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**A Novel Approach
to Education and Development:
Insights from African Women Writers**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Masters of Philosophy
in Development Studies at Massey University.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the contribution of creative writing to the interdisciplinary academic field of Development Studies. The theoretical framework of the thesis is guided by contemporary development perspectives, notably the concept of empowerment within Gender and Development literature, which emphasise the importance of seeking women's voices and listening to their views on issues of concern for themselves and their communities. Reading women's creative writing is one way of hearing women's voices.

Three novels by African women are examined for their insightful treatment of education, a key development issue. These novels are The Joys of Motherhood by Nigerian writer Buchi Emecheta, Zimbabwean writer Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions, and Our Sister Killjoy by Ama Ata Aidoo from Ghana. Educational themes that feature in the discussion and analysis of the novels are the constraints that African women face in making decisions about their daughters' futures; the sexism and alienation that girls encounter in their pursuit of Western schooling; and a critique, in the context of neocolonialism, of the educated African elite who emigrate to developed countries, constituting a "brain-drain".

The three novels make a valuable contribution to understanding educational issues in developing countries, particularly those facing girls, and suggests broad principles upon which future efforts to address people's needs in this area could be based. Above all the thesis concludes that fiction is a powerful vehicle of communication and, as such, challenges Development Studies to broaden its interdisciplinary approach still further to include the study of fiction by people from developing countries.

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Introduction

Objectives

The main objective of this thesis is to explore the idea that students can enrich their understanding of a wide range of development issues through reading fiction by people from developing countries. The secondary objective is to examine the contribution of three novels by African women to the area of education, particularly for girls, as a development issue.

Methodology

The objectives of this thesis originated from a literary studies course on fiction written by African people since political independence. The novels, poems and short stories which I studied heightened my awareness and knowledge of African countries and the many different facets of people's lives which colonisation affected. Through reading this fiction I became enthusiastic to learn more about the causes of the many development problems facing contemporary Africa and other parts of the world and so I enrolled in Development Studies. Continuing to read fiction written by people from developing countries, I began to reflect on the role that fiction played in shaping my awareness of development issues. This is the point at which this thesis began to take form. It is my exploration of the contribution that fiction can make to Development Studies.

The decision to focus on women writers also arose from this background. I was aware of the need to seek and listen to women's perspectives on development concerns and also of the need for more research and criticism to be directed at female rather than male writers. I decided to focus on the theme of education, particularly as it relates to girls and women, because it is a prominent theme in the fiction of African women and also because education is a fundamental development concern.

I decided to focus on a selection of texts from one region because the size of study did not allow for comparisons between regions. Africa was chosen partly because I was familiar with African literature and also because of the seriousness and scope of development issues facing the continent. Three novels, The Joys of Motherhood by

Nigerian writer Buchi Emecheta, Nervous Conditions by Zimbabwean writer Tsitsi Dangarembga and Our Sister Killjoy by Ama Ata Aidoo from Ghana, were chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, studying one literary genre kept the study focused; secondly, it was necessary to choose texts that all considered the theme of education; thirdly, I wanted to include a selection of different writers from variety of regions within Africa to acknowledge the range and diversity of African women writers, and to demonstrate the importance of the theme of education for more than one writer. My choice of texts to include in the study was constrained by what was readily available in New Zealand. The politics of publishing for African women writers is beyond the scope of this study. My approach to the three novels selected for study is to treat them, from the point of view of Development Studies, as a forum for the discussion and presentation of ideas and perspectives.

Structure of Thesis

Chapter One considers the study of fiction in the context of contemporary ideas about Participation, and Gender and Development. It then discusses the role of writers and their craft in society, drawing on interviews with Emecheta, Dangarembga and Aidoo in which they talk about their writing and its contribution to society. I argue that creative writing is an important and much neglected source of information, insights and perspectives about critical development issues which stem from the author's experiences and observations. In the second chapter I review literature written about education, women and development. I discuss critical issues raised about girls' education, such as the gender gap in enrollment statistics and the role of parents in making decisions about girls' education. Chapters Three, Four and Five each explore the contribution of one of the three novels to understanding in the area of girls' education.

→ The first novel, The Joys of Motherhood by Nigerian writer Buchi Emecheta, demonstrates some of the reasons why mothers (and parents in general) may be reluctant to send their daughters to school. Emecheta's portrayal of two women from different family backgrounds who migrate to Lagos from the rural village of Ibuza demonstrates some of the

constraints that women face in making decisions about educating their daughters. The novel suggests a number of factors, such as class background, that make it easier for some women to decide to educate their daughters. Zimbabwean writer, Tsitsi Dangarembga, raises girls' voices in her novel, Nervous Conditions, and, through a contrast of two characters, she demonstrates the diverse educational experiences of girls. The novel presents two key problems which face girls in education - sexism and the risk of alienation from their families and their cultures.¹ The risk of alienation for African people studying in Western educational institutions is examined further in Our Sister Killjoy, written by Ama Ata Aidoo from Ghana. Aidoo perceives a connection between African people who internalise alien values as a result of Western education and those who emigrate to Europe and other parts of the developed world. Her novel considers the implications for African development when students and professionals emigrate, in the context of the neocolonial relationship between African and European countries.

¹ Boys, as well as girls, face the risk of becoming alienated from their families, their homes and their cultures when they pursue a Western education.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

Development as practised since World War Two has been overwhelmingly characterised by large-scale projects informed by Modernisation Theory.² Such “development” has not changed the lives of the majority of African people. Writing in 1989, Fantu Cheru says, “Seventy out of every 100 Africans are either destitute or on the verge of poverty, with annual per capita income ranging from \$59 to \$115. One out of four Africans has access to clean water” (2).³ Cheru argues that living conditions for the majority of African people have worsened since “governments across the continent are forced to adopt harsh austerity measures required under an IMF [International Monetary Fund] or World Bank ‘structural adjustment’ programme for securing external financial assistance” (2). Despite theoretical attempts to improve the nature and practise of development, such as Gender and Development (GAD) and participation perspectives, the reality of life for two thirds of the world’s population has not improved. The onslaught of structural adjustment policies throughout the 1980s and 1990s has in fact made people’s lives more difficult (Bienefeld 92).

The failure of development initiatives to change the lives of the majority of people have seen those engaged in current debates about the future of “development” use words like “crisis” and “impasse” to describe the state of play. David Slater suggests we might be “living ‘the end of development’” (93) and Wolfgang Sachs argues that with this era coming to an end, “The time is ripe to write its obituary” (1). These sentiments are indicative of “the impasse in development theory” or of the “crisis” of the “development discourse” of

² For a discussion of the term “development” see Esteva 6-25.

³ As a thesis that bridges two disciplines each with its own distinct system of documentations I have had to choose one system in the interests of consistency. I have used the MLA (Modern Languages Association) system of documentation throughout this thesis because it is designed specifically for use with criticism of literary texts. I am aware that in the Social Sciences it is normal practice to place the publication date in parentheses, however the MLA system does not do so. This information is provided in the lists of works cited and works consulted at the end of the thesis.

which development theorists now talk (Schuurmann, 1; Moore and Schmitz, xxi). Michael Edwards even challenges the very continuation of Development Studies as an academic discipline in his article, “How Relevant is Development Studies?”. Some development theorists are attempting to move “Beyond the Impasse” while others like Sachs, believe that the very “idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape” and that “It is time to dismantle this mental structure” (1).

As theorists challenge fundamental tenets of the development enterprise of fifty years, I think it timely that we create space to allow the voices of the people whom this “crisis”, whom development has affected so badly, to be heard, listened to, understood and heeded. One of the most helpful ideas of participation literature, discussed later in the chapter, is that development processes should involve local people. Gender and Development perspectives have taught us that women’s voices must be sought by those serious about seeking a genuine understanding of the needs and wants of people in developing countries. The relevance of Gender and Development literature for this study will be discussed later in the chapter. In their efforts to listen, development researchers must consider all fora where people, in general, and women in particular, express their views. This thesis demonstrates that fiction is one such forum.

Fiction and Development Studies

A key task of Development Studies is to envision an ideal future and to seek ways of striving for it. For this imagination is helpful. As Esteva says,

To root oneself in the present demands an image of the future. It is not possible to act here and now, in the present, without having an image of the next instant, of the other, of a certain temporal horizon. That image of the future offers guidance, encouragement, orientation, hope (Sachs 23).

The creative writer’s craft involves a heightened sense of imagination with which they are able to create alternatives to the status quo, to suggest solutions to problems facing people in real life, to offer new ways of living and of relating to one another and also to explore

new alternative ways of organising society. This is an important reason why the study of fiction, a product of the imagination, should be included in Development Studies.

As a source for understanding development issues from the perspectives of the people who experience and observe them, fiction differs from other sources because its pages are filled with imaginary people. Fiction is able to involve readers to the point of feeling intimately connected with the characters so that readers almost feel as though they are experiencing the lives of the characters on the page. Fiction gives insights into the experiences, feelings, aspirations, dreams and anxieties of its characters. From one perspective, such experiences, because not actually lived by the characters, are not real. However, from another perspective they are more real, for fiction gives us insights of a kind we only rarely have in our own lives. As characters are often representative of particular groups of people in society, their thoughts, actions, dreams and problems can lead readers to a greater understanding of other people's fears and hopes. This can lead to greater sympathy and understanding among people.

In Development Studies traditional qualitative methods of seeking the views of women include interviews, oral history and case studies. Often, the outcomes of these interviewing techniques are initiated and directed by the researcher through whom the responses are filtered. Women who express their opinions, observations and insights through creative writing do so out of their own initiative. The product, of whatever genre, is the writers' creation, untouched by anyone else.

At the grassroots level, the powerful effects of using drama, song, visual arts, storytelling and creative writing in raising awareness and educating people about a range of issues has been well understood for a long time. Groups like The Sistren Theatre, a women's drama group in Jamaica, do important work dramatising issues ranging from domestic abuse to the exploitation of workers in the global economic order dominated by multinational corporations (Ford-Smith 4-5). Yet, while creative art and writing is used in resistance and education all over the world, there is little recognition in Development Studies of its crucial role in development processes at a personal, local and national level. Neither has there been consideration of the potential of arts and literature for Development Studies as a source for insights and understanding.

Perhaps part of the reason for the neglect of fiction by Development Studies is that creative writing is perceived to be “high culture”, part of a society’s art rather than an intrinsic part of society. Viewed in this way, the study of literature could be looked upon as not being able to contribute to the study of development processes and their effects on people’s lives. However, another perspective, and the one I argue in this thesis, is that creative writing is produced within, by and for a society and, as such, it can be studied for its depiction of people’s lives which reveal the complexities of development problems. Following Molar Ogundipe-Leslie, a writer of both fiction and non-fiction, I approach arts and literature as intrinsic parts of culture, produced by it and shaping it and not separate from it (105-107).

The study of literature by sociologists is an established branch of sociology and involves the study of the relationship between literature and society.⁴ Swinglewood argues that “literature, because it delineates man’s [sic] anxieties, hopes, and aspirations, is perhaps one of the most effective sociological barometers of the human response to social forces” (Laurenson and Swinglewood 17). Scholars in Peace Studies have also begun to study creative writing for its insights into peace issues (Getz 203). As I demonstrate in the following chapters, fiction is one of many sources from which development students can glean insights, information, knowledge and so on into development processes, issues and people’s lives - all from writers who have experience and knowledge of the subjects they write about.

During the first decades of development, 1945-1965, politicians, policy makers and academics began to get excited about the potential for development in the decolonising countries of the African continent. At the same time, poems, novels and short stories by African women writers first began to be published and distributed throughout the Western world. This fiction provides insightful commentary on the effect colonisation has had on

⁴ Alan Swinglewood identifies two main approaches to the sociology of literature. The first is focussed on the literary text and argues that the text reflects aspects of the writer’s society, and that ‘the task of the sociologist of literature is to relate the experience of the writer’s imaginary characters and situations to the historical climate from which they derive’. Swinglewood argues that there are a number of problems with this approach, the most obvious is that it can lead to a reductionist analysis of texts. The second approach focuses on the social conditions of the writers and the politics of publishing rather than analysing the actual literary texts (Swinglewood 17).

African women and their communities. It also offers insights and analysis of problems arising from on-going processes of development. For the most part, interest in this literature has been relegated to literary scholars.

A comment from Stuart Corbridge in his recently edited book on Development Studies demonstrates that scholars have begun to recognise the importance to Development Studies of studying Third World arts and literature. Corbridge explains that this study is an important aspect of the field, yet regrets that, for reasons of space, he has had to bring down the “censor’s axe” on a number of relevant readings. This is indicative of the current position of the study of Third World arts and literature in Development Studies - it is considered important, but is rarely undertaken. In a footnote, Corbridge explains why his omission is unfortunate:

One important reason for including the study of Third World arts and literatures in a broad-based study of development is to challenge the all too common assumption that Development Studies is about the ‘problems’ of the developing world, to the extent that the developing world and development are both defined as problems (and only as problems) (xvi).

Corbridge sees the study of art and literature as important because it emphasises a creative and positive side of the developing world all too often overlooked in Development Studies. Literature often counters the prevalent Western viewpoint that developing countries are a problem for them to solve, a view which is a legacy of the Eurocentric missionary zeal of colonial times to civilise or “save” peoples of the Third World. Corbridge argues that an inclusion of the study of Third World arts and literatures in Development Studies will encourage the recognition of people in developing countries as dynamic and creative human beings rather than the starving, miserable images that dominate the Western media.

Besides emphasising a creative aspect of people whom Development Studies often associates with their countries’ problems, the study of fiction is an important way to gain insight into complex issues. Often a single page or even a paragraph of fiction can describe complex issues, such as the barriers women face in education, the psychological effects of colonisation or the inappropriateness of a development worker’s behaviour and attitudes. Presenting the same depth of understanding in non-fiction can take many more pages and

will not evoke the emotions or empathy of the reader in the same way. As will be explored in later chapters, fiction is also full of personal experiences, and complex development issues are able to be treated in a holistic manner. This adds an important dimension to development literature which tends to reduce human experience to statistics and graphs.

There is still much work needed to establish how the study of fiction and other arts can contribute to Development Studies. Reasons for this lie in the historical development of this relatively new academic field. The study of development began after World War Two when newly independent countries emerged as a result of decolonisation. Development Studies began in response to a need to learn about options for the future development of these countries. At this time “development” was synonymous with economic growth or modernisation.

Modernisation Theory was the first of two grand theories to emerge in the context of decolonisation and the cold war. Many of its proponents were motivated by the desire to encourage newly independent countries to adopt the path of capitalism. Rostow’s famous manifesto of development was even sub-titled, “A Non-Communist Manifesto.”

