makes it known that chevron is a symbolic bead that represents slavery and its associated exploitation. Nana further draws the attention of the reader and Koli to the specific kind of slave trade that chevron is used to do: barter trade where human beings are exchanged for a chevron (a bead). This has eventually reduced man to the level of a commodity. It is further deduced from the excerpt that seven human lives are exchanged for one chevron.

The implication created here is that one chevron is worth more than one life, hence, seven humans must be given for a chevron. According to Nana, the barter trade is a sign of “greed” (line 115) on the part of the slave masters and “foolishness” (line 116) on the part of the natives. She believes that this is an unfortunate situation because even gold, despite being highly valued, cannot be equated to the life of humans, let alone a mere bead. She, consequently, registers her displeasure on the chevron to show that she does not want to have anything to do with it when she says, “So don’t talk to me of the chevron” (line 97). It is important to maintain that the common tool used by the old woman in the three excerpts educate the younger ones on slavery is storytelling, which is one of the oral narratives used by Akans. Yankah (1995) also asserts that in the Akan context, Aberewa, who is equally referred to as Nana, is the epitome of oral history, and her work here is to teach the younger ones about the history of the land.

Nana, in the three excerpts, again talks about mechanisms the indigenes have put in place to manage the pain and the trauma associated with slavery. One of the mechanisms is deliberate forgetfulness, as seen in *Anowa*. Thus, no

one wants to talk about this shameful and barbaric activity anymore to avoid bruising old wounds because it is considered taboo. That is the main reason Nana tries as much as possible to avoid the series of questions from Anowa, though she is forced to give simplified answers to satisfy the curious mind. Others have concealed it through the use of different names. Ato's Nana in excerpt 1 refers to it as the "Unmentionable", whereas Koli's grandmother in excerpt 3 uses chevron to replace it. In *Anowa*, it is referred to as "the big crime".

Another mechanism used by Ato's people in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* is to prevent their offspring of all generations from marrying anyone from a "double stock". This declaration is made by the ancestors, and it binds all the generations unborn. This is one of the main reasons behind their refusal to accept the marriage between their son and Eulalie. Her presence in the house continually reminds them of the painful historical event, which they have tried every possible means to eliminate from their memory. Koli's grandma resorts to anger to reveal how she detests the chevron and everything it stands for. Anowa's grandmother is also silent to deter Anowa from asking a series of questions about it. Aidoo has selected this omniscient character in the various texts to talk about this historical incident because she is the embodiment of the historical memory of the people who help to restore family and national history and establish generational continuity. The study of Olga, Anna, and Mykola (2021) also reveals that the old woman acts as a painful narrator of events that seek to be verbalized and at the same time avoid verbalization.

Nana's knowledge of history is not limited to slavery. She equally possesses a heavy dose of information on the genealogy of families such as

Ali's. It is important to maintain that the most striking and persistent topic she raises about Musa Kondey, Ali's grandfather; Musa Musa, Ali's father, and Ali himself, is their relationship with women. Concerning Ali's grandfather, she says:

Musa Musa's father, Musa Kondey, that is Ali's grandfather, who was long dead by the time Ali was born, had been quite rich. He had owned an impressive number of sons, cattle, horses, sheep, goats, wives and daughters. All definitely in that order of value (p. 26).

She also has this to say about Ali's father:

Like most men everywhere and from time immemorial- who have been able to pay for the luxury- Ali's father preferred his women young and tender. They had to be virgins, of course. And he had acquired one of such women for a wife in each of his favourite stops on his trade routes. At that time and at fourteen, Ali's mother had been his youngest and his favourite (p 24).

Concerning Ali, Nana has this to say:

And if it ever occurred to all that the women he seduced so easily fell more in love with the picture he painted of his father for them, and not so much for himself, it didn't bother him too much.... Ali liked his women mature, and he had no special use of virginity (p. 25).

What is common about these three characters representing three different generations is that all of them are in polygamous relationships. One can say that these characters engage in polygamous relationships because it is accepted in the Akan context. Also, each character has a unique way of relating to such women. According to Nana, grandfather places much more premium on

male children than his wives and daughters. He also objectifies his wives since they are counted together with items that constitute his wealth, a behaviour that is not far from Okonkwo's in *Things Fall Apart*. Nana uses Musa's stance to reveal to the audience the gender preference that exists in the setting. Thus, ethnopoetically, it is the male children who carry the identity and sustain the lineage of the family while women are married off to bear the names of other families, hence, placing a premium on males rather than females.

Father, on the other hand, prefers virgins and teenagers. This category of females is more fertile to procreate, a cultural practice that is cherished in the Akan society. Procreation helps to maintain the family lineage. The number of children produced in such relationships also has economic implications. Ali rather prefers mature women but does not put a premium on virgins. Ali's preference could be because of time variation. Even though polygamous relationships are accepted among the Akans as a result of the associated advantages, it could be argued that the old woman does not totally endorse it. That is why she provides Esi with enough information and forewarns her about it. Having realized that she cannot prevent her granddaughter from becoming a second wife, she ends up admonishing: "We do the serious business of living with our heads, and never our hearts" (p.87).

Conclusively, the role of Nana as the historian of the traditional society can never be underestimated. Her repertoire of knowledge is not limited to national history but tribal and family history as well. Ebine (2019) equates this historian to a griot who is regarded as the soul of the community, the source of historical truth, the fountain of knowledge, and a traditional library that kings and their subjects could lean on when the need arises. Nana's role is equally in

agreement with the assertion of Yankah (1995) who says that in the Akan setting, Aberewa (Old woman) is the epitome of oral history, eloquent and chronicler of genealogies on important occasions.

Aidoo has again represented Nana as the custodian of her people's customs and traditions, and her mission is to protect and pass such customs unto the next generations. Hence, she becomes a keen observer of the traditional practices to ensure that everyone conforms to societal norms. One of the practices is the involvement of extended family in traditional marriages. Thus, among the Akans, marriage is a communal affair where members of each family, especially the maternal grandmother, take part in the process from the beginning to the end of the marriage ceremony. Anything different is considered a taboo. Having realized the series of marriages conducted by her grandchildren, Nana becomes uncomfortable because these younger ones have consistently altered the tradition of the Akans by not involving the extended family as seen in these excerpts:

- a. NANA: My grandchild, so you are married? Why did you not write to tell us? (*The Dilemma of a Ghost*, 12)
- c. OLD WOMAN: That Anowa is something else!... She has refused to marry any of the sturdy men who have asked for her hand in marriage...Where is she taking her 'I won't, I wont to? (*Anowa*, p. 7).

d.—

e.d. It had begun with the announcement itself. That those two were going to get married.... No asking. It was just telling. That was when something hit me that there was something not right already...But

when I pointed that out to Mary, she said that things have changed
(*The Girl Who Can*, p. 87).

The acts of the younger ones in these excerpts indicate that they have disrespected Nana, the kinsmen, the entire society, and even the ancestors who introduced such practice. This contradicts the societal norms and makes them show some resistance to the traditional values of the community as well. Another implication is that this generation is irresponsible and lacks communal wisdom. The younger ones take actions that favour them only and not the entire community, and this has serious consequences not only on the grandchildren but every individual in the clan as well.

As the guardian of morals in the Akan context, the old woman consequently adopts different approaches to bring the grandchildren on track as far as the societal norms are concerned. In *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, for instance, when Ato later takes a firm stance to defend his marriage with Eulalie against societal norms and expectations, Nana reprimands him, “Do not talk with the foolishness of your generation” (p. 36). Nana rebukes her grandchild because this behaviour is not acceptable in the society, and this is what Nana stands against.

Nana also guides the younger ones to know where they have faulted, “But later, when I pointed that out to the child’s mother, my daughter said that things have changed... being my daughter, hard as a palm kernel outside and coconut soft inside, she later came and without apologizing for speaking like that to me” (*The Girl Who Can*, p. 87). Though Nana’s granddaughter has gone astray as far as the respect for the elderly and customs of the land are concerned, grandmother, who is knowledgeable about the customs of the land, tries to

straighten her by pointing out what is not done right, probably, that will cause her to do the needful. Grandmother also believes that she deserves an apology since this attitude is not culturally accepted. Mary, rather, remains adamant because she has a different view about Nana's demands, hence, she refuses to do what is expected of her as a native child.

The old woman, who happens to be one of the elders at Yebi, also directs those around her on what should be done: “Badua should tell her daughter that the sapling breaks with bending that would not grow straight” (*Anowa*, p. 8). Nana believes that Badua is the one who has influenced Anowa negatively to go against the established norm, hence, she should go back and advise her daughter. The steps taken by Nana in the various situations to bring the younger generation on track also agrees with Akhan’s (2007) who also reveals that Nana in the Akan context is intelligent and this quality enables her to guide the people to understand what to accept, what to reject, what to love and what to hate, the difference between order and disorder, and how to function in life accordingly.

Interestingly, Anowa herself confirms this point of view of the old woman when she indicates: “Someone should have taught me how to grow up to be a woman” (p. 52). This statement implies that her parents and her grandmother have failed to perform their role as responsible people to bring her up in accordance with the values of the land. The tone used by this elder who represents the traditional society shows that she is angry with Badua and Anowa’s grandmother for failing to perform their customary duty. Her anger is borne out of the fact that among the Akan, a child who misbehaves in public brings embarrassment not to herself only, but to the parents, grandparents, family, and sometimes to the community at large.

