

A Bildungsroman in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 11

Special Issue: 5

Month: March

Year: 2024

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Received: 21.01.2024

Accepted: 11.02.2024

Published: 01.03.2024

Citation:

Sasikala, P., and VS Vanjitha. "A Bildungsroman in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 11, no. S5, 2024, pp. 52–55.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v11iS5-Mar.7653>

P. Sasikala

Assistant Professor, PG and Reserch Department of English
Sakthi College of Arts and Science for Women, Oddanchatram

V. S. Vanjitha

PG Student, Research Department of English
Sakthi College of Arts and Science for Women, Oddanchatram

Abstract

Changes: A Love Story is a Bildungsroman novel written by Ama Ata Aidoo, and it was published in 1991. A Bildungsroman novel that focuses on the psychological and moral growth of Esi, the protagonist. *The Changes: A Love Story* follows the life of Esi Sekyi, a Morden Ghanaian woman who struggles to balance her career, marriage, and personal identity in society. Esi divorces her husband, Oko, because he raped her without her acknowledgement. Then Esi entered a polygamous marriage with Ali Kondey, he is a successful businessman. Then Esi soon realizes that her new marriage life does not give her freedom, happiness, or what she expected, and she also faces criticism and is kept apart from her family, friends, and society. Then she learns more about herself, her cultural values, and the value of her life. And it was published in the feminist press.

Keywords: Bildungsroman, Feminism, Colonialism, Tradition, and Culture, Modernity in Post-Independence Ghana, Polygamy.

Ama Ata Aidoo is a Ghanaian author, poet, playwright, and Ama Ata Aidoo 23 March 1942–31 May 2023 was a Ghanaian author, poet, playwright, politician, and dramatist. She was Secretary for Education in Ghana from 1982 to 1983 under Jerry Rawlings's PNDC administration. As a novelist, she won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1992 with the novel *Changes*. In 2000, she established the Mbaasem Foundation in Accra to support African women writers, including the Commonwealth Writers Prize for her novel *Changes: A Love Story*. She is a feminist and an activist and examines the themes of colonialism, gender, culture, and identity in her writings. And Aidoo's Originally, the subtitle was *A New Tail to an Old Tail*, but then it was changed to *Changes*, and it talks about the issues of women's lives and careers, and Aidoo revealed the subtitle as *A Love Story*. In this novel, *Changes: A Love Story* by Ama Ata Aidoo.

Change: A Love Story is a novel by Ama Ata Aidoo that explores the challenges and choices faced by Esi, a Ghanaian woman who has been married twice, and the effects of colonialism and the struggle for women's rights in post-independence Ghana. The novel focuses on the journal of Esi Sekyi, a Morden-day Ghanaian woman divided between culture and civilization in her relationship with two men. Esi

is a working woman who divorced her first husband, Oko, because he raped her. He is passionate about his work and enjoys the intellectual challenges and opportunities it offers. She also earns more than her first husband, Oko, who is the principal of her girls' school. She was abused and disregarded her freedom and work. Then she falls in love with her married partner, Ali, and agrees to become his second wife through a polygamous marriage. However, she realizes Ali is not the best partner she had hoped for, and that Ali ignored her. Esi struggles to balance her personal and professional lives in a society that expects women to follow tradition. The story is not just about love but also about self-love, friendship, and empowerment.

Esi faces challenges in her professional life, including social expectations and pressures that view women's work as inferior. She also grapples with marital conflicts and tensions as her husband, Oko, struggles to appreciate his achievements. Esi feels her professional work limits her time and energy for her personal life, particularly her estranged daughter, Ogyaanova. To overcome these issues, she makes choices that provide her with more freedom and happiness. Ultimately, she divorces Oko after he raped her. However, she struggles with professional activities and the relationship between culture and human rights issues, particularly women's rights, in post-colonial Ghana. The novel highlights the challenges faced by women in navigating these complex social dynamics.

Esi's relationship with Ali Kondey in the novel *Changes* by Ama Ata Aidoo sheds light on the cultural clashes that often arise in urban settings. Esi's desire to maintain a long-term relationship with Ali without formal marriage reflects a departure from traditional African values and beliefs. In many African societies, marriage is not just a union between two individuals but a sacred bond that is recognized and celebrated by the community. Esi's decision to resist the pressure to marry Ali highlights the tension between traditional customs and modern values in urban environments. While Esi may see no need for a formal marriage to validate her relationship with Ali, her family and community may view her choice as unconventional and even disrespectful.

The clash between Esi's personal desires and societal expectations in urban settings highlights the intricate nature of cultural contact and conflict. The novel *Changes* underscores the difficulties individuals encounter when balancing tradition and modernity and how these struggles influence their identities and connections. Esi's relationship with Ali Kondey reveals the internal and external challenges individuals confront in urban environments, where diverse cultures and values collide, resulting in significant changes in beliefs and actions. Through this narrative, readers are encouraged to contemplate the effects of cultural contact and conflict on personal lives and relationships, as well as the broader impact on society.