Modernisation Theory thus encouraged developing countries to develop the industries and infrastructure established under colonial rule and to produce crops such as coffee and cotton for Western markets. The advice of the rich nations to countries which underwent decolonisation after World War Two was to modernise, work hard and to produce export crops for the world market in order to gain foreign exchange which could then be invested in large scale development projects aimed at industrial development.⁵

However, in the 1960s Modernisation Theory came under attack because of its failure to fulfil promises of economic growth. Speaking to a conference on international aid and development to New Zealand agencies in 1974, then President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, spoke out about the unfairness of the assumptions underlying Modernisation Theory,

In 1950, Ghana exported 267,000 tons of cocoa, and earned 54.6 million British pounds. The Ghanaians worked hard; they invested some of that money on improving the quantity and quality of the crop, which accounted for more than 70%

⁵ For further discussion of Modernisation Theory see Webster 41-62; Hoogvelt 116-120.

of their total export earnings. By 1965 they were exporting 493,000 tons of cocoa - an increase of about 85% in output. Unfortunately, all their work and investment had increased their income by only 25% - and the value of money had meantime fallen (7).

Ghana followed the directions of Modernisation Theory and yet did not get the result which the theory promised. Modernisation Theory was critiqued by competing visions of socialism and by Dependency theorists in the context of Latin America. For example, Dependency theorists deconstructed the concept of the “level-playing field” which assumes that every country of the world starts from the same point and has an equal chance to develop. Dependency theorists pointed to the very different histories of each country and concluded that the industrialised countries developed with the use of Third World resources which led to the underdevelopment of today’s “developing countries”.⁶ Modernisation Theory relies heavily on the idea that wealth from big projects designed to improve and support export-led development will eventually reach the poorest people in the country. Yet, the “trickle down theory” has not occurred in practise with the richest 20 per cent of the population in Africa as a whole earning an income four times greater than that of the poorest 40 per cent (Cheru 2). Unfortunately Dependency Theory, while providing an important critique, did not propose an alternative path for development (Leys 29). Modernisation Theory continues to influence development practice throughout the world, despite evidence that the theory is flawed and is based on false assumptions about the global “free” market.

Until the 1970s, theories of development fell into one of these two grand paradigms: Modernisation Theory, or Dependency Theory. Although Modernisation and Dependency Theory had very different analyses and explanations for the existence of rich and poor countries, they were both still heavily theoretical and concerned primarily with economic aspects of development. Both theories sought solutions which would be universally applicable. It has been widely recognised since the 1980s that for development to be successful, attention must be given to a myriad of factors beyond economics. Development Studies now prides itself upon an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on the knowledge and

⁶ For discussion of Dependency Theory see Gunder-Frank 2-77; Dos Santos 57-78; Webster 65-97.

expertise of sociologists, anthropologists, geographers, political scientists and historians, as well as the economists who have traditionally held centre stage.

This shift from a narrow focus on economics to a broader outlook began in the 1970s when development workers became disillusioned with the failure of many development projects, informed by either of the two grand theories. The frustration felt by many of the people working at grassroots levels in underdeveloped areas of the world led to an explosion of thinking on what “development” actually meant and how it could be brought about most effectively. This explosion of thinking on development directly responded to the failure of both Modernisation and Dependency Theory to either account adequately for locally specific reasons for underdevelopment or to provide practical strategies and methods for development at the grassroots level. These new perspectives look beyond economic aspects of development to consider environmental issues, the role and status of women in development processes, and the ineffectiveness of projects which did not involve the very people intended to benefit from the project.

Two of these new perspectives have generated some of the most important thinking on development. One concerns ownership and participation, reflecting the growing awareness of the need to increase the participation of local people in projects. The other is the recognition of the role women play in development processes. From these two broad areas two principles emerge which are generally accepted by Development Studies as vital for development work.

The name given to the first set of ideas is “participation” and it is a key word in contemporary development discourse. This movement began as an attempt by grassroots development practitioners to build an alternative to “top-down” development strategies by encouraging the involvement of local populations in development processes (Rahnema 117). The use and meaning of the word “participation” is discussed by Majid Rahnema who alerts us to potential flaws in this concept when co-opted by certain governments and development institutions who use it to harness populations into the already existing development machine. As Rahnema argues, “participation is a most accepted concept which even very repressive regimes in the ‘Third World’, such as the ones led by Pinochet and Mobutu, have tried to promote as one of their objectives” (117).

However, the concept of participation acknowledges the importance of allowing local people to make their own decisions, to drive their own development, as some would put it, or as Gustavo Esteva puts it, “to walk with one’s own feet, on one’s own path, in order to dream one’s own dreams. Not the borrowed ones of development” (23). Esteva, like Rahnema and the other essayists in The Development Dictionary, “bid[s] farewell to the defunct idea [of development] in order to clear our minds for fresh discoveries” (Sachs 1). If we bear this in mind then the ideas behind the word “participation” might become more meaningful. Esteva emphasises that people must be free to choose their own movements rather than follow the prescribed ones bound up in the idea of “development”. This interpretation of what “participation” means, “implies above all, the recovery of one’s inner freedom, that is to learn to listen and to share, free from any fear or predefined conclusion, belief or judgement” (Rahnema 127). This emphasises listening and sharing with an open mind, and the need for freedom to do so. The concept thus acknowledges the necessity to listen to the opinions, concerns, wants and criticisms voiced by the people whom development workers mean to assist. All sources from which the voices of the poor and oppressed people of the world can be heard need to be looked at by those involved in this task of listening. Reading fiction from African countries is a way that students of development can begin to listen to the voices and opinions and to share the insights of African people - of both characters and the writers themselves.

The second generally accepted principle, that has emerged from the new thinking on development since the 1970s, is that women must be involved in all aspects of the development process. Just how widely this principle is recognised is exemplified by government policy in New Zealand. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has a Voluntary Agency Support Scheme (VASS) to which voluntary organisations involved in development, aid or justice work can apply for subsidised funding for overseas projects. VASS policy is that it will subsidise projects \$1 for every \$1 given by the agency. For women’s projects that subsidy increases to \$3 for every \$1 given by the agency.⁷ That policy at government level is so supportive of development projects that increase the participation

⁷ VASS will subsidise up to \$NZ50,000 for any project or programme on a yearly basis. The upper limit for funding applies to women’s projects also, but the subsidy increases to three dollars for every one dollar the agency puts forward.

of women in development (WID) is an indication that this second principle has become generally accepted as important for successful development.

However, the WID approach only seeks to include more women in existing development projects. Another approach, Gender and Development (GAD), goes beyond WID initiatives and challenges the structural causes of women's oppression, emphasising the need to listen to women's views on development processes. The empowerment approach within GAD originated from Third World women and it acknowledges the different levels of oppression facing women from developing countries (Moser 74-79). This approach aims to empower women so that they can take part in decision making and have some control over their communities' resources and ultimately their own lives. By empowering women in this way they will be able to challenge the structures that oppress them. Raising women's awareness of neocolonial and patriarchal oppression is an important strategy of empowering women. The key to consciousness-raising is education, yet formal Western-style education often fails to meet the needs of those who wish to challenge the status-quo. These concerns are addressed in Nervous Conditions, the novel examined in Chapter Four.

For this thesis the most important part of the GAD perspective is the emphasis on seeking women's voices, empowering more women to speak and share their opinions and creating spaces in which women can speak freely.⁸ The commitment to seek Third World women's voices comes out of the recognition that they have for too long been silent, muted and ignored in development processes as in other arenas. The Third World women's network, Development Alternatives with Women for a New era (DAWN), has been influential in pointing out the importance of seeking the Third World women's voices. DAWN recognise that women's voices, their knowledge and ideas, often provide the most profound insight into various issues because of their particular experience of oppression. DAWN states that, "it is from the perspective of the most oppressed - i.e., women who suffer on account of class, race, and nationality - that we can most clearly grasp the nature of the links in the chain of oppression" (Sen 20). It is women who are most often responsible

⁸ There is an extensive literature on the various perspectives on development as it affects women -- Women in Development, Women and Development, and Gender and Development -- with a range of approaches within each perspective. My purpose here is not to critique this literature or even to present an overview of them but simply to establish that within Development Studies there is a commitment to seek the voices of women. For further discussion see Moser 55-79 and Rathgebar 489-502.

for feeding their families, it is women who do most of the agricultural work throughout the world and it is women who fetch and carry water. It follows, then, that women are the first to know if a water supply is polluted or the crops are failing and, as they are ultimately responsible for children's welfare, they must forage for food when it is scarce. Therefore, women's experiences, knowledge and ideas in these areas are invaluable.

Together, the participation and gender perspectives on development show that there is a commitment, among scholars, practitioners and even at government level, to hear, listen and understand the views, knowledge and insights which women voice. Women choose to speak, to voice their views and tell their experiences through a number of different media. One of those is creative writing. When women write in order to communicate their ideas, to express their visions about the future of their communities, to address development issues such as the availability of education to girls, they are participating in the debate about their countries. This thesis is one way of hearing women's voices.

The Role of Writers in Society

Writers and orators have long been recognised as mouthpieces of societies, able to think and express visions of their communities in storytelling or creative writing. This role places writers at the forefront of change and "development" in their society. Elaine Fido talks of the commitment of creative writers to addressing social and political issues:

Part of the task of post-colonial writers has been to replace the 'reality' of colonial thought and social life, imposed from without, with the deeply felt experience of the inner, submerged life of people who never lost their own ways, but whose surface life often took on the appearance of an alien culture. In addition, since international influences have brought modernising trends, and change continues to be rapid if uneven in Third World societies, writers must deal with the radical redefinition of their people's experience by the implications of development, education and political decision (10).

Fido's comment suggests that the task of writers is to create and envision a new identity and a new society in their writing, to throw off the shackles of a colonial mentality and to present alternatives to the colonial and neocolonial structures.

A number of creative writers are active in bringing about social and political change by encouraging readers to think about issues, and by inspiring them to challenge dominant ideas and attitudes. Sam O'Asein, writing about a poem called "Harvest of Hate" by Nigerian poet Wole Soyinka, claims that the poem "amounted to providing through ridicule and protest an alternative social ethos which could form the basis of an ordered and just society rid of vices and corrupt public life pattern" (in Elimimian 119). Of Guadeloupean writer, Maryse Conde, Charlotte and David Bruner have noted that while her "characters are not self-portraits, their remarks appear often to echo her experience and her critical opinions" (10). Erna Brodber of Jamaica sees her fiction as part of her method as a sociologist: "I still think of myself as a sociologist and my fiction as part of my sociological method. My sociological effort and therefore the fiction that serves it, unlike mainstream sociology, has activist intentions" (165). Botswanan writer Bessie Head's novel, When Rainclouds Gather, grew out of a conversation with a young man, a black refugee from Zimbabwe, who is disillusioned with the future black leadership of his country. In the novel Head envisions a way for young men to contribute to their country's future without engaging in violence and depicts a man who spends "a lifetime in a small rural village, battling with food production problems" (Head 14). In writing this novel Head responds to a real-life problem, voiced by a real person, and presents a possible solution to it in her fiction. The subject of all of these writers' texts comes out of their experiences and are often an attempt to respond to the needs of their communities. Their examples demonstrate that creative writers can be agents for change and that their texts constitute a unique forum for the presentation of ideas.⁹

⁹ Conde addresses how such expectations can come to limit writers in her short story "Three Women in Manhattan". The three female characters are all writers at different stages of their lives. Elinor is the only one who has received any recognition by literary critics and she is quite proud of the fact that she has become the subject of well-established literary magazines. Vera, an elderly woman who was once an Haitian activist, has never had any of her manuscripts accepted for publication, and complains that Elinor's writing has 'no great cause, no great cause'. When a black magazine trashes her writing, dismissing it for its lack of political content, Elinor is distraught but she eventually rises to resist her critics, protesting, "They want me to speak once more about slavery and the slave trade and racism, for me to adorn us with the virtues of

Many writers take grave personal risks in writing about subjects that are unpopular with authorities, such as race relations issues in South Africa under apartheid, women's issues in the Middle East, pro-democracy issues in China and socialist issues in the West. Writing on these topics poses a threat to the status-quo and can be seriously dangerous for the writer. The punishment dealt out to writers who dare to air such subjects testifies to the authorities' awareness that writing is a very powerful medium, able to influence people's thoughts. The testimony of Nawal El Saadawi, an Egyptian feminist, doctor, activist and writer of fiction and non-fiction provides an illustration of the power of writing:

In 1972, all of my books - novels and nonfiction - were censored. I went to jail under President Sadat because of the content of my work, because I am a writer - not because I am a member of any particular political party or group, but simply because I expressed myself in written form on a variety of subjects having to do with Arab women. My arrest proved for me the tremendous power of the pen. It was actually exhilarating to know that Sadat was afraid of one woman with a pen! And the state's fear was demonstrated to me every morning when the jailer would search my cell and say to me, "If I find a pen or paper in your cell, it is much more dangerous to you than if I find a gun". I understood the power of the word (156).

Saadawi realises the power of writing, both imaginative and factual when she is imprisoned because of her craft and its politically explosive content. Such fiction is an important site for ascertaining the opinions, debates and issues of concern for a group of people. Through the example of writers like Saadawi, it becomes clear that art and literature are important outlets through which people express their opinions.¹⁰

victims, and to inspire hope" Elinor's writing is judged according to expectations that she should write on particular topics because she is black.

Elinor's critics seem to stipulate the subjects which black people should write about. Barbara Christian, writing about the political content of Alice Walker's novels, states that black women have little choice but to write with political intent. This suggests that they are not free to write on other topics and implies that Black women should only write about political and social issues. Elinor's painful and frustrating experience of feeling trapped is the result of this view. It is not empowering to prescribe the kinds of subjects that women should write about. Nor can it be said that all female writers from the South, or all African women writers are 'committed writers' in the sense that they all write with the intent of contributing to social and political change. But some may, and it is some of these writers, who see their writing as part of the forum of which Elaine Fido speaks, whose texts are studied here.

¹⁰ For this reason, any definition or understanding of development must include the freedom of women and men to move, to speak and to express themselves through art and creative writing, for example. Without

The writers of the three texts that I examine in later chapters all speak about the way they understand their role in society as writers. Aidoo speaks in strong support of the idea that writers have a social responsibility: "I think part of our responsibility or our commitment as writers is to unfold or open for ourselves and our communities what exists, what is wrong, the problems" ("An Interview" 130). Aidoo's articulations of her community's problems are valuable for people working in Development Studies who are committed to listening to and understanding the views of the people they mean to assist. Alice Walker has said of Aidoo's creative writing: "It has reaffirmed my faith in the power of the written word to reach, to teach, to empower and encourage" (A. James 8).

Likewise, Emecheta talks about her intentions when she writes: "I like to tell the world our part of the story while using the voices of women. Women in our area are silenced a lot My hope is that in the future, people will start reading more books by female writers and realise that African women do have voices" ("A Conversation" 449). Central to Emecheta's impulse to write is her desire to highlight women's voices and experiences. Dangarembga speaks about a more personal reason for writing: "I actually find the process of storytelling has helped me as an individual because I feel I have this story that's made up of all these parts that I know are a whole but they're disorganised. So sitting down and putting it into a framework, I can also be the reader. I can go back and read it and enjoy it and find some order in all these complexities that prompted me to sit down and write it in the first place" ("Tsitsi" 193). Here Dangarembga identifies one of the most crucial aspects of fiction in terms of what it can contribute to Development Studies, that is its ability to give a holistic depiction of a complex issue. It is clear from the statements of each writer that all three women write out of a commitment to addressing the needs of African people, and women especially.