That is why when a child misbehaves, some of the questions the people around ask include: Which family does this child come from? Is there no elderly person in his household? Looking at Anowa's action and the magnitude of its consequences, Badua also refuses to accept the entire blame. She points an accusing finger at the elders and the entire society:

BADUA: (Bursting out suddenly and pointing her fingers clearly at the OLD MAN and OLD WOMAN but speaking to herself) Perhaps it was my fault too, but how could she come to any good when her name was always on the lips of every mouth that eats salt and pepper (p. 8).

Based on the various submissions from Nana who represents traditional society, Badua, and Anowa, it is obvious that though it is the duty of a man and a woman to bring forth a child unto this world, his/her upbringing is the full responsibility of the entire members in the society led by the old woman. This is why when a child misbehaves in public, he/she is reprimanded by any member of the community without prior approval from the parents. The punishment is more often than not endorsed by the parents if they get to know of it.

In *Changes: A Love Story*, Esi, on the other hand, involves the extended family represented by the old woman in her marriage as discussed already. However, she deviates from performing the patriarchal gender roles that are traditionally determined for married women:

Esi: "puts her career well above any duties she owned as a wife...she complained any time she had to enter the kitchen. Their home was run by a house help... She leaves the house at dawn, returns at dusk, and often brings work home. Then there were all those conferences" (p 9).

From this extract, Esi is so much engrossed in her work that she hardly stays at home to perform her marital duties as a legitimate wife. For her to partially meet the needs of her nuclear family, she employs a house help, forgetting that the house help cannot perform all the duties. At a point in time, Oko has to force her before he can enjoy his conjugal right: “Oko snatched the watch from her, ...pulled her down, and moved on her. Esi started to protest” (p. 9). Sex in a natural sense should be done in such a way that both parties would participate effectively to make it worthwhile. Nonetheless, the scene created depicts that Esi is not interested in the act, and this is shown in her continuous protest and dormant behaviour. It is worthy to state that it is this act that Esi refers to as “marital rape” (p. 12). This rebellious act of Esi, a modern and educated woman, challenges the traditional definition of the roles of women.

As a maternal grandmother who has witnessed the collapse of Esi’s first marriage and would not wish for a second one, Nana educates Esi on her duties in the polygamous home:

No man who had more than a wife lived with any of the women on a permanent basis...And the days were properly regulated. Wives took turns...and undertook the housekeeping for him completely. She either went to his bedroom or he slept with her. When her turn was over, he just switched (p. 87).

The extract above reveals that Esi would not permanently have Ali to herself since she is supposed to share him equally with her rivals. It also spelled out the various responsibilities that she must undertake when her time is due to be with her husband. She again teaches Esi on time by telling her that her time belongs to her husband and that the best husband is he who demands all her time. She

tells her further that failure to offer her total being to her man is a crime, which attracts quick and swift punishment (pp.124-125). Nana intimates again: If she broke the rules, then her new marriage would be like a fire that had been lighted inside her ..." (p.132). This type of education has become necessary because Nana wants Esi to be respectful and submissive in going about the stereotypical roles assigned to her in her new home. This, as she has indicated, would make her enjoy her new home.

The conclusion that could be drawn on the attitudes and reactions of Nana and the younger generation towards marriage is that both belong to different generations that have different perceptions about what constitutes a happy marriage. Thus, how Nana sees marriage is different from how these young ones see it. As a parent figure, this archetype continues to remind the protagonist of important moral codes of ethics that may be useful to the central character later in a critical period in life (Vogler, 2007).

According to Ebine (2019), in the traditional context, the old woman is an authentic guardian and a source of traditional knowledge who transmits the tradition and perpetuates the ancestral values. Aidoo has used Nana who is knowledgeable about the tradition of the land to straighten the moral and social life of the younger generation. The findings from the analysis show that Nana in the various texts reflects an instructive (Morrison, 1984) and a corrective archetype (Bubel, 2006) who emphasizes doing what is morally right (Block, 2000).

Whilst performing her role as the custodian of her people's customs and traditions, Nana is represented as a figure who serves as a good role for those around her to follow. She once tells Esi:

I shall... try to make it my truth. In this world where lies are pampered like the only children..., all we can do is to hold on to our own truth... for the world where lies are pampered like the only children and nephews of queens and kings, all we can do is to hold on to our truths. These days, we are getting used to people saying big things when they mean little or nothing at all (p. 124).

Nana, in the excerpt, is aware that society is full of moral decadence, especially lies. So, she must stand out as a respectable person to serve as a good example for the younger generation. Again, since her words are sacred, she has no choice but to remain truthful to both her family and to the larger society. According to Akhan (2007), in the Akan context, Nana is naturally an example for others to emulate.

Whereas the positive aspects of the culture and traditions ought to be practiced and passed on to the succeeding generations, the negative ones must also be discarded to promote a more progressive and peaceful society. To highlight this feature in her texts, Aidoo makes use of the Nana figure as an agent of change. It ought to be borne in mind that the various texts present diverse changes that Aidoo wishes could be altered to harmonize the society. In the early part of *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, for instance, Nana is highly emotional and engages in serious lamentations and soliloquy when she finds out that Ato has married a descendant of slaves:

NANA: My spirit Mother ought to have come for me earlier.

Now, what shall I tell them who are gone?

Shall I tell them or shall I not?

Someone should lend me a tongue
light enough with which to tell
My Royal Dead
That one of their stocks
has gone away and brought to their sacred precincts
A wayfarer! (p. 37).

The excerpt above points out that Nana thinks she has not lived up to the expectations of the ancestors whom she represents. She, therefore, finds it difficult to relay this piece of abominable information to the dead. Another reason why she engages in this lamentation is that Eulalie's presence will constantly remind them about this "unmentionable" that they have tried their best to forget.

Nevertheless, as the play unfolds, this symbolic figure realizes that there is the need to put the past behind, forget about the age-long pain of slavery, and embrace one another irrespective of the differences in their backgrounds. Being the only surviving elder in the entire family, a symbol of continuity between the past and the progressive present, and the representative of the ancestral interest, Nana ensures that there is absolute unity and tranquility among the family members. This is the reason why she, together with the members of the Odumna Clan, gathers together at the stool room on the sacred day to pray to the ancestors on behalf of Ato's family:

Petu: It was a couple of days ago that we met. What came out of the meeting is that we must come and ask you and your wife what is preventing you from giving your grandmother a

great-grandchild before she leaves us [Everyone nods his/her head. Nana more violently than the others] (p. 66).

This act of Nana, in particular, and the members of the Odumna Clan in general, also shows that they have totally accepted Eulalie into the family as their in-law, despite all odds. Nana wants Africans and Ghanaians in general and Akans in particular to embrace the bitter experience associated with the national history with all its complexity and sensitivity. After all, yesterday is irreversible. The future does not solely lie in the past, though the past sometimes becomes the thrusting point for the future. Nana's act in this context preaches forgiveness. Another significant issue that is raised in the excerpt is procreation, which is one of the reasons for marriage among the Akans. This is to ensure the continuity of a family lineage, among other reasons.

According to Mbiti (1989), childbirth is the final seal of marriage in the Akan society. Nana's wish is for Ato and Eulalie to give her a great-grandchild so that this seed will be used to seal the unity that Nana stands for before she dies. The place selected for the family gathering is equally significant to consider. Thus, the family gathers at the stool room (p. 63), a sacred place where the stools of dead chiefs are kept. It is, therefore, regarded as the abode of the ancestral spirits. This implies that though they are not physically present, the presence of the ancestors and other divinities is needed to solidify the union.

Aidoo equally uses *The-Mouth-That-Eats-Salt-And-Pepper* to talk about some of the cultural practices that ought to be eliminated. In this context, these elders serve as the social consciousness to critique the society in a meaningful debate to bring about fairness in their discussions. One of the hostile

cultural practices highlighted by the elders is the belief in the practice of witchcraft. The dialogue between the elders lends credence to this:

OLD WOMAN: She is a witch.

OLD WOMAN: But Anowa is too much. She is against the very man whom she has selected from so many.

OLD MAN: A good husband would himself want advice from his wife, as the head of the family, a chief, a king, or any nobleman needs advice.

OLD MAN: I do not know if I can believe all that you say of this pitiful child. But certainly, it is not too much to think that the heavens might show something to children of the latter day which was hidden from them of old? (pp. 41- 41).

Anowa's crime that has resulted in name-calling in this dialogue is that she consistently expresses her thoughts and feelings on issues that concern her but finds herself under social customs and cultural practices that do not permit that. Her action is something that is regarded as disrespectful. This is because in the Akan context, much premium is placed on age, status, and experience. So, children are trained not to participate in decision-making or contribute to the conversation that concerns them unless they are invited.

Another reason is that Anowa is raised in a society where "in order for her man to be a man, she must not think, she must not talk" (p. 52). It is Anowa's gift of insight, intuition, and outspoken nature that has been mistaken for witchcraft. The application of this patriarchal power and wrongful accusation resulting in negative branding is meant to abuse and stifle the creativity of women, and this is what Aidoo stands against and wishes could be changed.