Esi's story is a tale of self-love, friendship, and empowerment. She faces criticism and judgment from her family, friends, and society for her poor choices. Esi learns to love herself, defend her rights, and accept life's changes. She also learns to cope with the consequences of her decisions. Esi's journey includes successful work as a data analyst, a master's degree in statistics, and a strong sense of independence. The story highlights the importance of self-love and empowerment in navigating life's challenges.

Esi, a woman, challenges the traditional expectations of her culture, which often sees women's roles as limited to home and family. After her first husband, Oko, treated her poorly, she divorced him and married Ali. Despite her hopes for love and freedom in a polygamous marriage, she soon realizes her dissatisfaction with her husband and herself. As she grapples with the consequences of her choices, family, community, and culture, Esi becomes isolated and lonely. She realizes

that Ali doesn't respect her, treats her as an equal partner, and loses her sense of self and purpose. Esi struggles to balance her personal and professional lives, finding her voice and identity in a changing world.

Esi's journey is a complex exploration of cultural leadership and human rights issues, particularly for women after Ghana. It highlights the need for women to accept their rights and choices, as well as the societal influences on their choices. Esi's journey is not just about love but also about self-love, friendship, and empowerment. She learns to love herself, her friendship with Opokuya, and accept life changes. Despite facing criticism and disapproval from family, friends, and society, Esi eventually divorced her first husband, Oko, and married Ali, a successful data analyst. This unconventional marriage was unpopular among women in her culture. Esi often avoids her mother's disapproval, as seen with Baba.

Esi, a woman, struggles with her marriage to Ali, a man whom she believes is abusive and neglectful. She tries to be clear and logical, like her grandmother Nana, but also struggles with her daughter Ogyaanowa, who suffers from her absence and neglect. Esi's reactions to criticism and opposition are not always positive, and she realizes that her choices have affected her daughter's identity and voice. She struggles to balance her personal and professional lives, finding her place and purpose in an ever-changing world. Esi's relationship with Ali is complex and challenging.

Esi is portrayed as a resilient, self-reliant, and educated woman who places great importance on her career and personal development. She divorces Oko due to his lack of respect for her autonomy and his act of rape. She enters a marriage with Ali, enticed by the promise of greater freedom and excitement, but soon discovers that he also has another wife named Fusena. In her second marriage, Esi grapples with feelings of loneliness, jealousy, and guilt. She comes to realize that Ali is not as devoted to her as she initially believed, and she becomes aware of the pain she has caused Fusena and her daughter, Ogyaanowa. Additionally, Esi feels alienated from her friends and family, who fail to comprehend or approve of her choices. Esi symbolizes the emergence of a new feminine identity in a society undergoing change, where women are presented with both opportunities and challenges. She strives to strike a balance between her own desires and the expectations imposed by her culture and partners, yet she struggles to find true happiness and fulfillment. Esi questions and critiques the cultural norms and values that shape women's lives and choices, shedding light on the complexities of their experiences.

Esi's story explores cultural leadership and human rights issues in Ghana's hinterland, particularly for women. Aidoo highlights the challenges women face in society and the need for them to accept their rights and choices. Esi's story also explores self-love, friendship, and empowerment as she learns to love herself, her friendship with Opokuya, and accept life changes.

Changes explores the emotions and cultural influences that shape the lives of city dwellers through the interconnected stories of characters. The novel captures urban life, highlighting the challenges and joys of love and relationships in a changing world. Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story* is an exploration of the psychological complexities of urban African life and the impact of cultural contact and conflict on individuals and relationships. It demonstrates the resilience of the human spirit in adversity.

The theme of a Bildungsroman in this novel highlights the journey of the protagonist, focusing on psychological and spiritual growth and maturation. It narrates the growth of the protagonist, Esi, and her pursuit of independence from her marriage. As the story unfolds, it delves into the changes occurring in the country politically, economically, and culturally. Esi's journey from childhood to

adulthood, her experiences in society, and her role as a second wife in a polygamist union are all explored. Despite the challenges she faces, Esi manages to maintain occasional friendships and does not seek a divorce. The novel concludes with an insightful Afterward by Tuzyline Jita Allan, which critically examines the changes depicted in the story. Through the characters of Esi, Oko, and Ali Kondey, the novel portrays a compelling narrative of resilience and self-discovery.

References

1. Aidoo, Ama Ata. *Changes: A love Story*. Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 1993.
2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Changes:_A_Love_Story
3. *Changes: A Love Story: Full Book Summary* | SparkNotes