Each of the three writers also talks about the influence of their personal experiences on their writing. Emecheta says: "I don't sit down and say I am going to write a book and this or that has to be there. You sort of have those experiences recorded in your memory like a reservoir and they just come out when you want to use them" ("A Conversation"

freedom of expression there is no way of knowing that the methods and goals of development undertaken by governments or foreign development agencies are in keeping with the desires of the people affected.

450). Similarly, Aidoo says of writers: “We write out of our own experiences. So, invariably, the characters we create are bound to exist as reflections or rejections of ourselves” (“Ama” 16) and Dangarembga says: “. . . my writing really does come from things that are quite concrete, that I’ve had quite a lot of first-hand experience of” (“Tsitsi” 190). All three writers clearly state that they write out of their own experiences.

The context of neocolonialism is another important influence on the work of writers from developing countries.¹¹ It is important to understand what writing in a neocolonial context means for African women, in general, and in particular for the women considered in this thesis. For many African women the need to counter neocolonialism and the need to liberate women are inextricable, they are two facets of the same agenda of liberation. Johnson-Odim writes that “gender discrimination is neither the sole nor perhaps the primary locus of the oppression of Third World women” (315). African women, like women in other underdeveloped countries will not be free of oppression until African countries become economically as well as politically independent. As Johnson-Odim writes:

In “underdeveloped” societies it is not just a question of internal redistribution of resources, but of their generation and control; not just equal opportunity between men and women, but the creation of opportunity itself; not only the position of women in society, but the position of the societies in which Third World women find themselves (320).

¹¹ By neocolonialism I mean the continuation of colonial domination in the form of economic dependence on western markets. Kwame Nkrumah writes that, “The essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside” (ix). During colonial rule Africa was developed by European countries as a producer of raw materials and the production of crops like cocoa, cotton and coffee were established to provide for the manufacturing industries developing in the industrialising countries of Europe. To a large extent this situation has not changed since independence. African governments continued to encourage the continuation of producing raw goods for consumption by the European and other markets as the international economy became increasingly global. African countries became dependent on the global market for the consumption of the crops they produced for export (Cheru 6). As prices for raw materials fell and prices for imports, manufactured goods from the industrialised market economies of the West, rose, many African countries began to develop massive balance of payments deficits. African governments had no control over international price mechanisms and because of the course of economic development imposed on them by colonial rulers, they were completely dependent upon selling those crops on the global market. Because of this lack of control by African governments, and the control of the world market by the most powerful players, the United States and some European countries, this pattern is a continuation of colonial style domination and is termed neo-colonialism.

African women writers are “conscious of neocolonialism and are interested in fighting through their work for a greater genuine independence for Africa” (Davies and Fido 311). Of the novels examined in this thesis, Our Sister Killjoy by Aidoo demonstrates this consciousness best. Aidoo does not separate her concerns as a woman from her concerns as an African. She explains her position:

How are you going to be able to say as an African that you are a feminist if you are not a nationalist? Not just because Africa has over 250 million people who are female, but because all those women are needed to help. You are not going to be able to do without women and do much. As far as I am concerned, the process, that is, the fast decay of Africa’s social, political, and economic systems is directly related to the complete marginalisation of women from developmental discourses (“An Interview” 124).

Aidoo is both female and African and so her concern to counter the oppression of neo-colonialism affecting African men and women goes hand in hand with her concern that women have been left out of development processes and are the worst affected by neo-colonialism. For Aidoo it is not just a matter of justice to attend to the specific needs of women as well as to overarching nationalist concerns but a matter of necessity because the involvement and contribution of women to building a just society is vital.

The Writers’ Backgrounds

Buchi Emecheta, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Ama Ata Aidoo, the three women writers in this thesis, reflect a range of class, experience and beliefs. They are all university educated. It is helpful to have some idea of the writers’ own educational background to understand why education is an important concern for them in the novels that I examine. Aidoo and Dangarembga belong to a class of highly educated, privileged, wealthy Africans. They are not representative of the majority of African women. Aidoo was born in the central region of Ghana in 1940 and her father, Nana Yaw Fam, believed that, “to educate a woman rather than a man was to educate a nation” (Odamtten 9-10). Aidoo was therefore born into a family that valued educating girls. She was among the first generation of graduates from the University of Ghana, graduating with an honours degree in English. She is a university

teacher, former Minister of Education for Ghana and a critic as well as a writer (Aidoo, "An Interview" 123). Dangarembga is the youngest of the three writers, born in 1959 in Mtoko, Eastern Zimbabwe. Both her parents are among the first generation of highly educated Africans in Zimbabwe, holding Bachelor of Arts degrees from South Africa and Master of Arts degrees from England (Viet-Wild 331).

Dangarembga therefore comes from an educated and privileged family. Between the ages of two and six she lived in England while her parents studied for their Masters' degrees ("Tsitsi" 188). Dangarembga received her earliest schooling in Britain and continued her education to secondary level at a mission school on the family's return to Zimbabwe. After completing secondary education Dangarembga worked as a teacher and then went to Cambridge University, England to study Medicine. She returned to Zimbabwe when the country gained independence and completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology at the University of Zimbabwe (Viet-Wild 331).

While Aidoo and Dangarembga were from middle-class families and had parents who placed a high value on educating their daughters, Emecheta is from a less privileged background. Emecheta was born in Lagos to parents from Eastern Nigeria and was educated to secondary level in Lagos ("Buchi" (a) 34). Emecheta talks about her class background:

I didn't "make it" first in Nigeria You have to belong to a certain class to break through. Flora [Nwapa] came from the colonial class, so she could break through. And Achebe and the other writers are very middle class. His father was a preacher, something high in Nigeria in those days. My father was only a moulder on the railways. On top of that, I'm an Igbo person from the West. They are from the East, and therefore they think "We're the real Igbo" ("Buchi" (b) 91).

Emecheta identifies class and ethnicity as important factors in whether or not a writer is able to "make it" in Nigeria. The daughter of a railway worker, Emecheta was brought up in a working class community. Despite this her parents did send her to school. She married at the age of sixteen and moved to London with her husband where she brought up her five children while studying sociology at the University of London and writing her first novels ("Buchi" (a) 37). Her husband burned her first manuscript, outraged by his wife's depiction of Nigerian men ("Buchi" (a) 45). Emecheta has lived in London since 1962 ("Buchi" (b)

83). Through her education to tertiary level, Emecheta has become a member of the middle class, and is able to give her children opportunities that she did not have.

In summary, Aidoo and Dangarembga have belonged to the middle class since their birth and both had parents who valued education for their daughters. Emecheta while born to a working class family did have parents who decided for whatever reasons to educate their daughter and this gave her the grounding she needed to pursue university education. All three writers received education to university level, all have worked in paid jobs in the formal economy and all have lived in urban centres.

These women are exceptional among African women, the majority of whom are not educated beyond primary level, tend not to earn their money through the formal economy, and live in rural areas for most, if not all, of their lives. The texts I study contain the voices of women and girls from a range of different backgrounds, including female characters, in both rural and urban situations, who come from “poor” backgrounds and do not have formal education. The fact that Aidoo, Emecheta and Dangarembga are not poor women themselves does not mean their texts should be disregarded in favour of those of the “authentic” poor and oppressed women, as DAWN would suggest. Braidotti et al, do not accept DAWN’s claim that “poor Third World women” are the source for alternatives to the current world order, with the implication that they alone can save the planet from destruction. They argue that, “visions from below the platforms of power are less prone to distortion, but subjugation does not necessarily mean superior vision” (Braidotti et al 120). It is important to listen to women in as many different situations as possible. Regardless of the writer’s class background as Elaine Fido, critic of Caribbean literature, says, “literature is a vital forum for dealing with agents which can attack self-worth, self-determination, autonomy and development” (“Crossroads” 11). Creative writing is a site used by writers to express their ideas and thoughts on issues of importance to them and as such it must not be overlooked by students of development.

Summary

The study of fiction for its insights into development issues is timely given current ideas about development theory and practice. It is now widely recognised that for development

processes to be successful, efforts must be made to increase the participation of local people, and to listen to their wants, opinions, desires and aspirations. Many development agencies and government departments also show a commitment to promoting development initiatives that help women to define the problems of their communities and empower them to be involved in development projects. Some go as far as encouraging women to work for structural change which will enable their whole community to achieve their own goals and thus improve their position as women. Together these ideas suggest that development theorists, practitioners, academics and activists should look to all sources where the ideas, knowledge, opinions and wants of women are presented. Fiction is one such important source.

I have selected fictional texts by women who have lived in and are committed to the countries they write about. I have chosen female writers because women's voices are the least often heard and yet are sometimes the most insightful. Women's voices continue to be ignored and neglected. It is clear that "there are surely vast silences here to be broken, silences of African women who have ceased to write or who have never written at all because they felt there was no audience to hear their words" (Frank 47). Development organisations such as DAWN have begun to give audience to the voices and words of women in the South. It is time to listen to women who refuse to keep silent and instead give voice to their views of the world through creative writing.

Chapter Two: Education and Development

Two of the principles now widely recognised by Development Studies -- listening to the viewpoints of ordinary people and recognising the needs and views of women -- require consulting a variety of sources of knowledge, insight and information to gain an understanding of complex development issues. One such development issue is that of education. The term “education” is used by academics, development workers, planners and policy makers to denote a variety of different concepts that include learning in a formal school institution, learning in everyday life, and learning in literacy programmes designed to teach people practical skills. Such education is recognised as a basic human right, a basic need in both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Universal Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Ballara 17).

In the context of The Joys of Motherhood, Nervous Conditions and Our Sister Killjoy I will use “education” to refer to formal Western education. The novels address not so much the education that takes place in the classroom but the whole experience of education, the difficulties of acquiring education, especially for girls, and the effects on students of everything they experience during their years of education.

In keeping with the concept of education as a human right, promoting and increasing access to education has been a major goal of African Governments since independence. Until the 1980s, when structural adjustment programmes demanded education funding be cut, governments poured large proportions of national budgets into the education sector for the construction and resourcing of schools.¹² Driven by the need for educated and trained people to work in new administrations, education was a high priority for governments in the first few decades after gaining independence. Governments were supported in their education efforts by organisations such as UNESCO, which ran literacy campaigns and began collecting data on literacy levels, widely used as an indicator of development. This commitment from governments and the international community to

¹²Structural adjustment programmes were imposed on many developing countries by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the 1980s and into the 1990s, essentially to squeeze money from governments for repayment of debts.

education “reflects a broad recognition that education is essential to economic and social development” (King, 1). Ordinary people, too, hang great hopes and expectations on education, believing it to be the key to improving their position by providing an escape from poverty. Education is considered to be a crucial part of the development process by governments, international development organisations and ordinary people and has stimulated wide debate amongst academics about the effects of educating people.

The negative effects of the educational experience have concerned a number of academics, notably W.T.S Gould and Gail P. Kelly. Despite indications of the benefits of education and amid the aspirations of many people in developing countries for education, the question of whether or not education is a liberating force or rather a method of hegemonic control, a manifestation of colonial or neo-colonial imperialism and a tool for assimilating people to the dominant culture, remains a complex and difficult question. On the one hand, time spent learning and studying a Western curriculum in schools based on a Western model will give children the necessary education, training, knowledge and attitudes to enter jobs in a Western-dominated and increasingly global economy. Conversely, the cost of this opportunity to understand a Western worldview and to enter professions in a rapidly modernising society is often alienation from one’s own community and culture. Being educated in a formal school setting bears the risk of assimilation into an alien culture, powerful because of the nature of global capitalism regulated and controlled by Western powers. Closely related issues concern language; students of Western-orientated schools are taught the language of the dominant culture, and may adopt this language, losing their fluency in their original language. A process of cultural loss and assimilation often accompanies loss of language and tends to go hand-in-hand with Western schooling. These concerns are raised by Nervous Conditions and Our Sister Killjoy, discussed in chapters four and five.

The debate on the experience of education has centred on the broad question of whether the experience is positive or negative and has tended to be blind to the disadvantages of women and girls. There was for a long time a need for academics and creative writers to examine the educational experiences of girls and to question the prevailing attitudes towards the education and schooling of girls and women. Since the

1970s some academics and creative writers, many of whom are women, have sought to balance the debate on education in developing countries by looking at how girls' and women's experiences of education might differ to men's.¹³

While education is one of the most basic issues in development, it is also one of the most important issues facing girls and women throughout the developing world. There is abundant evidence of the positive effects of educating girls and women, yet, despite this, statistics on enrollment and literacy rates indicate that there remain grave gender inequalities in access to education. Improvements in health, infant mortality rates, fertility rates and productivity, shown to result from educating girls, will not be fully enjoyed while gender inequalities in education persist. The barriers that girls and women face must be identified, acknowledged and understood if they are to be overcome.

As already stated, international declarations regard education to be a human right. Yet a recent UNICEF article begins with some stark statistics of the gender inequalities that exist in education worldwide:

. . . . of the estimated 960 million illiterate people in the world, two thirds are women. In 1990, 130 million children had no access to primary education: of these 81 million were girls (Nelson 15).

Quite clearly huge numbers of children around the world are denied one of the most basic of rights -- that of education -- and these statistics show girls to be more disadvantaged than boys. It is true that the number of children, boys and girls, enrolling in primary schools has increased steadily over the three decades, 1950-1980, and that the rates of growth in Africa are the highest in the world (Adams and Kruppenbach 438). However, Africa's post primary enrollment rates are the lowest in the world and at both levels, most markedly at secondary level, there has always been a wide gap between the levels for boys and those for girls (Adams and Kruppenbach 445). Elizabeth King uses data from UNESCO and from the

¹³ An abundance of literature exists on the subject of education and development in general but questions of gender disparities in education are not so well covered. Major work has been carried out by Gail P Kelly and a number of general texts on women in the third world contain sections about women and education. A recent and important book by Elizabeth M King and M Anne Hill surveys the literature and statistics on women and education in developing countries that have been undertaken up to 1993. Yet these books are few in number and fail to reflect the great importance of this issue for women as indicated by the treatment of this theme in creative writing by women in Africa.

World Bank for countries throughout the developing world, to demonstrate that while enrollment rates for both boys and girls have been rising at all levels:

The enrollment rates for girls remain much lower than those of boys, with the widest gap in the poorest countries. For the group of forty low-income countries, defined as those with a GNP per capita below \$500 in 1988, the gap in primary school enrollment between boys and girls averages 20 percentage points. This gap has persisted in large part since 1960 (King and Hill 2-3).

Such huge discrepancies as these have caused great concern in development circles worldwide and as Adams and Kruppenbach note, "The expansion and improvement of educational opportunities for females in the Third World has been a major policy thrust during this United Nations Decade of Women for UNESCO, the World Bank, the Agency for International Development (AID), and other international development donor agencies" (438). To carry this through requires understandings of why the gap persists and this is now the subject of much research.