It is shown in the excerpt again that the Old Man brings in a different perspective about Anowa's behaviour by maintaining that irrespective of the caliber and one's status in the society, they still need the advice of their women to make it. This elder again admonishes members of the society to change their mentality that the old are always the custodians of knowledge and that they must always be listened to. This is because some of the 21st century children, such as Anowa, are well-endowed with the gift of insight and knowledge that supersedes that of the elders, which the elders should tap into for the betterment of the entire society.

Akuba in *Heavy Moments* also suffers the same fate as Anowa as she is also called a witch by Mampa, the old woman in the house (p. 67). It is evident that though Anowa and Akuba suffer the same, Anowa's is borne out of strict adherence to patriarchal rules whereas Akuba's is steeped in superstition. These two yardsticks should be reconsidered because if society continues to use them for blaming others, it would have a grave impact on human reasoning and work against the unity and coherence of the community.

In *The Girl Who Can*, Nana has succeeded in preventing her only daughter, Maami, from going to school. Here, Maami "felt she was locked into some darkness because she didn't go to schools" (p. 31). The old woman has again tried consistently to prevent her only granddaughter, Adjoa, from accessing formal education. According to Nana, sending Adjoa to school "would be a waste of time" (p. 31). Nana does this because of the age-long traditional ideology that limits the capability of females to house chores and childbearing. As events unfold, Nana, who is initially represented as the agent of patriarchal ideology, ironically, becomes the one who washes Adjoa's

uniform and irons them (p.32). Nana also takes part in the celebration of Adjoa's victory in a special way when she runs and wins every race for her school to get a trophy:

Yes, Nana said that she didn't care if such things were not done. She would do it. You know what she did? She carried the gleaming cup on her back. Like they do with babies and other precious things. And this time, not taking the trouble to walk by herself (p. 32).

In the excerpt, Nana treats the winning cup as a baby: something that is cherished by Akans. Thin legs, which are the symbol of the perceived fertility of women, have now become the source of pride for Adjoa and her family and the society at large.

In the same vein, Akuba's Mampa (old woman) also has the same perception as Adjoa's Nana regarding the capabilities of a woman. In *Heavy Moments*, Akuba comes home and tells Mampa that she (Akuba) has been accepted into the Air Force Academy. Mampa reacts:

If I told people that you are going to learn to drive a lorry, a taxi, or a bus, they would think it is strange, but a brave achievement enough for a woman. But how do you expect me to go and tell anybody that you are actually going to drive an aeroplane through the skies and be believed? (p. 70).

Mampa does not believe that a girl like Akuba can fly an aeroplane because this is traditionally perceived as a masculine occupation. From Mampa's point of view, this is an awkward act, and this perception extends to the entire society that delineates gender-specific roles. Ironically, the same Mampa joins the thick

crowd to celebrate Akuba's victory, the same way Adjoa's Nana does. She forces her way through the crowd unto the front view: "Then she could see Sarah coming out of the crowd. Oww-w-w, what a relief! And with her an old woman. And ow...its Mampa, Mampa, Mampa..." (p. 71).

The victory of the two girls has become a big lesson for the old woman. She now believes that the capabilities of a woman or a girl are not limited. Females can venture into any field if they so desire. Nana, in these two situations, is a figure who is capable of adjusting to societal change. Thus, Nana is a person who is receptive to change in the Akan context. Aidoo has again used Nana to show that though Akan society is firmly rooted in tradition, the same tradition could be changed to reflect the ever-changing needs of the individual and the society at large.

Further to these, Aidoo, in the poem, "Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks" uses the bead as a symbol to represent the cultures of the people, hence, the need to protect this unique identity that serves the best interest of the people. Amenakpor, Donkor, Adu, and Horsey (2013) are of the view that beads were the first durable ornaments humans possessed, and they are the rich and never-fading assets of the Ghanaian culture that distinguish a particular clan from the others. As discussed earlier, beads serve various functions to Akans. It is based on the above significance that Nana in the poems is furious at the symbolic bead, chevron. She, therefore, admonishes the people to disassociate from it at all costs:

Don't tell me if there were no beads,
something else could meet our needs.
Something what? Something where?

Please keep it there, even if it's rare (lines 178-181).

So don't talk to me of the chevron.

Don't ever talk of it.

Don't break my ears on the chevron.

Don't break my ears!!! (lines 97-10).

Nana's stance regarding the beads signifies her quest to uphold and guard the uniqueness of the people. In this regard, she is used as a paradoxical character who helps to bring out the qualities of the two types of beads: chevron and the traditional bead.

Aidoo uses Nana in *Changes: A Love Story* to crown her stance on the changes that she (Aidoo) wishes to occur in the traditional society:

Do I think it must always be so? Certainly not. It can be changed. It can be better. Indeed, that can be changed.

What it would take is a lot of thinking and a great deal of doing. It is possible for life on this earth to be good for us all. Lady Silk, everything is possible (p. 126).

Nana, in this excerpt, is of the view that things should not be left the way they are. Thus, society should not continue to engage in cultural practices that do not favour the indigenes. Even though Nana is optimistic that it is possible to have the desired change, she also believes that it cannot be realized on a silver platter. This is because as the griot who is well-versed in the customs and the traditions of the land and an omniscient character who can assess the behaviours of the people across the globe and in different generations, she knows that most of the elders are conservative and would like to maintain the established status quo as far as the cultural practices are concerned.

Nana believes that it will take determination and hard work to convince these traditional elders to accept the needed change. Nana is insisting on change because the dynamic nature of the society needs such changes that would benefit all generations and both sexes. López-Ramírez (2020) also finds that the old woman represents an agent of change, awareness, insight, knowledge, and good judgment.

One observation made about Nana, the custodian of wisdom, is that she sometimes puts up behaviours that contradict this quality. In her perceived negativity, there could be an agenda which Aidoo has used several instances in the selected texts to project. A typical instance is shown in *The Girl Who Can*, where Adjoa persistently approaches Nana for help concerning a problem that has been bothering her (Adjoa) for some time:

My problem is that at seven years of age, there are things I can think in my head that I do not have the proper language to speak them out. And that, I think, is a very serious problem. Take Nana. First, I have to struggle to catch her attention.... Then I tell her something I had taken a long time to figure out. She would ask me... never, never, but NEVER to repeat THAT (pp. 27-28).

Adjoa is represented as an entity with a problem that she wants Nana to help her out with instead of going to Maami, her mother. But after listening to her, Nana either remains silent or tells her not to repeat what she says again. Nana does that because she thinks Adjoa's concern is unnecessary.

A similar scenario is created in *Anowa* when the protagonist engages her grandmother in a dialogue regarding slavery. When Nana realizes that Anowa is asking detailed questions, Nana intimates:

You ask many questions

Shut up, child or your mouth will twist up one day with questions

That a child should ask questions...

Shut up! It is not good for a child to ask big questions (p. 45).

Nana does not want to open up to Anowa, hence, she silences the protagonist because she believes Anowa has gone overboard. Thus, she asks questions that are not to be asked by a child like her. Nana adopts this strategy as a defense mechanism to prevent the latter from asking questions that could revive the unpleasant memories of the slave trade. After all, from the Akan's perspective, "Abofra bo nnwa na ommo akyekyedee" (A child breaks a snail, not a tortoise). The action taken by Nana is backed by the assertion made by Morrison (1984) that the old woman in the African context is instructive.

The attitude of Nana in the above-discussed scenarios is also projected in *Changes: A Love Story* when Esi drives from Accra to her village to consult Nana concerning her decision on Ali and Oko, as shown in this excerpt:

She had asked Esi to tell her truthfully whether the problem was that her husband beat her...At the end of the discussion, her grandmother had told her the matter sounded too much for her ears. Finally, Esi got into her car and drove back to Accra (p. 41).

The excerpt reveals that after the dialogue between the two, Nana again remains silent instead of telling Esi what to do. Her silence could mean that she does

not support Esi since her excuses are flimsy. Nana's action could also be interpreted that she wants Esi to gain direct autonomy and independence over the decision. According to Guerin et al. (2005), the gift of insight and intuition causes elders to behave in this manner.

Apart from silence, Nana is again projected as a character who is temperamental in various situations. In *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, for instance, when Ato tries to defend his act concerning his marriage to Eulalie, Nana retorts: "Ato, do not talk with the foolishness of your generation" (p. 36). Similarly, when Anowa also exhibits gross insubordination towards the people of Yebi, the old woman becomes angry:

OLD WOMAN: Badua should tell her daughter that the
sapling breaks with bending that would not grow straight.

The gods will surely punish Anowa... (*Anowa*, pp. 7-8).

Akuba's grandmother is not exempted from this. She shows this attitude when Akuba begins to cry at night:

It must have been deep, deep in the night. She had woken
up suddenly to what was unmistakably the sound of a
passing plane... When the sound of the plane died, she
started to cry... she just sat there wailing. In exasperation,

Mampa has called her a witch (*The Girl Who Can*, p. 67).

When Koli goes to Nana in "Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks" to learn more about beads, Nana appears happy when she recounts to Koli the importance of beads among Akans. Along the line, she sounds angry and suddenly retorts:

So don't talk to me about the chevron.

Don't ever talk about it.

Don't break my ears on the chevron.

Don't break my ears!!!(lines 97-100)

Though the audience may have their reservations about Nana's attitude in these situations, a critical look at them reveals they are for the goodwill of the society. Ato's Nana adopts this strategy to straighten and rebuke Ato for disrespecting her, the clan's men, and the entire society. The elders at Yebi also sound angry because, just as Ato, Anowa has also disrespected the elders of the land and has also shown resistance to the traditional values of the community. Apart from Akuba's cry being a bad omen, Nana must have rebuked her because she is disturbing other people's sleep. Koli grandmother's anger is not directed at the listener, but at chevron whose presence has brought about calamity upon the land. She uses this to register her displeasure about chevron and what it stands for.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has been used to examine the various roles Aidoo has assigned to the old woman figure to perform in the selected texts. It again looks at some of the cultural practices of the Akans that Nana wants to be altered. The chapter also looks at some perceived negative behaviours that Nana puts up, but are meant for the betterment of the individuals and the entire society. The ensuing chapter presents the styles used by Aidoo to foreground the old woman in the selected texts.

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction

Writers adopt different styles to foreground the aspects of their texts that are important to them to attract the audience's attention. This section is, therefore, meant to look at the techniques used by Aidoo to project the old woman figure in the various texts just as Armah, who foregrounds Naana in *Fragments* by using her as the narrator of the text from the beginning to the end of the story and naming the first and the last chapters after her. The analysis and the discussion are based on the language used by Nana, the stylistic elements employed, her name, and how she is introduced in the texts.

Analysis and Discussion of How Nana/Old Woman is Foregrounded in the Sampled Texts.

One technique Aidoo has used to project Nana is her language. It is realized that Nana in the sampled texts consistently uses proverbial language. This act is mostly carried out by elderly people in the Akan context, unlike the younger generation who prefer modern expressions devoid of any local flavour. Examples of the proverbs are presented below:

1. Esi Kom, leave that child alone, for no one knows what the man of fame and honour was like when he was a child”.
2. “Young man, one does not stand in an ant trail to pick off ants” (*The Dilemma of a Ghost*, pp. 11& 65).
3. “The infant which tries its milk teeth on every bone and stone grows up with nothing to eat dried meat with” (*Anowa*, p. 21).
4. “We meet our in-laws only when we are in our farming rags” (*The Girl Who Can*, p. 63).
5. “Love is deceitfully sweet like the wine from fresh palm tree” (*Changes*, p. 45).

Nana uses proverbs because among the Akans, proverbs are used as a pedagogical tool to educate the younger ones on how to conduct themselves successfully in society. They are also used to transmit cherished cultural values to them. Excerpt 1 indicates that a child’s future is unpredictable, so no one should be quick to criticize them. This is important because Akans believe in destiny (nkrabea). Akans believe that every child, regardless of the present behaviour, has the potential to grow into a respectable personality in society, hence, there is no need to be harsh when training them. This proverb emphasizes the application of patience, wisdom, and guidance in raising children.

Excerpt 2 highlights the need to use wisdom and patience in solving problems in life to avoid making hasty decisions. This is necessary in the sense that if care is not taken, the one involved would waste his/her time but would not get any fruitful outcome. Excerpt 3 suggests that a child who wastes his/her energy on unnecessary things or makes an unguided decision will struggle in future. The proverb reflects recognition of limits, patience, and wisdom in

decision-making. The proverb is also used to remind the younger ones that it is not everything in life that they can handle by themselves, and this reinforces the importance of elderly people in the Akan society as they have more experience and wisdom to help them deal with difficult challenges. This proverb is equated to the Akan proverb: A child breaks a snail but not a tortoise.

The revelation made, as far as this proverb is concerned, is not farfetched from Yankah's (1995) view. He also reveals that Nana is the epitome of wisdom, and she uses it to guide the younger generation. Excerpt 4 conveys the idea that important moments often come when we are less prepared. The proverb, therefore, teaches the younger ones the need to be strategic in life. Thus, one must always be prepared for unexpected moments since opportunities and challenges in life do not always meet us when we are fully ready for them or prompt us before they surface in one's life. Excerpt 5 conveys the idea of unexpected changes in relationships. Thus, fresh palm wine is sweet and enjoyable. However, with time, it ferments and becomes sour with a strong alcohol content, which can easily intoxicate the user. Similarly, love could begin with excitement and joy at first. Later, it could become complicated, leading to bitterness and regret that one must be prepared to face. This proverb again highlights the need to be cautious, patient, and wise when falling in love.

From the analysis, it becomes clear that patience and wisdom are the common virtues reflected in the five proverbs. For the old woman to stress these two virtues signifies that her children needed them most to succeed in life. Nana's consistent use of proverbs helps in the preservation of this Akan oral narrative and foregrounds her identity as the custodian of culture within which she is situated. It is also argued that Nana's love for proverbs is a way of

exalting the beauty of old age in the Akan setting, thereby, making her stand out since proverbs have lost their significance, especially, in the eyes of the younger generation. This act of Nana is also buttressed by Konadu (2006), who indicates that the Akan language is saturated with proverbs so much so that the language can be considered a proverbialized one. Chilala (2014) also believes that this is an elevated language that is associated with the wisdom of the old. According to Ui (2014), the use of dialect in a text is a foregrounding feature that is an inseparable part of the text's identity, though it prolongs the reading time.

It is also obvious that the old woman uses transliterations, which involves assimilating the local expression in English or transforming a local language (Akan) into the English language for various reasons. Examples of the transliterated English (TE) used by the old woman and their corresponding standard (SE) versions are:

- a. TE: "I try not to put my tongue in your affairs (*The Dilemma of a Ghost* p. 9).
SE: I try not to interfere in your affairs.
- b. TE: "A good man eats his wife" (*Changes*, p. 124).
SE: A good man has sex with his wife.
- c. TE: "Our ears are breaking with that" (*Anowa*, p. 20).
SE: We are tired of hearing that.
- d. TE: "For only my dot -dot's eyes!" (Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks, line 62)
SE: For my beloved eyes only.
- e. TE: "Adjoa, you say what?" (*The Girl Who Can*, p.27)
SE: Adjoa, what did you say?

It is shown from the various excerpts that the transliterated expressions have their equivalent in Standard English that Nana could have easily used to express her thoughts. She, however, opts for the transliterations only. Her action indicates that Akan's way of speaking is equally valid since it is understood by those who matter. Nana uses it to also ensure that she speaks with an Akan voice, even in English, thereby, reinforcing the connection between language, identity, and culture.

I also find instances of code-mixing in Nana's expressions, a situation where some vocabulary items in the indigenous (Akan) variety of language are interwoven into Standard English. The examples below are sampled to illustrate instances of code mixing in the selected texts. (The code-mixed expressions are boldened.):

- a. "That '**saa**' thin legs can also be useful" (*The Girl Who Can* p. 32),
- b. "**Puei puei puei!** This is the type of happening out of which we get stories and legends. Yebi, I wish you **due, due, due**. May all powers be consoled with you" (*Anowa*, p. 63).
- c. "They are now removing their pans, **tchia!**" (*The Dilemma of a Ghost*, p. 9).
- d. "Though called **bodom**, as in a dog" ("Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks", line 137).

Bodom beads, they are so big" ("Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks", lines 139).
- e. Destroy a perfectly good marriage because your husband has too many people around him? **Ei!** In the olden days, wasn't that one of

the reasons why any family gave their princess to any man in marriage? **Ei**. But wasn't that a good reason? (*Changes*, p.128).

It is worth noting that “**saa**” in example a is used to emphasize or intensify the quality of the legs. “**Puei puei puei!**” in excerpt b suggests disgust, disappointment, disapproval, and frustration. Repeating it three times intensifies the emotion it exudes. “**Due, due, due**” also conveys pity, sympathy, and sorrow. The repetition emphasizes deep concern or sadness. “**Tchia!**”, as used in excerpt c, indicates mockery. “**Ei!**” is used in excerpt e to indicate surprise and shock. The word “bodom” means a dog. At times, code-mixing is used because there are no translational equivalents of the Standard English words in the Akan language.

However, in this context, though some of these expressions: “saa” and “bodom” have their equivalent in the standard English, they are intentionally employed by the old woman not only to help immerse her into the setting (Akan) of the texts but also to provide insight into the identification of the character's perspectives and reactions to different situations or contexts. Its usage also projects her identity as an Akan and a person who is culturally concerned in the face where modern expressions are preferred by the younger generation. The usage also reflects the realities of the use of English in the Akan context as it caters adequately to the varying or multilingual situations of the indigenes, which is partly influenced by colonization. Again, such expressions are used by the old woman to capture concepts that are likely to lose their true meaning if translated into the author's second language (English).

These two indigenized forms of English: transliteration and code-mixing, violate the normal codes of the Standard English Language. It is

pertinent to note that despite the comprehension problems that they can create, especially for non-Akan speakers, the old woman uses them perfectly to express her views and deliver her messages to the audience. This finding concerning the indigenized language adopted by the old woman in the selected texts aligns with the findings of Zhou and Qiang (2023) whose research points out that violation of the norms of language results in the appearance of foregrounding language that is intentionally applied for artistic aesthetic purposes and these unusual, unconventional, cultural, and attention-grabbing expressions are deliberately chosen by authors to produce special effects.