Several arguments exist for closing this gap. Firstly, it is an injustice to women, secondly education is considered by many women, in developing countries as well as in the developed world, to be the key to liberating women from patriarchal domination, and therefore to effective, participatory development. Florence Abena Dolphyne, an African woman, emphasises the importance that women place on the role of education in empowering women to question their inferior position in their society,

It is ignorance that has made women accept the inferior position to which they have been relegated in society for centuries Only education can foster in women an analytical and a critical mind that would make them question the religious, cultural and physiological bases of their supposed inferiority . . . (Dolphyne 56).

The literature on women, education and development starts from this premise - that education is an important tool for development, that education offers possibilities for girls and women that they would not otherwise have and that, because of this, it is vital to educate women so that they can participate in and make decisions about development processes.

Perhaps the most powerful argument, as to why girls should be encouraged into education, draws on the evidence from research about the economic and social returns to investing in educating girls and women. The economic returns to women's education have been well documented (King and Hill 27; Schultz 51-99). A number of studies show that educating women and girls leads to social returns such as improvements in infant mortality rates; fertility rates; level of involvement in income generating projects; the support given to educating the next generation of children, particularly girls; and women's work options. One such study is the Demographic Health Survey which shows that in 1990 in 28 countries in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Arab States the "tendency for smaller families increased with the educational level of women", the average number of children falling to less than four among women with secondary education. In Botswana, Kenya and Zimbabwe where over 70 percent of women have some education, family planning methods are more widely used (Ballara 13). The results of another study conducted by the Research Triangle Institute, carried out in 80 developing countries, show that an "increase of 70 percent in girls' enrollment in primary schools, together with a comparable growth in secondary education, would after 20 years result in a decrease in the infant mortality rate of 40 per 1,000 live births" (Ballara 14). The State of the World Population (1990) reported that the results of studies carried out in 46 countries indicated that a one percent increase in women's literacy rate is three times more effective in reducing infant mortality than a one percent increase in the number of doctors (Ballara 14). These studies all point to the considerable health gains that come from being educated. Benefits in areas other than health have also been documented. In an effort to draw public awareness to these needs the United Nations declared 1990 as International Literacy Year and in March 1990 specific attention was given to the needs of girls and women in education at The World Conference on Education for All.¹⁴

Despite the communal benefits of educating girls, the gender gap in education persists. The reasons for this lie in attitudes and ideas about the role of women in society. Daughters are not seen by their parents to bring the same benefits as sons and the costs of girls' education are seen to be greater. To decrease the gender gap in education a greater

¹⁴ See Ballara 17-20 for further discussion.

understanding of parents' expectations of their daughters is needed. This, in turn, requires insights into the deeply formed attitudes about the role of women in society that underly those expectations. The perceptions of parents are crucial in determining whether or not daughters will attend school. For many traditional African societies a woman's role is reproduction and for this education is deemed unnecessary. Boys' education is favoured over girls' because it is a man's role to provide for his wife and children; girls do not perform this role and therefore their education is not considered to be as important. Moreover, if girls do need to earn money they can do so in the informal trade sector, selling snacks and cigarettes, another activity for which education is thought to be redundant. Children represent a form of security for parents' old age and because daughters are expected to marry and enter their husband's family, parents educate their sons knowing that they and their money, earned as a result of education, will remain in the family (Dolphyne 49-50). In addition, girls' education can cost more. More importance is placed on girls' appearance than on boys. Parents go to extra efforts to dress their daughters in correct, well-fitting uniforms. Parents' reluctance to allow their daughters to travel on public transport can lead to boarding and lodgings costs which would not be incurred for boys.

Furthermore, girls are thought to miss out on important domestic and childcare training if they spend the day at school rather than at home. Girls' work at home, in the marketplace and on the farm is often more valuable than boys' work. Education and the school environment are considered to have a negative influence on girls which might make them "bad" wives or worse still, unmarriageable. Often if girls are sent to school at all, they are only expected to go to school until they get married (King and Hill 24). As Dolphyne says, "For all these reasons, and also the fact that there was always the risk of a girl dropping out of school because of pregnancy, it was not considered important to invest money in a girl's education, and whenever money was short and a decision had to be made between keeping a son or a daughter in school, it was the daughter who was withdrawn" (50).

The development literature gives an indication of the marked gender inequalities in education and it attempts to explain them. Yet social-science research is limited and the use of statistics to illustrate the extent of gender inequalities cannot explain the complex and

varied reasons why girls and women are denied opportunities in education and what their experiences of education are like. In order to eradicate the injustice it is necessary to understand why the gender imbalance exists and why it must be eradicated. The testimonies of individual girls are needed to gain a deeper understanding of the social, cultural and psychological implications of denying girls access to school and of the battles girls sometimes wage to attend educational institutions. Traditional methods of inquiry in Development Studies are limited in their ability to gain such an understanding of education issues, relying heavily on statistics to make points about gender issues in education. Gail P. Kelly points to the limitations of social science research and suggests that fiction is better able to convey the great hopes and expectations with which people in developing countries, and significantly women, have regarded education. Of the limitations of their book, Women's Education in the Third World: Comparative Perspectives, Kelly and Elliott say,

Above all, this book may fail to convey the passionate dedication to education that historically has motivated many men and women all over the world. To individual women, as well as men, education represents a possibility of escaping the drudgery of poverty and domestic routines. Agnes Smedley's fictional autobiography, Daughter of the Earth, provides a particularly moving example of such a quest for education. To social and political reformers, women's education has represented a route to national dignity and independence by countering such obscurantist social practices as child marriage and burning of the widow. Roden Adjeng Kartini's Letters of a Javanese Princess gives eloquent testimony of her belief in education to free her nation. . . . It is difficult for such social science analysis as is presented here to capture the great hopes education has aroused in the lives of women (7).

It is to fiction by women in developing countries that Kelly and Elliot look to for a deeper understanding of the extent of the hopes women have for education. They suggest an important role for fiction, one different to that of more traditional methods of social science research. The following three chapters explore the ability of fiction to provide the depth of insight that for which Kelly and Elliot look to fiction.

Chapter Three: Educating Daughters: One of The Joys of Motherhood

Introduction

Buchi Emecheta's novel The Joys of Motherhood enhances a Development Studies understanding of the reasons behind the choices women make about educating their daughters by providing examples of two women who make different decisions about their daughters' futures. A range of contrasting factors underlie the women's decisions -- some are financial and others relate to the women's attitudes about girls and to their class.¹⁵

The central character, Nnu Ego, is a woman who comes from the rural village of Ibuza and goes to live in urban Lagos as an adult. She provides an example of a woman who does not attach the same importance to education for her daughters as she does for her sons. The novel explains that Nnu Ego's approach to bringing up her daughters is in keeping with traditional Igbo attitudes about women. As portrayed by Emecheta, Nnu Ego's approach makes sense in the context of Ibuza but not in Lagos where, as the novel makes clear, education is a definite advantage for girls. A second character, Adaku, Nnu Ego's co-wife, provides an example of a woman who, more quickly than Nnu Ego, questions the attitudes that she too has brought from Ibuza. Adaku observes that in Lagos it will be much more difficult than in Ibuza for her daughters to earn recognition and status because the traditional roles of women as traders and mothers do not carry the same opportunities for status in Lagos as they do in Ibuza. Adaku realises that education will provide more options for her daughters and so makes the decision to educate them.

It is Adaku's attitude that Emecheta upholds. However, rather than criticising Nnu Ego's treatment of her daughters, the novel calls readers to understand the complexities of her situation. In addition, Emecheta highlights several reasons why it is easier for Adaku than for Nnu Ego to adapt to life in Lagos and accept education for her daughters. First, both of Adaku's children are girls, whereas Nnu Ego has sons as well as daughters, and

¹⁵ While the novel is primarily about the tensions which confront families as they try to transpose traditions and customs developed in a rural, communal context into an urban environment, Emecheta's interest lies with change and adaptation particularly as it affects women.

secondly, Adaku comes from a family of lower social standing than Nnu Ego and therefore faces less pressure to adhere to the traditions of Ibuza.

The novel's portrayal of the differences between life in Ibuza and Lagos -- the isolation from extended family and the diminishing status of women and their roles -- highlights the importance of education for girls in this new environment. As Adaku realises, in Lagos education offers girls an avenue to the status and respect no longer achievable through traditional roles. The contrast of Nnu Ego and Adaku gives clear insights into the ways circumstances and family background affect the decisions women make regarding their daughters' education. This is the novel's greatest contribution to understanding in this area.

As discussed in chapter two, parents' reluctance to educate their daughters is a major barrier to increasing access to education for girls. Social-science research, as already mentioned, tends to isolate various aspects from one another leaving a fragmented picture (Kelly and Elliot 7). This issue is no exception. I chose The Joys of Motherhood because of the way it treats this important development theme, namely parents' and specifically women's attitudes to educating their daughters. The novel takes an integrated approach to the question of women and their daughters' education by demonstrating the inter-relationships between many of the aspects dealt with separately by some of the researchers mentioned in Chapter Two. As a work of fiction, The Joys of Motherhood is able to tell a complete story of the lives of Nnu Ego and Adaku, showing that their approaches to their daughters' upbringing and education is connected to many other aspects of their lives. With the turning of each page, the reader learns more about each woman, her fears and her desires, her family background and the way she reacts in a variety of situations. Gradually the reader begins to get a very detailed and full picture of the two women, although as Adaku is a less central character in the novel Emecheta does not give the same amount of detail for her as she does for Nnu Ego. This integrated approach is the unique contribution of fiction in general and this novel in particular to a Development Studies understanding of women and the choices they make about educating their daughters.

The author, Buchi Emecheta, believes that education for girls is essential for the emancipation of African women (as it is for women worldwide). Emecheta is convinced that education will provide girls with knowledge and skills which will enable them to have

greater opportunities than their mothers. Emecheta explicitly articulated this belief at a conference in 1985 where she spoke about her commitment to promoting education for women:

I want very much to further the education of women in Africa, because I know that education really helps the women. It helps them to read and it helps them to rear a generation. It is true that if one educates a woman, one educates a community, whereas if one educates a man, one educates a man ("Feminism with a small 'f'" 175).

Emecheta shares the position of many of the writers of development literature; the education of girls and women is important because of their role in bringing up children, it results in extensive benefits in healthcare, fertility, reduction of infant mortality and the education of the next generation as well as bringing immediate benefits to the woman herself (Ballara 30-47; King and Hill 29-31).

This may seem quite straightforward: if girls are educated they will have more options, and the benefits of better living standards and healthcare will ripple out to their families and the wider community. But as Emecheta also explained at the conference, deeply entrenched attitudes about the role of women, held by women as well as men, form the basis for persistent negative attitudes towards the education of girls. This is one of the greatest obstacles to equality, as Emecheta points out:

Working and achieving to great heights is nothing new to the woman of Africa, but there are still many obstacles in her way. Her family still prefers to educate the boy, while she stays at home to do the important jobs called 'women's duties'. And we accept the tag, knowing full well that the boy, however clever he is, would not be where he is today without the sacrifices made by his mother, his sweetheart, his wife or even his sister. The African woman has always been a woman who achieves. . . . But she still will have higher aspirations and achieve more when those cleverly structured artificial barriers are removed, when education is free and available to every child, male or female, when the male-dominated media does not give exposure to a black woman simply because she is a beautiful entertainer, thereby undermining

our brain power, and when we ourselves have the confidence to value our contribution to the world (“Feminism with a small ‘f’” 181).

Women’s acceptance of their position in the home figures largely in this speech and recurs as a key concern of The Joys of Motherhood. Emecheta clearly views education as the mechanism which will bring women to question the traditional perception of their “women’s duties” to include more than domestic work. As women begin to question these attitudes they will be more likely to encourage the education of their daughters. Emecheta’s commitment to education for women is reflected in her novels where, as Kirsten Holst Petersen observes, “education for girls and the attitudes toward educated women” is an important theme (“Unorthodox Fictions” 287). In The Joys of Motherhood Emecheta demonstrates how complex challenging traditional gender roles can be for the families concerned.

The Joys of Motherhood discusses some of the reasons why parents, and particularly mothers, can be reluctant to educate their daughters. Constrained by limited financial resources, Nnu Ego has to choose between education for all her children to a minimal level, or education for her sons at the expense of her daughters. The complexities of Nnu Ego and her family’s situation is explored in detail, creating tensions for the reader who sympathises with both Nnu Ego and her daughters. From this portrayal of one family’s financial struggles and the implications for the daughters’ education, development workers involved in encouraging education for girls can gain a deeper understanding of the many and complex reasons why girls are often denied education.

Discussion and Analysis

Emecheta shows that Nnu Ego is strongly influenced by the traditions of her culture and the different but complementary roles set out for men and women which Nnu Ego learns from an early age in Ibuza, the rural village in which she grows up. Nnu Ego’s attitudes towards education for girls can be better understood in the context of Nnu Ego’s family background and traditional ideologies of gender in the rural Igbo society Emecheta portrays.

Nnu Ego's understanding of the positions of power available to women in her society is affected by her own privileged position as the daughter of the chief Agbadi and the only child of his favourite lover, Ona. Ona, herself, is the only daughter of another important chief. Emecheta's portrayal of Ona, Nnu Ego's mother, provides the context for Nnu Ego's attitudes to her daughters and education. Emecheta characterises Ona as a woman, "who managed to combine stubbornness with arrogance. So stubborn was she that she refused to live with Agbadi." Ona's independent spirit is made clear, "Many a night she would send him away, saying she did not feel like having anything to do with him" (11). Part of the reason for Ona's ability to display a forthright character is her relationship to her father which brings her a degree of respect and privilege. Ona is the daughter of an important chief who has no sons and as his only child she is her father's heir, she is a "male daughter".¹⁶ The independence Ona has because of this relationship is further described: "she frequently made people aware of being a conservative, haughty presence, cold as steel and remote as any woman royally born. When she sat, and curled her legs together in a feminine modesty, one knew she had style, this only daughter of Obi Umunna" (12). A further example of the independence Ona has as the only daughter of an important chief is the pact she makes with her lover Agbadi when she is pregnant with the child who becomes Nnu Ego. Ona cannot marry because if she does she will join her husband's family and her father will be left with no heir. So Ona tells Agbadi that if the child is a boy it will belong to her father, if a girl, to Agbadi. Her ability to compromise and negotiate on her own terms with men is directly related to her position as a "male daughter". Although, Ona is not free to marry Agbadi even if she wants to, because her father won't accept a brideprice, Ona nevertheless remains in control of this situation and thus provides an example of the autonomy available to some women in Igbo society.

Emecheta's portrayal of Ona, a strong-willed and independent-minded woman of Ibuza, shows that women could, in certain circumstances occupy positions of power in pre-colonial Igbo society. For Nnu Ego, the fact that her mother occupied such a privileged position heightens her awareness of the status and independence sometimes available to

¹⁶ This institution is an important aspect of gender in Igbo society and depends on specific circumstances, largely on a woman's relationship to male family members. For a full discussion of this see Amadiume 1-223.

women in her society. When Nnu Ego has her own daughters she brings them up with this in mind, and, expecting that their position as the grandchildren of Agbadi and Ona will ensure that they are always well cared for, she does not consider education to be necessary for them.