It is again observed that some of the expressions of the old woman reflect traditional belief systems among the Akans. The extracts below are meant to lend credence to this claim:

1. “Do they not know that if heavens withdraw the light, one must light his way? How will he find his way around this dark place should the ghost of one of our forbearers pay us a visit?” (*The Dilemma of a Ghost* pp. 8-9)
2. “The gods will punish Abena Badua for refusing to let a born priestess dance (*Anowa*, p. 8).
3. “It is a bad omen because all the bad spirits will come and join, and then someone in the house or neighbourhood was bound to die” (*The Girl Who Can*, p. 67).
4. “Beads like angels plead for us” (“Where the Bead Speaks”, p. 150).
5. “Why did our ancestors build the shrine and the white people built their churches then?” (*Changes*, p.84).

These excerpts highlight all the divinities that Akans believe in. Excerpt 1 talks about ancestors (Nananom Nsamanfo). The excerpt further shows that these

ancestors are always in touch with mortal beings. Excerpt 2 reveals their belief in gods (Abosom). These gods, just as the ancestors, play an integral role in the lives of the living. Thus, they have the power to bless and to punish. Excerpt 3 reveals that apart from these divinities, there are other spirits around who work against the mortals. Nana's utterance numbered 4 also discloses that they equally believe in the Supreme Being (Nana Nyame) whom they contact through beads. It is again shown in excerpt 5 that since these divinities perform different functions, Akans set apart different sacred places for them. It is important to maintain that the presence and the functions of these figures act as motivation for Akans to act morally to attract their blessings instead of curses.

Nana's capability to use these expressions shows that she is well-rooted in the traditions of her people. Because of this, she knows what to say and when to say it. This is a unique feature that is not portrayed by the younger generation represented by Esi, Anowa, Ato, Mary, Akuba, and Adjoa, who do not want to have anything to do with the cultural practices and the traditions of the land. According to Leech (1969), the linguistic characteristics of a particular text - consisting of the choice made from the repertoire of language- is a means of rendering a particular subject matter prominent. In this regard, Nana has been projected through her linguistic choice to show the cultural values, belief systems, and other ways of life of the indigenous people. This act of Nana indicates that she is the custodian of the culture and tradition that she wants to protect.

From the analysis, it could be said that Nana has carefully flooded her utterances with proverbs, transliteration, code-mixing, and traditional belief, which are features of Ghanaian English to portray to the audience and the

outside world that colonization has not totally rubbed her of her language. The different forms of language used by Nana also enable Ghanaians in general, and Akans in particular, to identify with the texts and meaningfully participate in them. Nana's language, therefore, situates her within the Akan context and authenticates the cultural boundary set for this study. The finding of this study is also in line with that of Asika's (2011) who also reveals that the stylistic features that give uniqueness, identity, as well as authenticity to African literature, of which the selected texts of Aidoo are not excluded, include direct transliteration, objects familiar to natives, tales, and proverbs.

Aidoo has again foregrounded Nana through stylistic elements. One of them is repetition. Repetition of the Nana figure in most of Aidoo's texts and her repetitive roles foregrounds her, and this is what catches the attention of the researcher, hence, this study. Thus, the researcher wants to find out why Nana has been consistently represented and the exact roles assigned to her to perform in those texts. Apart from Nana and her roles that have been repeated, her repeated utterances are equally used as a stylistics tool to foreground her. In *Changes*, for instance, it is clear that even after her encounters with Esi, what Nana tells her keeps repeating itself in the mind of the granddaughter. This makes Esi engage in critical reflection when she is alone, as shown in this excerpt:

Next, she rummaged through her rather impressive music library for some choral music. She smiled to herself as she remembered what her grandmother had said about that the last time she had been around (p. 90).

Most of her pieces of advice also repeat themselves in Esi's mind to create a context of reflection:

Lying alone in bed with her eyes wide open in the dark, she remembered some of the advice her... grandmother had given her... That being one of the wives had rules. If she obeys the rules, a woman like her should be all right (p. 132).

These instances show that the words of the old woman are not ordinary. Re-echoing this view, Akuba has this to say:

Mampa had always warned against what she described as Akuba's habit of senselessly and uselessly hoarding of urine. 'One of these days, you are going to burst your bladder'. Akuba nearly choked on that. 'Oh Mampa,' she thought fondly. She was remembering that it was the same Mampa she had overheard mutter to herself that we meet our in-laws only when we are in our faming rags or something to that effect. And in any case, is this the time to remember all these? (*Heavy Moment*, p. 63)

The excerpt reveals that the old woman has warned Akuba several times about this negative behaviour of keeping urine for a long time. Nana repeats the warning to emphasize the implications of this dangerous act, hence, the need to avoid it. It is shown in the excerpt that Nana's voice resonates when Akuba begins to experience the repercussions of what Mampa refers to as senseless behaviour. Akuba and Esi's current situations affirm the fact that the words of the old woman are sacred and must be adhered to. Anyone who goes contrary to such advice pays for it. Nana, in these situations, has been used as an image of reflection to the protagonists.

In *The Girl Who Can*, the young narrator, Adjoa, recounts how Nana's words recur in her mind when she is alone: "After I have repeated whatever I had said, she would either, still in that voice, ask me 'never, never, but NEVER to repeat THAT'" (p. 28). Nana uses the word repeatedly to let the protagonist know that she is serious about what she is saying. Thus, Adjoa should not say whatever she said again. These words 'Never, ever, but NEVER' paint a picture of a dialogue between Adjoa and her grandmother. The child narrator also indicates: "When I think back on it now, those two, Nana and my mother, must have been discussing my legs from the day I was born. That discussion was repeated very regularly" (p. 28). This utterance shows that Adjoa is worried about the continuous discussion between Nana and Maami about her features. From the excerpt, it is clear that the old woman is also worried because she believes Adjoa's state can affect her reproductive organs. The implication is that Adjoa could be barren, just as Anowa, and barrenness is something that is frowned upon in the Akan context because of its repercussions: termination of family lineage, social stigma, among others. This stylistic element is further used in *Anowa* where the phrase "shut up" is repeated four times when Anowa engages her (Nana) in a dialogue. This excerpt lends credence to this:

ANOWA: Nana, what do they look like?

NANA: Shut up, child.

ANOWA: But what do they look like?

NANA: Shut up or your mouth will twist one day with questions... I must escape from you, child. Shut up. It is not good ... Shut up (P.45).

These repeated words are used to stop Anowa from asking questions, as previously discussed.

The same scenario is created in “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks”:

So don’t talk to me about the chevron.

Don’t ever talk about it.

Don’t break my ears on the chevron.

Don’t break my ears!!! (lines 97-100).

This repetition is done to emphasize how Grandma despises the bead “chevron” and everything associated with it. Grandma in the excerpt believes that talking about the chevron means reopening the pains inherent in it, the same scenario created in *Anowa*. Qin (1983) observes that the recurrence of certain words or key sentences at an extraordinary frequency is meant for prominence, emphasis, and enhancement. He believes that these are sufficient to illustrate a point.

Imagery is another stylistic element consistently used in diverse ways in the selected texts to foreground the old woman. Thus, Aidoo has used the old woman figure to create mental pictures of diverse issues raised in the selected texts. One of them is slavery and its associated pains depicted through the reaction of the old woman. Thus, the lamentation of Ato’s grandmother in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* when she finally confirms that Ato’s wife is a slave (p. 37), the reluctant attitude of Anowa’s grandmother in *Anowa* towards Anowa’s questions concerning slavery (pp. 45-46), coupled with Nana’s angry nature expressed in “Where the Bead Speaks” when talking about chevron (lines 105-108) evoke a vivid image of an emotionally and psychologically distressed figure.

Again, the imagery created through Nana’s various reactions draws the audience into the texts to experience the harrowing impact of slavery just as those who witnessed it. Her actions also increase the emotional imbalance in

the reader. This causes the reader to sympathize and empathize with the affected ones. Nana also uses flashbacks and sensory imagery in the three situations to evoke painful memories of slavery that have long been forgotten. The finding is supported by Short (1996) who maintains that foregrounding yields a powerful psychological effect on the audience.

This technique is applied in *Changes* but from a different angle. Here, the device is used to highlight the reaction of the old woman when she gets to know Esi's reasons for divorce, as shown in the excerpt below:

What is the problem? Both her grandmother and her mother really screamed this time: the former with her walking stick raised as though to strike her... Are you mad?... At the end of the discussion... her grandmother had told her ... she didn't want to hear any more of it... The declaration was accompanied by a proper palm-rubbing gesture (*Changes*, p. 44).

The excerpt projects a woman who is shocked and even angry. The use of rhetorical questions depicts how frustrated she is and her inability to comprehend Esi's decision since her choice is not only unacceptable but also challenges traditional expectations of marriage in Akan society. Her grandmother's reaction suggests that marriage is seen as a woman's duty, and leaving it, regardless of personal happiness, is almost unthinkable. The palm-rubbing gesture signifies that Nana has given up on reasoning with her. Despite being a woman herself, Nana's action reflects the societal constraints placed on Esi. Her autonomy is questioned rather than respected, illustrating how deeply patriarchal norms dictate women's lives. Her grandmother, despite being a

woman herself, reinforces these norms, showing how cultural expectations are upheld across generations.

In *The Girl Who Can*, Aidoo has created another striking visual imagery through how Nana handles the trophy won by Adjoa during the athletic competition: ‘‘She carried the gleaming cup on her back. Like they do to babies, and other very precious things (p. 32). For Nana to carry the trophy, just as a baby, signifies how precious the trophy is to her. She carries it on her back to keep it safe, and this symbolizes a new life.

Aidoo has equally projected the old woman by using her as a tool to create suspense in the audience, thereby, keeping the audience glued to her and the texts in general. In *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, when Nana first encounters Eulalie, she does not immediately express her disapproval openly. Instead, she reacts with silence and an elusive gesture, leaving both Ato and the audience unsure about her thoughts, as seen in this extract:

The old woman totters in, supported by her stick...She sits on one of the stools... She props her chin on her stick. Presently, Ato enters... For a few seconds, the old woman continues to sit motionless as if she has not seen him (p.8).

In the excerpt, Nana behaves as if she is not aware that Ato is in the house. Her silence and stillness create tension. This is because it is unclear whether it is a deliberate attempt to ignore her grandchild or she is in a deep thought. This posture taken by Nana raises some questions. One, what exactly is she thinking about? Two, what is she up to? Her reaction influences the audience to guess and be eager to see how she will finally react. Suspense is deepened, especially, when the reader is already aware of Ato’s marital status and the one he has

chosen. The audience is left wondering whether she will accept Eulalie or reject her. To satisfy this curiosity borne out of suspense, the audience reads thoroughly to get the outcome of this reaction.

Similarly, in *Changes*, Nana has been very instrumental in Esi's two marriages. However, her hesitation at a point in time in providing immediate, outright, and direct answers to Esi's marital issues leaves Esi and the reader to wonder whose side she will take. Esi drives from Accra to the village to seek her advice from Nana, and after listening to her submission, the only thing she says is, "The matter sounded too much for her ears. She didn't want to hear any more of it" (p.41). The next thing she does is to accompany her action with a "proper palm-rubbing gesture. Here, neither the reader nor Esi knows whether Nana is on the side of Oko or Ali at this point. This form of uncertainty builds suspense.

She equally creates suspense in *Anowa* through this expression: "But what shall we say of our child? The unfortunate Anowa? Let us just say that Anowa is not a girl to meet every day" (p.7). The opening remarks of the old woman is a foreshadow, prompting the audience that there is a mystery surrounding Anowa. However, the old woman does not provide it, and this grapples the audience with uncertainty, hence, the need to stay glued to the content to unravel the mystery by finding out who this lady is and why this statement is made about her.

In *The Girl Who Can*, Nana's reaction towards Adjoa's question likewise creates suspense throughout the text. This extract supports this claim:

Take Nana. First, I have to struggle to catch her attention. Then I tell her something that I had taken a long time to figure it out. And

then you know what always happens? She will at once stop whatever she is doing, mouth open, and stare at me for a long time. Then, bending and turning her head slightly so that one ear came down towards me. She'll say in that voice: 'Adjoa, never, never, but repeat THAT', or she will immediately burst out laughing. She would laugh and laugh and laugh until tears ran down her cheeks...And then, of course, there would be two old people laughing and screaming with tears running down their faces. Sometimes, the show continues until there are three, four or even more of such laughing and screaming tear-faced grownups. And all that performance on whatever I had said? I find something quite confusing in all this. No one explains to me why I should not repeat what I say (p. 28).

It is shown in the extract that when Adjoa asks her question, Nana immediately reacts with seriousness and urgency, telling her never to repeat that. This unexpected reaction makes Adjoa and the audience wonder what she has said wrong and why Nana is so strict about her question since Nana does not provide any answer to that effect. Interestingly, she sometimes stands up and looks at Adjoa in a way to suggest that the topic is serious, but here too, she does not explain why.

The lack of explanation heightens the suspense in the audience and the protagonist since both cannot easily identify what is actually wrong. The situation becomes worse when other old women join the laughing galore. The mystery deepens because their laughter suggests that the elderly people know a secret that Adjoa and the audience are not aware of.

By keeping the reason hidden, the story keeps the audience engaged, waiting anxiously to see if the hidden secret will be uncovered at the end. It must be emphasized that it is never revealed. This influences the reader to make some guesses concerning Nana's behaviour. One, she laughs because Adjoa insists on going to school, something that the existing patriarchal ideology does not permit. Two, Adjoa wants to inquire about why she is always complaining about her legs. Three, Adjoa wants to know what is wrong with her (Adjoa's) father.

The same situation is found in the first stanza of the poem, "Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks", which reads:

My uncle was the prophetic one,
throwing his beads this way and that,
diving, foretelling,
warnings galore, sweet promising.
One eye on the past, four to the future,
Half a dozen or more for now.
He was good if the news was good,
for evil news, we blamed the beads (lines 1-8)
Speak to me of beads, Grandma,
speak to me.
Talk to me of beads, Nana,
talk to me (lines 33-36).

The opening lines create suspense through mystery, symbolism, and the ambiguous nature of the fortune-telling of the beads. Thus, the audience

wonders what the beads exactly reveal through the telling galore and what they represent.

This strategy used by the old woman immediately draws the reader into the world of prophecy and uncertainty, making her eager to uncover the deeper meanings behind the beads and their significance in the Akan culture. It is this revelation and others that influence Koli to desperately crave for information on beads, hence, pleading with Nana to help her out, which Nana does perfectly. The finding is in agreement with that of Zhou & Qiang (2023) who maintain that specific manifestations of foregrounding involve emphasizing character traits and behaviors to attract the audience and to aid in a better understanding of the connotation of the work. So, Nana succeeds in creating suspense in the text and the audience. This tool effectively increases the level of concentration and the attentiveness of the audience and the characters.

How the old woman is named also foregrounds her. Aidoo has given her names that befit their status. In *Anowa*, there is an old woman who is referred to as “The bearded woman who stays at Kwakrom” (p.58). She is the one Anowa consults for advice concerning her marriage, as discussed in one of the previous chapters. In society, it is men who grow beard. For a woman to be bearded sinks well into the feminist politics that as a woman comes of age, she gradually attains some patriarchal status in the society. As a feminist, Aidoo has intentionally projected this old woman with dual qualities. The implication is that she can perform the roles assigned to both sexes.

Another concern is where this woman stays: Kwaakrom, which symbolizes patriarchy. Thus, among the Akans, all the males have day-born names with variants mostly consisting of different affixes: Kwa or Ko as in

Kwesi, Kojo, Kwabena, among others. For a woman to stay in Kwaakrom means that she is in the committee of men, hence, she behaves as such. Essuman's (2012) study also reveals that the old woman archetype is a cultural mother who transcends cultural norms to perform roles reserved for men in society. Though this means of foregrounding is laudable from the feminist's perspective, as a researcher, I have my reservations about it. Thus, does it mean that until a woman acquires the attributes of men, she cannot possess the needed wisdom to function as expected in society?

Another name Aidoo has given to this old woman figure is Nana, as shown in the excerpt from the various texts:

- a. "No, **Nana**...he is very clean, very orderly" (*Changes*, p. 41).
- b. "Talk to me of the beads, **Nana** talk to me" ("Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks", line 35).
- c. "It had nothing to do with what **Nana** considered as problem" (*The Girl Who Can*, p. 71).
- d. "There is nothing else on my mind **Nana**" (*The Dilemma of a Ghost*, p. 28).
- e. Tell me, **Nana**, who built the house? (*Anowa*, p.44)

Among the Akans, this title is used to refer to elderly people (males and females), the Supreme Being (Nana Nyame), abosom (gods), ancestors (nananom nsamanfo), and priests/priestesses (akomfo). It is only those who demonstrate their worthiness of the title who are properly addressed as such. For the old woman to be consistently addressed with this title indicates that her behaviour, roles, and other attributes are in line with that of these divinities. She

has, therefore, become part of a divine community after having attained a certain level of spiritual qualities.

The finding concerning the old woman in this regard agrees with the assertion of Akhan (2007) on who deserves to be called Nana within the Akan context. It is important to maintain that this name, Nana, given to the old woman in the various texts also elevates her respect, status, and power in the Akan society, so when she speaks, the audience must listen to her. This is because she speaks with the voice of the divinities and man. Therefore, her words carry weight, are full of wisdom, and are considered sacred. Whoever goes against them faces the consequences, as expressed by Chilala (2014).