Not only her mother's unusual status, but Nnu Ego's own position in her family influences her attitudes to her daughters -- Nnu Ego holds a privileged place in her community as the only child of her father's favourite lover. However, when Nnu Ego moves to Lagos, away from her family, she loses this privileged status. Emecheta's portrayal of Ona and Nnu Ego, mother and daughter, represents Igbo women's loss of status in one generation. Where Ona was respected and given special privileges according to traditional custom in Ibuza, Nnu Ego loses the status she inherits from her mother and the opportunity to achieve her own status when she moves out of the context of traditional custom and into Lagos. Theodora Ezeigbo writes: "the role and status of women underwent drastic changes from what they were in the traditional society to the subsequent political, cultural and economic powerlessness that characterised women's lives in the colonial period" (Ezeigbo 15). Nnu Ego, however, is not alert to the fact that in Lagos her daughters are unlikely to benefit from their family connections.

In addition to her family background, the role of motherhood which Nnu Ego learns in Ibuza also helps explain the way Nnu Ego brings up her daughters. The Joys of Motherhood describes the cultural value of children and motherhood, the powerful process of socialisation that prepares girls for motherhood and the limitations which this role places on women, made more apparent in the urban context. All of these issues require consideration if development workers are to fully understand the reluctance of parents towards their daughter's education. Speaking about the socialisation of girls, Emecheta says,

In many parts of Africa only one's enemies will go out of their way to pray for a pregnant woman to have a girl-child. Most people want a man-child. The prayers will go: 'you will be safely delivered of a bouncing baby boy, a real man-child that we can play with and make jolly with whisky and beer.' The pregnant woman will not protest at this prayer because in her heart, she too would like to have a man-child, who will not be married away, but will stay in the family home and look after his

mother when she becomes weak and old. In most African societies the birth of a son enhances a woman's authority in the family. Male children are very, very important. Yet, this girl-child that was not desired originally comes into her own at a very early age. From childhood she is conditioned into thinking that being the girl she must do all the housework, she must help her mother cook, clean, fetch water and look after her younger brothers and sisters. If she moans or shows signs of not wanting to do any of this, she will be sharply reminded by her mother. 'But you are a girl! Going to be a woman.' ("Feminism with a small 'f'" 179).

These are the attitudes of Nnu Ego and her response to her daughters' protests are similar to those Emecheta describes. Emecheta explains the different value placed on boys and girls at birth, values which reflect the traditional pattern of girls leaving home and boys staying within the family. Again, the self-abnegation of women is mentioned and explained in terms of acceptance of the traditional "women's duties" of which Emecheta spoke earlier. Emecheta encourages the contrasting approach of Adaku, discussed later, because by educating her daughters Adaku will begin to break the cycle of women's oppression.

The importance of motherhood for Igbo women is made clear as the novel opens with a flashback to Nnu Ego's explosive grief and torment when she discovers her first born son dead on the mat. Straight away we are plunged into an acute awareness of how important this baby is to Nnu Ego and of how important motherhood is for Igbo women. Their whole identity and future well-being depends on whether or not they are able to give birth. Later we learn that Nnu Ego has already suffered because of the expectation on her to have children, she was discarded by her first husband, Amachokwu, when she failed to produce children. Nnu Ego, in discussing the absence of children with her husband, internalises the community's belief that the woman is to blame when children do not follow soon after a marriage:

I am sure the fault is on my side. You do everything right. How can I face my father and tell him that I have failed? I don't like going there these days because his wives always rush out to greet me hoping that I am already carrying a child. You can see the disappointment on their faces (31).

Nnu Ego is desperate to have a child and fulfil her own desire as well as the expectations of her father's family and her husband's family. Eventually Amachokwu's family gives up on Nnu Ego and finds a new wife for their eldest son. She soon has a baby and Nnu Ego, still living in the compound, becomes ill with jealousy, eventually taking the baby and nursing it with her own milk to satisfy her deep desire to mother a child. This painful episode of the novel is a good example of the power of fiction to convey intense emotions. The grave importance of motherhood for Nnu Ego, representative of Igbo women, is made very clear and Nnu Ego's early experiences have a significant effect on her eagerness to ensure her daughters are well-groomed for motherhood. Nnu Ego prays to her chi for a child, she loses weight and becomes very depressed. Finally she is sent home to her father after being discovered with her co-wife's child at her breast and when Agbadi finds a new husband for Nnu Ego, Amachokwu responds, "Let her go . . . she is as barren as a desert" (39). These experiences, rather than making her reject the pressure of having to produce children only make Nnu Ego more insistent that her daughters must be taught to be good mothers.

The cultural value placed on children has much to do with the expectation that children would look after their parents in their old age. As a young woman Nnu Ego expresses her desire for children in terms of her own future well-being: "When one grows old, one needs children to look after one. If you have no children, and your parents have gone, who can you call your own?" (38). Nnu Ego knows that she must have children if she is going to enjoy a comfortable old age. Having many children, particularly sons who will stay within the family, brings women greater status and it means security for women in their old age. This is why large numbers of children are sought by parents and why Nnu Ego, having eventually given birth to nine children, is held up as a role model by her community in Ibuza for following generations of women when she dies. However, Nnu Ego does not gain the rewards that she expects for her successful raising of the seven children that survive infancy -- her sons leave to pursue tertiary study in the United States and Canada and neither of them visit, nor send money home. Chapter five discusses issues surrounding the departure of students to other parts of the world in relation to Our Sister Killjoy.

When Nnu Ego moves to Lagos to meet her second husband, Nnaife, she enters an environment in which her family background does not help her; where being a mother is

much more difficult, without the support of extended family; and where she cannot rely on her children to live nearby and support her in her old age. Gradually, Nnu Ego realises that these changes have implications for her children's futures and that education will make their lives easier. This applies to all her children, although she sends her boys to school while her girls only attend literacy classes. Nnu Ego learns the importance of education in this new environment through her own experiences of being disadvantaged without literacy. One such experience occurs when Nnaife is away and Nnu Ego has no means of communicating with him since they are both illiterate. When Nnaife does send letters, dictated for someone else to write, Nnu Ego is unable to read it so she has to find someone to read it for her. As the following passage illustrates this raises a number of problems:

Now who was there to read it for her? Mama Abby had moved. She could not give it to any Ibuza person; they were too close. After close relatives had been used to seeing one poor, only the most mature ones among them would be able to stomach one being out of poverty. She ran impulsively to the front part of the house, to the landlord Mr Barber who worked at the railmen's Secretariat. His family had been kind to her, in a distant, not too familiar, neighbourly way. Halfway there, she changed her mind; no, if it was a lot of money they would increase her rent, and the wives would be jealous. It was better that she be patient, settle the children to their different tasks for the day, and then go in search of her old and reliable friend, Abby's mother (176).

Nnu Ego feels limited in her choices of people to read the letter incase it contains word of money. It highlights the tension in Lagos' Ibuza community between those with more money than others. Her pride prevents her from approaching wealthier members of this community. Nor does she want to ask her landlord incase he sees an opportunity to demand more rent. This she could not afford and so, despite the inconveniencies, Nnu Ego spends the following day travelling to visit Mama Abby. The whole household is disrupted as a result of Nnu Ego's absence; the boys have to stay home from school to stand in for Nnu Ego at her stall and the girls have to do the household chores. This incident shows the need for women to be literate and have some level of education and it makes Nnu Ego thankful that she is sending

her daughters to private lessons so they will at least be able to read and write. As the narrator tells us,

With tears of relief in her eyes, she promised herself that all her children, girls and boys would have a good education. If she herself had had one, she would have been able to call at this office to check about the money. She would at least have been able to contact Nnaife, and he could have done the same. She and her husband were ill-prepared for a life like this, where only pen and not mouth could really talk. Her children must learn (179).

Nnu Ego has come face to face with the powerlessness of being illiterate in a system which relies on the written word as its major form of communication. This experience heightens Nnu Ego's awareness that the ability to read and write in this new environment is very important for girls as well as boys. Nnu Ego returns home determined to ensure that all her children become literate. Emecheta thus emphasises the important role which mothers play in influencing decisions about their daughters' education. There are no similar passages emphasising the role of the father in the novel. This event comes late in the novel, emphasising the time it takes for Nnu Ego to recognise the implications of the clash of cultures and the value of education for her daughters.

Nnu Ego gives her boys' education priority and Oshia's education is discussed more than anyone's in the novel because he is the eldest son. Many of the sacrifices Nnu Ego makes are for Oshia and his younger brother, Adim, and indeed Nnu Ego's daughters are also required to make sacrifices for their brothers' education. During one of the longest periods of Nnaife's absence, Nnu Ego is very short of money and cannot afford to continue paying for her sons' school fees as well as her daughters' literacy classes. Forced to make decisions about how to use her limited resources most effectively in terms of her children's education, Nnu Ego removes the boys from school, saving their fees, and puts them into literacy classes instead of the girls. Unhappy about having to stop Oshia's schooling Nnu Ego consoles herself by reflecting on the value of the education he already has:

He might not be able to read properly yet, but he could write his name, and that was more than his father could do at the same age. So even if he had to stop school now, he would still be better equipped for life than his father (173).

Here Nnu Ego gives a further reason for educating her children. She emphasises the personal benefit to Oshia rather than the investment for the family that, as shown, his education also represents. By giving her child education she gives him tools which will help him cope with daily life in the city. Nnu Ego measures Oshia's level of education against his father's, not her own, despite them both being illiterate. This is a good illustration of Nnu Ego's traditional understanding of the roles of men and women which influence her opinion that education is more important for males than for females because in Lagos the emphasis is on the male to provide. The comparison between parent and child also shows how quickly educational levels can increase from one generation to the next.

A further illustration of Nnu Ego voicing her attitudes occurs when she warns Oshia that he will soon have to leave his school and instead take over the girls' lessons. Oshia feels extremely hard done by and, aware of the inferior value of his sisters' lessons, he exclaims, "But the girls go to private lessons. They don't learn anything there" (174). His response demonstrates the socialisation of boys; Oshia learns his mother's attitudes very quickly. Nnu Ego reinforces his view, saying "The twins will have to leave and help me in running the house and my trade. If they are lucky, they too will go to school when your father returns. They don't need to stay long in school - only a year or two" (174). Although it is not made explicit here it is because of their female sex and the values and attitudes toward women that the girls attend inferior classes. With reduced spending money the boys leave school and take their sisters' places in private lessons and the girls move out of education altogether. This reflects the common pattern whereby girls are the last to get education and the first to lose it when money is scarce -- a pattern we also see in Nervous Conditions in the next chapter.

A further illustration of the low priority Nnu Ego puts on her girls' education comes when Nnu Ego's daughters protest at being expected to do housework while their brothers go to school and come home to study. Nnu Ego cannot understand their complaints, telling them, "But you are girls! They are boys. You have to sell to put them in a good position in life, so that they will be able to look after the family. When your husbands are nasty to you, they will defend you." (176). Here Nnu Ego clearly articulates the roles for men and women which she learnt in Iboza; the girls' support by earning money for their brothers' education

now will enable their brothers to support them later in life. Again Nnu Ego's understanding makes sense in the context of Ibuza where men and women, in their complementary roles support each other throughout life. Traditionally, as already discussed, girls were also taught to sell so that they would have some degree of economic independence. It is in this context that Nnu Ego's treatment of her daughters, keeping them home to help with housework and to trade while the boys go to school, must be understood.

In Lagos, where the traditional roles of mother and trader lose the status and rewards which were available in Ibuza, Nnu Ego's attitudes toward her daughters take on new meaning. In the new setting her attitudes disadvantage her daughters, as preparing them for motherhood and trading will not give them the independence and security that she thinks they will. Judith Van Allan argues that, "the experience of Igbo women under British colonialism shows that Western influence can sometimes weaken or destroy women's traditional autonomy and power in exchange" (165). Nnu Ego treats her daughters as she would have in Ibuza, with the best intentions, but in Lagos that treatment no longer makes sense and in fact education would give them more opportunities for status, security and independence.

In Ibuza women are supported in the tasks of motherhood by extended family and their husbands' other wives. Emecheta's portrayal of Nnu Ego's life in Lagos suggests that, because women are often isolated from an extended family, they do not have the same support that they would have had in Ibuza. This isolation means there are times when Nnu Ego needs to stay home with a new baby, whom, in the rural context, Nnu Ego would have left with relatives while she engaged in farmwork or trade, thus exercising greater independence. Nnu Ego continues this practice of combining motherhood with other work when she first comes to Lagos, but instead of leaving the baby with relatives she leaves it alone. She returns one morning to find the baby dead. This, of course, is a horrific experience for Nnu Ego and she sees in it a lesson of the differences between Ibuza and Lagos; in Lagos motherhood is a full-time occupation, not to be combined with other work. When Nnu Ego's next child, Oshia, is born Nnu Ego is careful not to leave the house to trade as she would have in Ibuza. In the following passage, the narrator describes Nnu Ego's

thoughts about how to approach mothering her second child as she observes the changes taking place in Lagos regarding the traditional work patterns of men and women:

She might not have any money to supplement her husband's income, but were they not in a man's world where it was the duty of the father to provide for his family? In Ibuza, women made a contribution, but in urban Lagos, men had to be the sole providers; this new setting robbed the woman of her useful role. Nnu Ego told herself that the life she had indulged in with the baby Ngozi had been very risky: *she had been trying to be traditional in a modern setting*. It was because she wanted to be a woman of Ibuza in a town like Lagos that she had lost her child. This time she was going to play it by the new rules. She would sometimes ask herself how long she must do it. In Ibuza after the child was weaned, one could leave him with an elderly member of the family and go in search of trade. But in Lagos there were no elderly grandparents. Then she would scold herself: "Nnu Ego, the daughter of Agbadi, don't be greedy. Manage with Nnaife's income and look after your child. That is your duty. Be satisfied with his earnings. Let him do his duty" (my emphasis) (81).

Women's roles are becoming much more limited in the urban setting because in the absence of extended family to childmind, women are finding it more difficult to combine trade with caring for children. As Nnu Ego notes, in Lagos a woman's potential to contribute to the family earnings is limited by the necessity to stay home with children. This limitation places women in the situation of having to rely more on their husbands to provide for the family. This is why Nnu Ego, at the end of the passage, makes an effort to talk herself into accepting the fact that, while her children are young, she would be wise to depend on Nnaife to earn enough income to support the whole family.