The revelation made from the analysis, coupled with the assertion of Chilala, is not different from what happens to Ato, Anowa, Mary, Akuba, and Esi who at a point in time refuse to listen to the old woman. As a result, they face the consequences of their actions. Ato, for instance, has a series of misunderstandings with his wife which does not make him have a happy marriage (*The Dilemma of a Ghost*, pp. 52 -71), Anowa faces divorce (*Anowa*, pp.53-58) and dies prematurely and shamefully (*Anowa*, pp. 63-64). Since it is a taboo to take one's life, it is believed that she will also face the consequences in the ancestral world (*Anowa*, pp. 63-64). Esi's marriage to Ali also fails on the same grounds because she fails to listen to the advice and the warnings given by her grandmother (*Changes*, pp.132-181). Ato, Anowa, Mary, Akuba, and Esi's situations show that whatever the younger generation does, they cannot do away with the pieces of advice and guidance from the older generation. They will always come to realize the sense in the words of the elderly.

It must be noted that the behaviours of the above-listed characters are not in line with the norms used in the traditional society because of time variation in the upbringing of Nana and the other characters. It must also be emphasized that the title given to the old woman also creates anonymity and space for her to speak frankly on social issues and to serve as a social conscience. According to Adams (2011), names are symbolic and contribute to the interpretation of a text. According to Zhou and Qiang (2023), literary writers use symbols, such as the Nana figure, to make it easier for readers to understand the meaning created in their texts.

Adjoa, in *The Girl Who Can*, on the other hand, behaves according to the expectations of the Akans. She does that by remaining quiet all through the story, though she would have loved to react towards Nana's attitude as she says:

I always wanted to tell them not to worry. I mean Nana and my mother. That it did not have to be an issue for my two favourite people to fight over. But I didn't want either to be told not to repeat that or it to be considered so funny that anyone would laugh at me (p. 28).

In this excerpt, Adjoa appears to be an obedient and respectful child who does not challenge Nana even when she is pushed to the wall. Nevertheless, a critical examination of her utterance reveals that she wishes she could react just as the other grandchildren, but the training given to her by her maternal grandmother does not permit her to do so. It is believed that this training given to an Akan child makes the child respectful, disciplined, and always appreciative that adults are more knowledgeable and experienced.

Another name is “The-Mouth-That-Eats-Salt-And-Pepper” in *Anowa*. This is an unusual name in the Akan purview. It contains two significant ingredients: salt and pepper, which are needed to balance the taste of any meal. However, they should be used wisely. The bearers represent the voice of the entire community, and Aidoo has employed them to portray the balance in the society. They provide different shades of perspectives and interpretations on issues raised in the traditional society. This unique identity makes them stand out. This is because the reader always pays attention to them to find out how they critique issues raised in the text.

It is, however, observed that whereas the Old Man gives reflective and positive comments, the Old Woman expresses myopic, negative, and conservative views held by society. By so doing, she does not attempt to reassess what she hears or what has been handed down to her. The ensuing dialogue between the elders lends credence to that:

OLD WOMAN: Hei, hei, hei! And what do the children of today want? Eh, what would the children of today have us do? Parenthood was always an expensive affair. But it seems that there is no man or woman created in nature who is endowed with enough power to be a mother or father. Listen, listen. The days when children obeyed their elders have run out. If you tell a child to go forward, he will surely step backwards. And if you asked him to move back a pace, he would ten leagues.

OLD MAN: But what makes your heart race itself in anger so? What disturbs you? Some of us feel that the best way to

sharpen a knife is not to whet one side of it only. And neither can you solve a riddle by considering only one end of it. We know too well how difficult the children of today are. But who begot them? Is a man a father for sleeping with a woman and making her pregnant? And does bearing the child after nine months make her a mother? Or is she the best potter who knows how her clay breathes? (pp. 19-20).

This excerpt concurrently presents different angles from which a child's upbringing could be looked at. Aidoo, through the point of view of the Old Man, condemns the universally accepted arguments expressed by the Old Woman that women are solely responsible for the moral conduct and upbringing of their children. According to him, the responsibilities lie on both parents who brought the child into society.

Examining the diverse views of these two at the same time helps the reader make informed and balanced conclusions on social issues that are presented to the public. It can, therefore, be said that *The-Mouth-That-Eats-Salt-And-Prepper* is both a blessing and a curse to society. The findings in this study concerning the name given to the old woman figure confirm Bossan's (2020) view that names in literary texts are equally foregrounding tools. According to Ennin and Nkansah (2016), names reflect important traits of characters and are used for stylistic effects. Thus, authors use names to foreground characters, endow them traits that will attract the audience to the bearers, and engage in further analysis to aid in a better understanding of the connotation of the work.

Another strategy that Aidoo has adopted to project the old woman is how she is introduced and positioned in the texts. Upon reading the various works, it is revealed that Aidoo strategically introduces her at crucial moments in various parts of the texts under investigation. In *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, Nana is not introduced early. She is ushered into the later part of Act One when the family's taboo: slavery resurfaces (pp. 14-17). Aidoo again introduces her in the early part of Act Three (pp. 28-29) to unravel the mystery surrounding Ato's dream. In another instance, she is positioned close to the stool room where the family members of the Odumna Clan assemble on a sacred day to pray to the dead and to call for assistance and blessings, specifically for Ato and Eulalie (pp. 43-47). She is placed here to supervise the ritual activities and to make sure that they are carried out religiously to get the needed results.

In *Anowa*, the old woman comes into the scene in the early part of Phase Three when the protagonist needs answers to questions about slavery (pp. 44-46). The next old woman to talk about is the bearded woman who is introduced at the time Anowa needs counseling about her marriage (p. 58). Apart from Anowa's grandmother and the bearded old woman, there is another old woman who is one of the elders of Yebe. She serves as a chorus in the text. Thus, she is placed at the end of each phase to comment on the actions of Anowa and Kofi Ako concerning the norms among the Akans. At the end of Phase One, for instance, she provides the audience with more information on what makes Anowa a disobedient child in the Akan context, the man that Anowa has finally decided to settle down with after six years of her puberty right, as well as some characteristics of the man in question:

OLD WOMAN: Hei, hei, hei! And what do the children of today want?... Listen, listen. The days when children obeyed their elders have run out.... after all her ‘I don’t like this’ and ‘I don’t like that’, she has gone and married Kofi Ako?... As for that Kofi Ako, they say he combs his hair too often and stays long at Nteh games (pp.19-20).

At the end of Phase Two, the old woman reveals to the reader the financial status of the couple as a result of the slave trade as shown in this extract: “But people of Yebi rejoice, Kofi Ako has prospered...Kofi Ako can stand on his two feet to dress up fifty brides without moving a step and dress up fifty more (pp. 39-41). At the end of Phase Three, the old woman again announces the death of Anowa and Kofi Ako and also gives the details of their death: “Yebi, I wish you *due, due, due*. May all the powers that be console with you. Kofi Ako has shot himself and Anowa drowns herself!” (p. 63). I must state that it is through her that three significant pieces of information about Kofi Ako’s manhood are revealed: That he lost his manhood because he was not born with much to begin with; that he has been a sickly infant and there is always a hollow in him where a man’s strength should be; that he has consumed it acquiring wealth or exchanged it for prosperity (p. 63). Looking at how she relays comprehensive information, the audience has no choice but to follow her at every phase to get all the needed information to make a firm conclusion about the issues raised in the texts.

In *Changes: A Love Story*, Nana is brought into the text in chapter five, the time her granddaughter is in a desperate dilemma regarding the decision to

take concerning Oko and Ali. From this stage, Nana is almost always attached to Esi when she is reflecting and when she has a confronting issue at hand.

The introduction of Adjoa's grandmother into *The Girl Who Can* is quite different from what has been discussed earlier. Aidoo introduces her at the beginning of the text, and she stays through to the end. During this period, she is made to witness Adjoa's birth: "Nana and my mother must have been discussing my legs from the day I was born" (p. 28) and the series of transformations she goes through: going to school and taking part in the athletics competition. Aidoo might have done that intentionally to let Nana change her primitive mindset about what constitutes an ideal African woman and her capabilities. If Adjoa symbolizes the future, then the two characters create the past and the present and try to see the future through Adjoa.

The introduction of Nana in "Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks" and in *About the Wedding Feast* is quite similar to that of Adjoa's grandmother. The two texts are presented with a traditional folktale storytelling pattern where Nana remains the storyteller from the beginning to the end, just as Naana in Armah's *Fragments*. Nana uses oral art because it is one of the widespread traditions among the indigenous people and a source of entertainment through which lessons are taught. This characteristic situates the texts in the Akan setting where children gather around their grandparents to listen to stories full of wisdom and admonitions. Aidoo must have adopted this dramatic monologue to help the audience follow Nana's presentation without any interruption to make the delivery effective and exciting.

These instances shown above indicate that Aidoo does not have a fixed way of introducing the Nana figure into the various texts. However, the

observation made is that Aidoo strategically attaches her to situations where her presence and interventions are required to demonstrate her importance within the traditional society and to project her as the custodian of wisdom in the Akan perspective, thus, the one that people consult for help. Aidoo's strategy corroborates the assertion by Vogler (2007) that although the actions of a central character often make the old woman figure appear in the early stage of the text, her placement in a text is often a practical consideration. When and where she appears depends on when she is needed. This form of foregrounding makes it difficult for Nana to escape the audience's attention.