Her early experiences in Lagos, such as the death of her first baby, make her very eager to adapt to the demands of the city so that she and her children can survive. Her acceptance that the reduced independence of women is one of the many changes to which she must become accustomed, affects her decisions about her children's education -- which she recognises as a key to better, higher-paying jobs. Nnu Ego makes educating her sons a high priority because of her understanding that, in Lagos, circumstances are such that men must carry a greater proportion of the responsibility to provide for the family. Having some

education means her sons will have the options of a larger range of jobs with higher incomes which, as she understands it, will benefit their whole family including their mother and sisters. One other reason why Nnu Ego makes her sons' education a priority is that boys are traditionally expected to provide for their parents in their old age; girls are not relied on because they leave their birth families to join their husbands' family. In this context, educating sons is an investment for old age. This is portrayed in The Joys of Motherhood as we see Nnaife and Nnu Ego strive to keep their sons at school, at the expense of the daughters' education. This understanding is based on the context of Iboza, where society is structured around the extended family and where sons provide for their mothers.

Whereas Nnu Ego responds to the diminishing status of women's traditional roles by accepting the process, Adaku does not. In Adaku, Nnu Ego's junior wife, Emecheta presents a woman who does accept the need to adapt her ideas about gender roles so that she can continue her success as a trader and ensure that her girls are not disadvantaged in the new environment of Lagos. From her arrival in Lagos, Adaku is determined to emphasise the worth that girls traditionally represent -- their earning potential and brideprice which still exists in Lagos. A very successful trader herself, Adaku encourages her daughters, as Nnu Ego does also, to be astute traders. Later she decides to send her daughters to school, recognising that education will offer her daughters greater independence than trade will. Adaku's positive attitude is illustrated when Nnu Ego is disappointed at giving birth to twin daughters. Nnu Ego says to her co-wife, Adaku, "I doubt if our husband will like them very much. One can hardly afford to have one girl in a town like this, to say nothing of two" (126-127). Adaku tries to ease her disappointment by reminding her that their bride prices will help pay for the boys' education, focusing on the value that does exist for the girls. At this stage of the novel Adaku has not developed her thinking to the point where she decides to educate her daughters. Adaku's words reflect the traditional view of girls' futures, that they are expected to marry, have children and that the worth of their brideprice is for the boys' education. What is significant is that, unlike Nnu Ego who despairs at the thought of the extra burden of having girls in the urban setting, Adaku is determined to see worth in girls and insists that the traditional value of girls, in terms of their brideprice is still relevant

in Lagos. Nnu Ego is struck by Adaku's ability to concentrate on the girls' worth and looks at her speculatively:

'This woman knows a thing or two,' she thought. So independent in her way of thinking. Was it because Adaku came from a low family where people were not tied to pleasing the rest of their members, as she Nnu Ego had to please her titled father Agbadi all the time? She sighed and remarked aloud, 'You are right. The trouble with me is that I find it difficult to change' (127).

Nnu Ego thus recognises the value of Adaku's response and the advantage of being able to change. Class makes it easier for Adaku to think independently. Coming from "a low family" means Adaku does not have the same pressures as Nnu Ego, whose father's family expects a higher level of adherence to custom. Adaku's family do not appear in the novel while Nnu Ego's do. This is not just because Nnu Ego is the central character -- it is to show that Nnu Ego is much more tied to her family and consequently their expectations and wishes have more influence over her. The influence of the backgrounds of both Nnu Ego and Adaku is shown in each woman's marriages. Both women marry twice, yet Nnu Ego becomes a first wife in each instance, Adaku marries both times as a second wife. Class is thus a key factor that makes it easier and more desirable on a personal level for Adaku to challenge her society's conventions.

A critical event in the novel illustrates the importance of the class difference between Nnu Ego and Adaku. After a dispute in which Nnu Ego has been rude to a guest of Adaku's, the men of the community meet to settle the fraught situation caused by Nnu Ego's offence to traditional social obligations of hospitality. Contrary to Adaku's expectations, the men side with Nnu Ego despite agreeing that she is at fault. This is due to Adaku's position in the household as a second wife and the mother of fewer children than Nnu Ego, neither of whom are boys. This incident precipitates Adaku's decision to leave the household, taking her two daughters with her. Yet it is not simply the discrimination which prompts her departure, it is that the urban setting cannot accommodate the custom of polygamy in the Igbo tradition which makes the situation unbearable for Adaku. In rural Ibuza Adaku would have had her own hut within the larger family compound but in Lagos the large family lives in one small room with no privacy for anyone. Adaku tells Nnu Ego why she is leaving:

I am not prepared to stay here and be turned into a mad woman, just because I have no sons. The way they go on about it one would think I know where sons are made and have been neglectful about taking one for my husband . . . I'm going to be thrown away when I'm dead, in any case, *whereas people like you, senior wife, have formed roots*, as they say: you will be properly buried in Nnaife's compound (my emphasis) (169).

Adaku notes a vital difference between herself and Nnu Ego that makes it easier for her to disregard her society's customs by leaving the household. As this incident has demonstrated, Nnu Ego has more to gain by staying; she has a more stable position in the family and will be looked after as the senior wife. Adaku leaves knowing she has less to lose. She leaves the household to become economically independent.

Talking to Nnu Ego, Adaku does not separate her decision to leave from her desire to educate her daughters:

Everybody accuses me of making money all the time. What else is there for me to do? I will spend the money I have in giving my girls a good start in life. They shall stop going to the market with me. I shall see that they get enrolled in a good school. I think that will benefit them in the future. Many rich Yoruba families send their daughters to school these days; I shall do the same with mine. Nnaife is not going to send them away to any husband before they are ready. I will see to that! I'm leaving this stuffy room tomorrow, senior wife (168).

Aware that some families are beginning to educate their girls, Adaku has considered that education will put her daughters in a better position to cope with urban life and give them access to more options than were available to herself and Nnu Ego. As Ezeigbo puts it, "Adaku's greatest survival strategy which will benefit her daughters immensely and be a huge investment in their future is her foresight in embracing Western education for the girls" (21). Adaku's decision to leave is a choice to become economically independent and she tells Nnu Ego, "I am going to be a prostitute" which of course prompts a horrified reaction from Nnu Ego, "What of your daughters? No Ibuza man will marry girls brought up by a prostitute", a reaction that illustrates the cost in terms of social standing and reputation that Adaku and her daughters face in leaving the household (168). Adaku responds that her

daughters will have to cope by themselves and this is why she equips them with education. Adaku is determined to give her daughters a good education and she knows that she will have to leave to have control over her daughters' futures, yet her decision to leave makes it even more important that her daughters are educated.¹⁷

Other than class, Adaku's decision to educate her daughters is made more easily because both her children are girls. Having few children means she does not have to face the decision of how to allocate scarce funds to large numbers. Furthermore, because she does not have any sons Adaku escapes the social pressures to educate sons before daughters. This situation differs for Nnu Ego, who has seven children, the eldest two being sons who soak up most of the available funds for education before their four younger sisters and one younger brother have a chance. Nnu Ego, unlike Adaku, has sons as well as daughters and so she faces greater pressure to educate sons before her daughters. She educates her sons first (they are also older) and her daughters are taught basic reading and writing skills. This suggests that women who only have daughters do not have to take into account the societal expectations that boys' education should take priority over girls' when faced with making decisions about how to allocate limited resources to their children's education.

While it is easier for Adaku to change in time for it to make a difference for her daughters, Nnu Ego does begin to reflect on the relations between men and women toward the end of her life. She begins by reflecting on her own experience after the birth of her first set of twin girls:

I am a prisoner of my own flesh and blood. Is it so enviable? The men make it look as if we must aspire for children or die, because I failed to live up to the standard expected of me by the males in my life, my father and my husband - and now I have to include my sons. But who made the law that we should not hope in our

¹⁷ Adaku strikes out by herself to provide for herself and her daughters and as Carole Boyce Davies notes, the term "prostitute" is used to signify economic independence which in itself is unacceptable, rather than indicating that Adaku becomes a sex worker. This is what Adaku says at first, that she will join the women in Montgomery Road and "make some of our men who return from the fighting happy" (168) but as Davies observes there is little in the text to suggest that this is what Adaku actually does; she is seen in the market place and seems to be making her money from selling expensive cloths ("Epilogue" 179). Before Adaku leaves Nnu Ego expresses surprise that Adaku will not have to depend on men for anything and Adaku says, "I want to be a dignified single woman. I shall work to educate my daughters, though I shall not do without male companionship" (170-171).

daughters? We women subscribe to that law more than anyone. Until we change all this, it is still a man's world, which women will help to build (187).

Nnu Ego begins to question the attitudes she has learned which have influenced her approach to bringing up her daughters. Here again women's own acceptance of the customary laws that keep them subordinate to men is questioned. Emecheta believes that women must learn to question their position in relation to men as this will lead to education for women and hence will encourage more women to educate their daughters.

There are other signs in the novel that Nnu Ego gradually begins to question the double standard inherent in her attitudes toward educating her sons and daughters. As already mentioned, Nnu Ego does her best to ensure her daughters have a minimum of literacy but, when money is scarce, their education is cut short. In another instance, she begins to wonder about the possibility of there being a future for educated girls when Adaku visits to farewell Oshia for college in the United States. Asking after Adaku's daughters she learns that they are in a convent school. Nnu Ego is impressed and to Mama Abbey's exclamation that Adaku's girls might go to college one day, Nnu Ego supports Adaku, saying,

She wants them to and they will make it. I am beginning to think there may be a future for educated women. I saw many young women teaching in schools. It would be really something for a woman to be able to earn some money monthly like a man (189).

Nnu Ego seems quite proud of Adaku's achievement and her daughters' progress at school. She voices confidence in Adaku by saying that she believes her daughters will succeed to college. However when Adaku asks, "But Kehinde and Taiwo are still at school, are they not?" Nnu Ego replies,

Oh, no, they only attended for a couple of years. We have Adim and Nnamdio to think of and, with Oshia's big school fees, we cannot afford fees for the twins. I think they can read a little. I personally do not regret it. They will be married in a few years. They can earn an added income by trading. The most important thing is for them to get good husbands (189).

The tone is defensive. Nnu Ego is eager to explain why she could not educate her daughters, emphasising that they have a bright future ahead of them nonetheless. Nnu Ego's attitude towards educating girls remains ambivalent at this point. She sees how education might benefit girls by getting them into teaching positions but she maintains that for her daughters, the most important thing is to marry well. She may be saying this defensively in the face of Adaku who has educated her girls, as Nnu Ego's daughters are now past the age of school education. Later on in her life, after Oshia has left, Nnu Ego mentions in conversation with her second eldest son, Adim, "My only regret is that I did not have enough money to let the girls stay at school" (213-214). This suggests she would have had them educated had there been enough money to go round. Finally, by the time Nnu Ego leaves Lagos to return to Ibuza where she will spend her old age, she leaves her youngest daughter in the care of her son, Adim, and his wife. She asks them to "see that in fifteen years' time she becomes a well-educated Miss". This parting instruction for her youngest daughter suggests that Nnu Ego has at last recognised that education is important for girls

It is possible that Nnu Ego has been aware that her daughters would benefit from education all along -- she shows a commitment to provide them with the basic tools of education by sending them to literacy classes. In her old age she seems to regret that she did not give her daughters a more extensive education, like their brothers. Her regret may indicate her sadness that she was *unable* to give them more education, rather than a sudden realisation that her daughters would have benefited from education. Her eagerness to convince Adaku that her daughters will not be disadvantaged without education may in fact hide her awareness of the contrary. She may actually be trying to justify to herself society's prejudice against educating girls which she finds difficult to accept, but is unable to do anything about. Perhaps it seems easy to argue that Nnu Ego could have educated her daughters -- that it was her choice not to do so. However, it is important to remember the constraints that Nnu Ego faced. With very limited financial resources for a large number of children she was forced to choose which children to educate, as there was not enough money for them all to attend school. Her position as a senior wife from a family of high-standing increases the pressure on Nnu Ego to try her hardest to maintain the pattern of life in Ibuza, including valuing boys over girls. Nnu Ego's decision not to educate her daughters

must be understood in the context of these constraints and circumstances. Development workers who attempt to raise awareness among women of the benefits of educating their daughters may receive unexpectedly harsh rebuffs from women who would like to educate their girls but do not have enough money. One possible solution to this is to encourage schools to charge cheaper fees for female education to offset the traditional expectations that the benefits of educating girls go to another family, and to ease the kind of situation that Nnu Ego is in.

Conclusion

The novel's focus on change and adaptation allows Emecheta to emphasise the need for attitudes about gender roles to change. As Kirsten Holst Petersen writes, Emecheta demonstrates a "willingness to search for new ways of social and sexual organisation and to change views when social circumstances alter" ("Unorthodox Fictions" 289). Certainly this "search for new ways" is a mark of The Joys of Motherhood.

The two female characters, Nnu Ego and Adaku, illuminate the necessity and also the difficulties of searching for new ways as they respond at different paces, reflecting their different circumstances. Emecheta encourages her readers to challenge some of the traditional views and attitudes about women and so "search for new ways" also. This, she believes, will have a positive effect on women's willingness to educate their daughters. Educated daughters, as seen in chapter two, are more likely to encourage their own daughters' education. Furthermore, education enables people to understand and cope with the need to adapt traditions in rapidly changing societies. It empowers people to engage in the process of change so that they have some control over what is happening, choosing to resist certain changes or to adopt others. In The Joys of Motherhood, Emecheta is pointing out that Nnu Ego's inability and reluctance to change her ideas about the futures of her daughters puts them at a disadvantage. Through Adaku, Emecheta portrays a woman whose courage to strike out by herself, without education or any family support, enables her to ensure her daughters are educated so that they might have more choices in life than their mother. It is Adaku whom Emecheta admires and whose decision to educate her daughters,

Emecheta upholds as an exemplary step towards a society in which African women have the freedom and opportunities to realise their full potential.

The Joys of Motherhood shows that decisions about educating girls are informed by persistent attitudes about the traditional roles of women. Nnu Ego's life and her treatment of her daughters can be understood as part of her endeavour to adhere to traditional perceptions of gender roles, developed in a rural setting, in the urban context of Lagos. The reader glimpses the effect of this treatment on her daughters through their awareness of the preferential treatment being given to their brothers and through their protests at being expected to do more housework than their brothers. An in-depth examination of the effects of the prejudice against educating girls on the girls themselves is found in Tsitsi Dangaremba's Nervous Conditions.

Chapter Four: Patriarchy, Colonialism and Education: Girls voices in Nervous Conditions

Introduction

When reading The Joys of Motherhood one gets a sense of the constraints women face in making decisions about educating their daughters. Their daughters' perspectives, however, are dealt with only briefly. While Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions also portrays mothers' attitudes to girls' education, the novel is primarily told from the point of view of two girls, cousins Tambu and Nyasha.¹⁸ The perspective of girls has been neglected by development workers -- "the girl is as invisible in the development discourse as the woman was prior to the feminist movement of the 1960s" (Sohoni 7). The stories of Tambu and Nyasha demonstrate the great hopes that education represents for many girls while illuminating some of the problems they face. Both girls confront the confusion, tensions, inconsistencies and contradictions of being educated in a colonial, patriarchal society prejudiced against educated women. Their stories are valuable for development students and workers trying to address the needs of girls in education.

Tambu grows up in a rural setting learning and carrying out tasks such as carrying water, cooking, washing clothes, caring for younger siblings and helping with the farmwork. Neither of her parents, Jeremiah and Mainini, are formally educated. They expect her to help with domestic chores, to learn the necessary skills to be a good wife and mother and to marry well. Tambu is not content with the prospect of this life and sees that education offers other options and opportunities besides those tradition sets out for her -- marriage,

¹⁸ The novel is narrated by Tambu. She speaks with two voices: that of the young girl as she experiences the events in the story and that of a well-educated woman who has become conscious of the patriarchal and colonial structures which oppress women. There are then two narrative voices, the young Tambu as she grows up and the adult Tambu who looks back on her life with the benefit of hindsight. Of this dual narration used by Dangarembga, Heidi Creamer says that, "the multiplicity of voices of the narrator precludes a single 'authentic' voice", and sees that this technique "helps create a framework for representing political complexity, psychological depth, and inner struggle" (351). The technique enables Dangarembga to juxtapose the personal thoughts and opinions, dilemmas and intellectual struggles, decision-making and understanding of a young girl as she changes and grows with those of the adult into which the same girl has grown. Most significantly, the two narrative voices allows the child's growing awareness of the deep seated, unjust attitudes which oppress her to come to fruition in the adult's narration.

motherhood, trading in the informal economy and farming. Tambu's motivation for education thus lies in her desire to escape a life of poverty, exemplified for her by her mother's life. However, Tambu's quest for education involves overcoming certain barriers. First her parents lack the financial resources to provide for more than one child's education, leaving Tambu with only her initiative. Second, because her parents do not value female education they discourage Tambu's aspirations for an education, as does her brother whose sexism is more blatant. Despite these barriers, Tambu receives encouragement in the example of her aunt, Maiguru, who, although both married and a mother, is educated -- she has a Master's degree -- and thus provides a role model for Tambu's aspirations.

Nyasha's background is very different to her cousin, Tambu's. Her parents, Maiguru and Babamukuru, are both educated to Master's level.¹⁹ They recognise the worth of educating their daughter and can afford it. They encourage her to attend school, to study hard, to succeed academically and to gain a good job -- until she marries. Her parents' financial resources, their education and their willingness to encourage female education mean that, unlike Tambu's, Nyasha's access to education is never threatened. However, Nyasha pursues the education she is so readily given with rather an ambivalent attitude because of her awareness of the risks and difficulties involved in being educated.

Firstly, Nyasha has experienced what it is like to feel alienated from one's culture. She spends three years of her childhood in England while her parents study for Master's degrees, and finds it very difficult to readjust to living in the Shona community to which her family return. Unlike Tambu, who comes to be able to live in both worlds, Nyasha feels she lacks significant knowledge of her culture. Nyasha considers alienation to be an inevitable result of Western education and, because of her own experience, she believes it is too great a price to pay. Secondly, Nyasha has greater insights than Tambu into the difficulties for educated women. She is aware that her mother's education is not recognised by family members and that her mother has not gained the freedom from her education that Tambu expects to gain. Maiguru, despite her education, is still subordinate to her husband and for most of the novel she is quiet and submissive. With this awareness of the limitations of her

¹⁹ That Nyasha has an educated mother is consistent with studies which show the increased likelihood of girls being sent to school if their mother are educated (King and Hill 113-114).

mother's education, Nyasha confronts a contradiction: her parents give educational opportunities equal to those of her brother yet she is aware that, like her mother, she will probably not be able to fulfil the potential of her education. Her father's strictness and harsh treatment of her is a constant, painful reminder of the patriarchal structure of her society which she knows will restrict the usefulness of her education. Nyasha's story shows that while parents might seem to accept the value of education for their daughters, their underlying attitudes and values about women can persist for much longer and continue to exert pressure on girls to conform to the traditional ideal of women: submissive, obedient and groomed for marriage. As Nyasha's story demonstrates, this pressure, the tensions and contradictions, can have devastating effects.

The girls' experiences contrast with one another. Tambu faces resistance from her family yet her determination to succeed in spite of it and her growing awareness of the inequalities between men and women are all significant reasons for her strong motivation. Tambu is steadfast in her determination to take every opportunity for education that comes her way, convinced that the benefits of education outweigh any difficulties or costs. In contrast, Nyasha is torn apart by her knowledge, experience and observations of both the costs of alienation involved in pursuing Western education, and the difficulties of being an educated woman. The novel's portrayal of Tambu and Nyasha demonstrates both the range of experiences that girls have in education, and some of the reasons for their different responses to the costs and difficulties involved in being educated. As in The Joys of Motherhood, family backgrounds are one of the most significant factors explaining their contrasting experiences. This suggests that development students must be sensitive to the effect family background has on the educational opportunities available to girls, their motivations and the contact they have with educated adults. As we will see with Tambu and Nyasha all of these factors can influence opinions about the value of education for children in general, and for girls in particular.

Discussion and Analysis

Tambu's motivation for pursuing education at all costs lies in the fact that she comes from the poorest branch of her extended family. Tambu learns the necessity and prudence of seeking education from her grandmother's stories about the arrival of missionaries who brought with them Western education. She believed that education was the only path forward, the only other alternative being poverty, and so she took her eldest son, Babamukuru, to receive the missionary's education -- tools for the new era that she foresaw. These stories make Tambu aware that Babamukuru's successes, his material wealth, and his status as the headmaster of the mission school, are due to his education. Tambu observes that her uncle's education has brought him a well paying job which enables him and his immediate family to enjoy a high standard of living. When Nhamo goes to the mission he brings back stories of its comforts which Tambu herself later experiences. Baths, hot running water, electricity, flushing toilets, modern cooking facilities and plush, richly decorated rooms at the mission contrast strongly with the time consuming tasks of cooking on an open fire and washing clothes by hand in the nearby river, a leaky roof, an outside longdrop toilet and cramped living conditions at the homestead.

Tambu learns that in addition to physical comforts and material wealth, education brings Babamukuru high status within the family. This is best exemplified by Tambu's observations of the family's praise for Babamukuru and his education when they welcome him home from England. Jeremiah welcomes Babamukuru: "Our father and benefactor has returned appeased, having devoured English letters with a ferocious appetite" (36). His sister Tete Gladys echoes Jeremiah's welcome: "Truly our prince has returned today! Full of knowledge. Knowledge that will benefit us all!" (36). This welcome, full of praise for education, makes a strong impression on Tambu. The praise hinges on the benefits that Babamukuru's education will bring the whole family.

As the only member of his extended family to be educated Babamukuru feels a strong responsibility to share the benefits of his education with his siblings and their families. Babamukuru makes his family aware of his sense of responsibility for them by telling them about his reaction to a letter from his brother, Jeremiah, which he receives while studying in England. Jeremiah complains about the situation of his family and especially the lack of

money for the children's school fees. Babamukuru reads and rereads that letter whenever he strikes difficulties in his overseas study to remind himself how important his degree will be for his family's welfare:

That letter made me see that even more than myself my whole family needed my qualification. That is how I was able to carry on even when things were very bad.

That letter made me say to myself, "Come what may, I will succeed" (45).

Babamukuru says that he is determined to succeed because he believes his education will enable him to provide for his whole extended family. On his return from England Babamukuru calls a family conference at which he emphasises the importance of educating the next generation: "These children who can go to school today are the ones whose families will prosper tomorrow" (45). Educated children, it is assumed, will earn money that will help their families improve their living conditions and social standing. This is a major motivation for sending Nhamo to school. As Tambu notes, her brother would,

. . . distinguish himself academically, at least sufficiently to enter a decent profession. With the money earned in this way, my uncle said, Nhamo would lift our branch of the family out of the squalor in which we were living (4).

Once the decision to send Nhamo to school is made, Nhamo is constantly encouraged and reminded of the benefits which will result from his education. Jeremiah tells him, "If I had your brains, . . . I would have been a teacher by now. Or maybe even a doctor. Ya! Do you think we would be living the way we are? No! In a brick house with running water, hot and cold and lights, just like Mukoma [Babamukuru]" (5). The benefits of education -- a good job which will lead to material gain and a comfortable lifestyle -- are made clear to Nhamo and also to Tambu who observes the discussions. These examples demonstrate the view that the education of one child belongs to the whole family. Educating a child is an investment for the whole family's well-being.

Tambu's attitude to her own education, especially when she replaces her brother at the mission, resembles Babamukuru's. Throughout her years at school, Tambu remains aware that Babamukuru is providing for her education so that her whole family might benefit. This knowledge keeps Tambu focused on her goal even when she considers the personal price that she pays. Because she views her education as belonging to her family as

well as herself, Tambu cannot simply give up in her quest for education -- she would be compromising her family's future as well as her own.

While Tambu is motivated in her quest for education, in part, by the desire to assist her family, it is her family she must fight to continue her education. As a result her feelings toward them are ambivalent. It is clear that she resents having to confront resistance from her family in her quest for education which she wants for them as much as for herself. At the age of eight she does not separate her anger at the treatment of women in her family from the family members themselves:

The needs and sensibilities of the women in my family were not considered a priority, or even legitimate. That was why I was in Standard Three in the year that Nhamo died, instead of in Standard Five, as I should have been by that age. In those days I felt the injustice of my situation every time I thought about it, which I could not help but do often since children are always talking about their age. Thinking about it, feeling the injustice of it, this is how I came to dislike my brother, and not only my brother: my father, my mother - in fact everybody (12).

Writing in hindsight, Tambu recalls her acute awareness, at a young age, that her progress at school has been thwarted because of her sex. She relates this personal experience of sexual discrimination to the lack of attention given to any of the needs of the women in her family. Tambu's dislike for her family comes out of her observation that it is her family and the barriers they create which hinder her education and which she must fight if she is to attend school for any length of time.

As a young girl, Tambu's parents remove her from school because they do not have enough money for both her and Nhamo's school fees. Their mother sells hard-boiled eggs and eventually raises enough money to pay her son's fees. Having raised money for Nhamo's fees the household is stretched as far as possible and Tambu's fees cannot be paid. Tambu is very unhappy about having to leave school: "I understood why I could not go back to school, but I loved going to school and I was good at it. Therefore, my circumstances affected me badly" (15). Her parents' efforts to reassure and comfort her by reminding her that education is not necessary for the tasks ahead of her as a woman -- "Can you cook books and feed them to your husband?" -- make it clear to Tambu that it is because of her

sex that her education is not given priority (15). That her parents remove Tambu, rather than her brother, from school when money is short is consistent with the research which shows that if only one child can be sent to school it is usually a boy who is chosen (Dolphyne 50). This pattern is also seen in The Joys of Motherhood when the boys stay in school.

Tambu decides to raise the money herself. This is crucial - had she not taken action she might have lost the opportunity for education and escape from a life like her mother's. Tambu requests seeds to grow corn that she will then sell to raise money for her fees so she can return to school. Tambu's request for seeds to begin her fund-raising plan is met with unpleasant laughter from her father. Although Mainini persuades her husband to give Tambu some seeds, neither parent gives her any encouragement as she carries out her project - in fact Mainini actively discourages Tambu to prepare her for disappointment. In addition, when Tambu asks for her brother's help, Nhamo tells his sister bluntly that she is wasting her time -- she will never be educated, "because you are a girl" (20). Nhamo's cruelty goes further, he tries to hinder his sister's efforts by stealing the maize once it is ready to sell. Finally Tambu does receive some support from a teacher who drives her to town and appeals for pity, exaggerating Tambu's situation. Together they raise the money and Tambu defies her father's authority by lodging the ten pounds with the school when he tries to claim it. Tambu thus shows an ability to rise above resistance and follow her desire for education despite the lack of family support.

These events make Tambu very aware of the barriers she faces as a girls seeking education. When Tambu begins her struggle to be allowed to continue her schooling alongside her brother, her mother explains the situation to her:

This business of womanhood is a heavy burden How could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can't just decide today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated! When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them And these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other. Aiwa! What will help you my child, is to learn to carry your burdens with strength (16).

Mainini's attitude to her education is no different from Nnu Ego's in The Joys of Motherhood. Her mother's speech makes a strong impression on eight-year-old Tambu, and the burdens she mentions are referred to at several points later in the novel to highlight Tambu's strong personal motivation for pursuing education. To Tambu, education represents freedom from the burdens of womanhood of which her mother constantly reminds her, in both her words and her life. The insistence that as a girl she should not expect to be educated puzzles Tambu because of the example of her aunt Maiguru -- educated despite being both black and female: "She [Maiguru] was altogether a different kind of woman from my mother. I decided it was better to be like Maiguru, who was not poor and had not been crushed by the weight of womanhood" (16). Tambu is not deterred by her mother, rather she is encouraged by the example of her aunt.

Tambu carries out her plan to raise her own fees believing, at this point, that determination is all that is necessary to avoid such burdens. Later, when she is not allowed to go with her father and brother to meet Babamukuru when he returns from England, Tambu learns that her battle to remain at school was only a beginning -- the barriers against female education are much deeper than she at first thought:

Whereas before I had believed with childish confidence that burdens were only burdens in so far as you chose to bear them, now I began to see that the disappointing events surrounding Babamukuru's return were serious consequences of the same general laws that had almost brought my education to an abrupt, predictable end. It was frightening. I did not want my life to be predicted by such improper relations. I decided I would just have to make up my mind not to let it happen (38).

Tambu makes the connection between two separate incidences of being restricted because of her sex and attributes them both to the patriarchal laws of her society. Nevertheless, Tambu's early victory to secure herself access to education is a very formative experience for her and whenever she has doubts about the negative aspects of education she recalls this first battle against her family. Each time she resolves to continue her pursuit of education it is her early victory and her desire to escape her mother's life that spur her onwards.

When her brother dies, Babamukuru persuades Tambu's parents to allow her to take her Nhamo's place at the mission school. Tambu thus gains the opportunity for further education because her brother dies. Tambu is wary of going to the mission because she has seen the dazzling effect that the mission environment had on her brother before he died. Tambu remembers her disapproval of Nhamo's feelings of disdain and disgust towards his home after a year at the mission and is determined not to allow herself the same feelings. When she arrives at the mission Tambu guards herself against being seduced by her uncle's material wealth, a by-product of his education, describing the seriousness of her situation: "I was in danger of becoming an angel, or at the very least a saint, and forgetting how ordinary humans existed -- from minute to minute and from hand to mouth" (70). This is her family's way of life which she wants to escape but not forget. Tambu's awareness of the risks she takes by staying at the mission is further illustrated by the remarks about the intent of her aunt and uncle's welcome: "Babamukuru and Maiguru would now formally welcome me into their home; formally disinter me, my mind and my body, from the village." Tambu is quite clear in her mind about the risk of weakening or indeed losing completely, her ties to her family and home. However they are risks she is prepared to take. very aware of the risks she is taking by being educated at the mission.