Chapter Summary

The analysis of the texts revealed that Ama Atta Aidoo has used various styles to foreground the old woman in the texts under review. Aidoo has done that through stylistic devices, linguistic features, and her name. How she is introduced into the various texts is another style employed by Aidoo to project the old woman. The next chapter looks at the summary, key findings, conclusions, and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The previous chapter contains the techniques used by Ama Ata Aidoo to project the old woman figure in the selected texts to make her stand out from the other characters. The present chapter contains the summary, key findings, conclusions, recommendations, and implications for further studies.

Summary of the Focus of the Study

The focus of this research is on the topic: *Foregrounding the Old Woman: An Analysis of Selected Texts of Ama Ata Aidoo*. The texts that are used for the analysis are *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964), *Anowa* (1970), *Changes* (1991), *The Girl Who Can and Other Stories* (1997), and “Ghana: Where the Bead Speaks” (2017). These texts are sampled purposively because they contain the old woman who supports an archetypal reading. The researcher observes that the bulk criticisms on Aidoo’s works have mostly been skewed towards analyzing feminist thematic issues and slavery, with little attention paid to Nana, the old woman figure. It is also revealed through the review that though various studies have been conducted on ethno-poetics, foregrounding, and old woman from various settings and different texts, there has not been a study where the old woman in Aidoo’s works only is analyzed with an archetypal lens. Accordingly, I set out to explore five texts of Ama Ata Aidoo that cut across the three genres of literature by employing the theory of ethno-poetics and foregrounding to this seemingly neglected aspect of her works. The purpose of

this study, therefore, is to fill the niche created by looking at the roles assigned to her to perform in the Akan context and how she is foregrounded.

This thesis is structured into five chapters. Chapter One contains the introduction, which comprises background to the study, thesis statement, research objectives, research questions, and significance of the study. The chapter also discusses the methodology and concludes with the organization of the study. Chapter Two contains a review of related literature on the topic under investigation. It touches on ethnopoetics, foregrounding, archetype and archetypal characters, the origin of the name “Nana” in the Akan context, and the chapter summary. I subsequently devote Chapter Three to examine the symbolic roles Aidoo has assigned Nana to perform. Chapter Four covers how Nana has been foregrounded in the various texts. Chapter Five provides the key findings of the analysis, the conclusions to the discussion, recommendations, and implications for further research. Having highlighted the summary of this study, it is important to emphasize that some key points discussed in this work are worth re-echoing. The next subsection covers the summary of such key findings.

Summary of the Research Findings

This study has revealed that the various representations of Nana as a symbolic figure in the texts selected perfectly situate her in the Akan context to perform the roles assigned to her. As the repository of wisdom, *Aberewa* is the final consultant for answers to complex and delicate issues of life. She directs, educates, and counsels through dialogue and oral narratives: storytelling and proverbs, which are some of the media that are used by Akans to socialize, educate, and transmit culture to the younger generation. This finding confirms

the findings of scholars such as López-Ramírez (2020), Ramaswamy (2014), Chilala (2014), Akhan (2007), Yankah (1995), and Morrison (1984) who also reveal that the old woman is an epitome of wisdom and she uses that to help the younger generation.

Another significant finding is that Nana is an omniscient character who transcends time and space to bridge the gap between generations, observes characters and events keenly, and compares different cultural practices. It is, therefore, not surprising that she is projected as the repository of wisdom, the one who has acquired rich and quantum information to guide, counsel, predict, and forewarn the younger generation. The finding confirms the assertions by Morrison (1984), Vidovićová and Galčanová (2018), and Harvey (2010) in their previous studies that the old woman is an omniscient figure who connects the past to the present and talks about the future as well.

It is also clear from the analysis that as the custodian of Akan's culture and tradition, she is a guardian of morals, the one responsible for the proper upbringing of those around her, the figure who transmits traditional and societal values and sees to the adherence of age-long customs. When performing this role, Nana teaches, reprimands, and serves as a moral beacon to the society. López-Ramírez (2020), Hunsicker (2000), Ampofo, Essuman, Ansah (2020), and Akhan (2007) also reveal that the old woman is a preserver of culture, and her mission is to protect and safeguard this knowledge and pass it on to others.

It is further revealed through the analysis that Nana is the historian of the traditional society. She does this by recounting the national, tribal, and family history to the younger generations, and she does this through storytelling, an educative tool of communication among the Akans. The finding affirms that

of Wilton & Davey (2006), Olga, Anna, & Mykola (2021), Ebine (2019), Chiangong (2018), and Yankah (1995) who indicate that the old woman is a chronicler of history.

The analysis again shows that the Nana figure is an agent of change that Aidoo wants the society to alter. These include forgetting about the bitter experience associated with slavery, strict adherence to patriarchal ideology, which delineates gender roles, superstition, belief in witchcraft, and not allowing a child to express herself freely. Aidoo also wants the people to avoid any foreign material and other cultural practices that give rise to the loss of their special identity. Rather, they uphold and guard the good virtues that define them. López-Ramírez (2020) also reveals that the old woman represents an agent of change, awareness, insight, knowledge, and good judgment.

From the analysis, it becomes clear that the old woman sometimes exhibits some perceived negative behaviours: remaining silent when the younger ones need answers to their problems and being temperamental. These are done purposively to prevent the grandchildren from reviving unpleasant memories, create room for reflection, rebuke, correct, and register her displeasure towards unpleasant cultural practices introduced into the traditional society. Though the audience may have reservations about these behaviours, it could be said that these mechanisms are adopted by Nana for the betterment of society as a whole. This finding confirms the findings of Chilala (2014).

The study also aims to interrogate how Aidoo has used some techniques to project the old woman figure in the various sampled texts. The discussion has brought to bear the fact that Nana is foregrounded through her language. Thus, she consistently saturates her language with proverbs, transliteration, and code-

mixing. Her expressions further reflect the traditional belief systems and cultural values of the people. These give her a unique identity, the texts a local flavour, and authenticate the cultural boundary within which the old woman is situated. This finding corroborates the findings of Bob, Kwekove, and Godcan (2024), Ui (2014), Chilala (2014), Konadu (2006), and Achebe (1989).

Another outcome of the analysis is that the old woman is projected through stylistic elements. One is repetition, which is achieved through her repetitive representation and repetitive roles. These are crucial, hence, this study. Her repetitive utterances also help to create a context of reflection, to advise, to correct, and to forewarn. Nana is again foregrounded through imagery where her actions and utterances create mental pictures about the psychological and emotional trauma the characters are exposed to. Aidoo has equally used the old woman as a tool to create suspense. This is done through her silence and elusive gestures, hesitation in providing immediate responses to issues, and her persistent use of foreshadow about existing mysteries. These traits of the old woman make her unpredictable. Nana, in this situation, creates suspense in the text, the characters, and the audience, and this is an effective tool to increase the level of concentration and attentiveness of the audience and the characters. The finding agrees with that of Zhou & Qiang (2023) who reveal that the specific manifestation of foregrounding involves emphasizing character traits and behaviors to attract the audience and to aid in a better understanding of the connotation of the work.

The analysis again reveals that the name “Nana” used for the old woman in the selected texts elevates her status and her roles in the Akan context. It also creates anonymity and space for her to speak frankly about any social and

cultural issues. This finding confirms the finding of Essuman (2012) and the assertion of Akhan (2007).

The analysis again shows that Aidoo does not have a fixed way of introducing the old woman in the selected text. However, she strategically places the old woman in situations where her presence and interventions are required to solve problems, offer counselling, unravel mysteries, supervise events, and provide significant information. This form of projection demonstrates her importance within the traditional society and projects her as the custodian of wisdom in the Akan perspective, thus, the one that people consult for assistance. This observation is in agreement with the findings of Vogler (2007).

Conclusions

With these findings, one conclusion that could be drawn is that Nana is used by Aidoo in the Akan context to perform similar roles in all the texts. As Nana performs her assigned roles, she becomes the authorial voice to express her (Aidoo's) views on social and cultural issues that she wants to project and those that must be discarded for the benefit of the society. She is also the cultural and social conscience of the people in the texts. Again, even though Nana's roles are contextualized in all the texts as a repository of wisdom, a third-person narrator, a historian, a storyteller, a custodian of tradition and culture, a teacher, and an agent of change, these do not make her limited in terms of space and time. She is a symbolic character whose roles transcend culture, time, and space, hence, an archetypal character. Nana's roles in the texts are crucial to foreground her. Again, juxtaposing Nana's roles in the Akan context to those performed by the grandmothers in the various contexts discussed in the

literature shows that there are no differences. This authenticates Aidoo's Nana as an archetypal character. Again, as a feminist, Aidoo has intentionally foregrounded the old woman figure to project her significance in the society.

Recommendations and Implications for Further Research

Research into Ghanaian literary materials has occupied a huge space in academia, but there is still a lot to do as the Ghanaian literary landscape has a lot of data for scholarly study. One area is the Nana figure, which is not given the needed attention. It is, therefore, recommended that similar studies should be conducted where a comparative analysis will be carried out using Aidoo's Nana and Nana in other literary texts of male Ghanaian writers to find out the similarities and differences in her representations, the roles assigned to her, and how she is foregrounded. Theoretically, this research would be one of the rich references for students who have an interest in the use of ethno-poetics to explore the old woman figure in other literary genres. In addition, the study contributes to the theory by demonstrating the extent to which ethno-poetics is useful to the analysis of the Ghanaian texts.

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