Coming to the mission is Tambu's first step away from her home. The second, years later, has the potential to distance her from her family and her home to a far greater extent. Tambu is offered a scholarship to a convent school for further education.²⁰ Tambu knows her decision whether or not to take up the opportunity will affect the rest of her life and she weighs up the costs and benefits:

I was to take another step upwards in the direction of my freedom. Another step away from the flies, the smells, the fields and the rags; from stomachs which were seldom full, from dirt and disease, from my father's abject obeisance to Babamukuru and my mother's chronic lethargy. Also from Nyamarira that I loved. The prospect of this freedom and its possible price made me dizzy. I had to sit down, there on the

²⁰ Her mother, Nyasha and Babamukuru are all against her going for a variety of reasons. Her mother is scared of losing her as she did her son. Nyasha is nervous of Tambu becoming alienated from her culture as Nyasha is. Babamukuru is worried that his niece will lose her sense of the traditional responsibility of women. Only Maiguru supports her desire to go.

steps that led up to the house. Then I felt numb; then better. The cost would balance. What I needed I would take with me, the rest I would discard. It would be worth it to dress my sisters in pretty clothes, feed my mother until she was plump and energetic again, stop my father making a fool of himself every time he came into Babamukuru's presence. Money would do all this for me. With the ticket I would acquire attending the convent, I would earn lots of it (183).

Tambu knows that going to the convent will change her and that she will have to give up some of the things dearest to her. The prospect is daunting and the decision is not an easy one. However, once again she reminds herself of the benefits which her education will enable her to bring to her family. This is why she decides to go to the convent. It is not only or even primarily for herself, but for her family's benefit. As stated earlier, this is an important factor contributing to Tambu's determination to succeed and to pay the price. Nyasha does not have the same motivation -- she has no family member who stands to benefit from her education, they are all well-off in the first place.

Tambu is prepared to pay the price for her education. In contrast, Nyasha feels the personal costs of pursuing education are too great. This is because of her early exposure to the effects of that cost. When she returns after three years in England with her parents and brother she feels alienated from her Shona community. No longer fluent in their original language, Shona, the children feel very out of place in what were once familiar surroundings. Nyasha recalls their feelings several years later when Tambu comes to live at the mission:

. . . actually we were frightened that day. And confused. You know, it's easy to forget things when you're that young. We had forgotten what home was like. I mean really forgotten - what it looked like, what it smelt like, all the things to do and say and not to do and say. It was all strange and new. Not like anything we were used to. It was a real shock! (78).

The time spent in England leaves an immense sense of loss, grief and alienation in Nyasha. Many things set her apart from the rest of her age group. She is the daughter of the headmaster of their school. She has difficulty speaking Shona yet speaks English fluently and what Shona she can speak, she speaks with an English accent. All these things make it very difficult for her to feel accepted by her peers who taunt and jeer her.

An illustration of Nyasha's strong sense of alienation can be seen in the interest she shows in learning about her culture's customs. It is an incident which highlights the girls' different attitudes to education. When Babamukuru suggests a Christian wedding for Tambu's parents as a way of curing all the family's problems, Nyasha asks Tambu about the traditional cleansing rituals of their people, thinking that these are probably more appropriate for healing the family than a Christian wedding. Tambu is surprised by Nyasha's interest. She considers the old rituals backward and the new ones a sign of progress: ". . . the more I saw of worlds beyond the homestead the more I was convinced that the further we left the old ways behind the closer we came to progress" (147). Tambu is convinced that progress, like education, means embracing "Western" ways and abandoning traditional customs. Nyasha reacts angrily to her cousin's opinions, recognising them as a symptom of colonisation, "'It's bad enough,' she said severely, 'when a country gets colonised, but when the people do as well! That's really the end, really, that's the end'" (147). Nyasha considers her lack of knowledge about her culture's customs to be a cost of education. Her father's education brought him to live amongst English missionaries rather than at the family homestead and his children are therefore distanced from their culture. Here lies a major difference between the two girls which affects their different experiences of education: Nyasha is the second generation of her family to be educated whereas Tambu is the first. As a result, Nyasha is aware that one of the long-term costs of her parents' education is to have distanced their children from their culture whereas Tambu concentrates on what they have gained in terms of material wealth and comforts. Nyasha's views echo those of Ngugi wa Thiong'o who talks about colonisation of the mind:

Colonialism imposed its control of the social production of wealth through military conquest and subsequent political dictatorship. But its most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o 16).

Nyasha perceives Western education as a means of gaining the mental control of which Ngugi talks. She equates being educated with having one's thoughts moulded or colonised. For Nyasha, as long as people are free to question then there is hope but when people's thoughts are colonised, "that's the end".

Nyasha's strong opinion that the costs of education outweigh its benefits is further exemplified by her reaction when Tambu is awarded a scholarship to the convent school, an institution run for British children. As Tambu tries to decide whether or not to take up this opportunity, Nyasha tells her, sarcastically, "It would be a wonderful opportunity . . . to forget. To forget who you were, what you were and why you were that" (179). Nyasha's experience of alienation makes her fully aware of the difficulty of retaining one's own culture while being educated in a foreign institution. Education represents freedom from poverty for Tambu yet her cousin knows that her Shona identity will be compromised once she is exposed to English customs. In Nyasha's opinion this is too high a price to pay.

This high price has also to do with the connections Nyasha makes between Western education and colonialism. As Tambu notes, Nyasha took "seriously the lessons about oppression and discrimination that she had learnt first-hand in England" (63). In England Nyasha came face to face with racism and gained a powerful awareness of colonial oppression. She is also struck by her father's acceptance of colonialism and she forms the opinion that he has been used by the colonisers. Trying to make sense of these painful and confusing experiences and observations, Nyasha spends hours studying, reading colonial history texts, observing events around her and reflecting on her experiences in search of answers. She thinks carefully about what she is reading and begins to realise that her history books give a one-sided account of her country's history. The interpretation of events favours the British colonisers and Nyasha comes to think that this must be a deliberate attempt to shape her thinking. Nyasha soon becomes very sceptical of Western education as she begins to see that it is implicated in colonisation. She learns that the education system was introduced to Rhodesia by the colonial government not purely for humanitarian reasons but motivated more by the desire to capture and mould the most intelligent Africans by educating and training them for jobs in colonial administration, as teachers or clerks, for

example. She sees that this kept them busy, thereby limiting the risk of their rebellion against the colonial regime.

Nyasha's interpretation of how her brother got his scholarship in the first place further reveals her scepticism of the colonisers' motives for encouraging the education of Africans. The narrator explains Nyasha's view:

Not surprisingly, since Whites were indulgent towards promising young black boys in those days, provided that the promise was a peaceful promise to accept whatever was handed out to them and not to expect more, Chido was offered a place at the school and a scholarship to go with it. Nyasha was sure that Mr. Baker had had a hand in that scholarship. To ease his conscience, she said. 'A word with the headmasters' she told me when Nyaradzo was not present. 'You know how it is, *bwana* to *bwana*: "The boy needs the cash, old man!"; "He's a good boy, what. Pity to waste him. We'll see what we can do." So Chido gets his scholarship and Mr. Baker feels better about sending his sons there in the first place. Really! The things they get up to pull the wool over our eyes. Really! (106).

Nyasha's analysis of the motives behind the generous opportunity given to her brother by the missionaries is the same as for her father. Unconvinced that the offer is altruistic, Nyasha sees the hand-out as a bribe, a means of ensuring her brother's mind does not develop undesirably. Mr. Baker is one of the white missionaries who sends his sons to a Government school where they "would be among their own kind" (104). The missionaries' goal is to educate African people so they can better participate in the colonial society. In an effort to create the perception that the mission school is as good as a government school, a number of missionaries send their own children to the mission school. Mr. Baker, however, is an example of a missionary who could not bring himself to sacrifice his children's education for the sake of making a good impression with the African parents. Nyasha sees all of this very clearly and recognises the deceit involved. Nyasha's experiences of alienation coupled with her thoughts about the role of education in colonisation make her consider the costs of education to be very high. She does not have the same degree of motivation as Tambu for a number of reasons. Firstly, Nyasha is from a family who already has the benefits of education. Therefore, unlike Tambu, Nyasha does not feel responsible to use her education

for the benefit of others and so it is easier for her to reject it. Secondly, unlike Tambu, Nyasha does not have to battle against her family for schooling. Tambu only succeeds in continuing her schooling because she challenges her family who do not value female education. Tambu's early struggles make her education extremely precious. She realises that she is very fortunate to have the opportunity of education and she therefore values it more than Nyasha whose parents readily grant her access to school. This is an important factor contributing to the different experiences of Tambu and Nyasha. Thirdly, while both girls are aware of the costs of education, Nyasha's awareness is based on her own experience of alienation and as a result she considers such costs to be greater than the benefits which Tambu holds sight of. Tambu, because of her strong motivation, is prepared to face the consequences of pursuing an education.

Interestingly, other than Nyasha it is Tambu's mother, Mainini, who speaks out most strongly against Western education because of the danger for students of being alienated from their families and homes. Mainini's attitudes make an interesting comparison with those of Nnu Ego from The Joys of Motherhood. While their attitudes are similar -- neither woman sees the point of educating her daughters -- Nnu Ego does begin to change or at least question her opinion whereas Mainini remains steadfast in her disapproval. There are several differences between the two women's experience of female education which may help explain Mainini's stronger opinion. Firstly, Nnu Ego experiences the value of education first-hand because she lives in an urban centre. After experiencing the disadvantages of having no education, Nnu Ego is more willing to consider the value of education for her daughters. Secondly, Nnu Ego is always in control of the decision whether or not to educate her daughters, whereas Mainini is faced with a daughter determined to pursue education despite her parents' disapproval and lack of support for her. Thirdly, unlike Nnu Ego, Mainini has seen negative effects of Western education -- when her son returns to the homestead after a year at the mission Mainini is distressed at his loss of Shona because, as Tambu relates, "She did want him to be educated, . . . but even more, she wanted to talk to him" (53). When Babamukuru and Maiguru bring news of Nhamo's death, Mainini, in her grief, yells accusations at them: "'First you took his tongue so that he could not speak to me and now you have taken everything, taken everything for good . . . You bewitched him and

now he is dead. Pthu!’ She spat at Maiguru’s feet. ‘And you too, Babamukuru! Pthu! I spit at you! You and your education have killed my son’” (54). For Mainini, Nhamo’s death had already begun when he came home unable and unwilling to talk with his mother. She is convinced that Western education is partly to blame for her son’s death.

In addition to the death of her son, Mainini has observed other negative effects of education, notably the changes that education has wrought in Babamukuru and his children, Nyasha and Chido. She disapproves of Nyasha’s failure to observe traditional etiquette, of Chido’s infrequent visits to the homestead and of their inability to speak Shona very well. Mainini attributes these failures to the children’s Western education which she also blames for the family rift between the educated and everyone else. She feels that her husband’s lack of education is a significant reason why he has less power and status in the family than Babamukuru. Mainini feels that her own inferior status to her sister in law, Maiguru, is connected to her lack of education. In a heated dispute, Mainini breaks out of the position ascribed her:

I am only saying what I think, just like she did. She did tell us, didn’t she, what she thinks, and did anyone say anything? No. Why not? Because Maiguru is educated. That’s why you all kept quiet. Because she’s rich and comes here and flashes her money around, so you listen to her as though you want to eat the words out of her mouth. But me, I’m not educated, am I? I’m just poor and ignorant, so you want me to keep quiet, you say I mustn’t talk. Ehe! (140).

Mainini bravely challenges the unwritten rules which say that an uneducated woman cannot speak. She refuses to be silent. Against the protestations of the other women, Mainini continues and accuses Maiguru and education of killing her son and of taking her daughter away from her. Of importance is Mainini’s awareness of the distance between educated and uneducated which Western education is causing in her family. As a consequence of her observations, Mainini remains ardently opposed to education.

So, when Tambu is considering going to the convent school to further her education Mainini asks her, “ ‘Tell me, my daughter, what will I, your mother say to you when you come home a stranger full of white ways and ideas? It will be English, English all the time’” (184). Mainini blames the “Englishness” for the misfortune of Babamukuru’s family and

warns Tambu against it (203). Throughout the novel, Tambu is anxious not to be influenced by the “Englishness”, from the time that she sees the changes in her brother after he returns from the mission to her arrival at the mission when she resists the temptation to be seduced by the plush new surroundings, to the end of the novel when she still worries about her ability to retain her Shona identity: “Was I being careful enough? I wondered. For I was beginning to have a suspicion, that I had been too eager to leave the homestead and embrace the ‘Englishness’ of the mission and after that the more concentrated ‘Englishness’ of Sacred Heart” (203). Her awareness of the powerful urge to embrace all things English only makes readers more aware of how difficult it is to resist even a gradual process of alienation.

The risk of compromising one’s relationship with one’s family and culture confronts both girls and boys in education. However, the novel makes clear that there are unique problems for girls in education. Just as Tambu and Nyasha react differently to their awareness of the risks of alienation which their education involves, they also have different responses to the tensions of being restricted in their use of their education because of the pressure from family to behave according to the traditional expectations of women.

Dangarembga makes this contradiction clear in Babamukuru’s instructions to Tambu when she arrives at the mission, “I was an intelligent girl but I had also to develop into a good woman, he said, stressing both qualities equally and not seeing any contradiction in this” (88). Dangarembga invites readers to consider the contradiction -- why educate Tambu, if, bound by traditional expectations, she will not be able to explore the opportunities which her education will give her? But there is no contradiction so long as Tambu does not deviate from her uncle’s plan for her future. This plan is clearly articulated later when he explains why he thinks Tambu should not go to the convent school. Even though Tambu has a scholarship there will be some expense involved and this, Babamukuru explains, is needed to educate Tambu’s recently born, and only surviving, brother. By way of further explanation Babamukuru reminds his educated niece what is expected of her,

. . . . we think we are providing for you quite well. By the time you have finished your Form Four you will be able to take your course, whatever it is that you choose. In time you will be earning money. You will be in a position to be married by a decent man and set up a decent home. In all that we are doing for you, we are

preparing you for this future of yours, and I have observed from my own daughter's behaviour that it is not a good thing for a young girl to associate too much with these white people, to have too much freedom. I have seen that girls who do that do not develop into decent women (180).

This speech captures succinctly the restrictions placed on girls because of traditional expectations, even when they are permitted education to secondary level. Babamukuru's opinion is explicit; too much education, especially when it accompanies a measure of freedom, is a bad thing for girls. The reference to Nyasha highlights Babamukuru's disappointment with his daughter.

For most of her time at the mission, Tambu follows her uncle's instructions and accepts the events, speeches, decisions and attitudes around her. At times when she instinctively wants to ask a question or offer a dissenting opinion she instead keeps quiet. This is at odds with her behaviour as a young girl at the homestead. Then, Tambu's awareness of her unequal treatment combined with sheer determination to attend school like her brother gave her the strength to initiate and carry out her own plan to raise money by growing maize to sell. It was her tenacity and determination with which Tambu won her education. But at the mission she becomes submissive and obedient, and finds it increasingly difficult to voice dissenting opinions. Babamukuru is very pleased with his niece's behaviour and holds her up as an example for his own daughter. Tambu's disappointment at her loss of confidence is seen when she disapproves of Babamukuru's plans to hold a wedding for her parents, in an attempt to cleanse the family of its sins. Tambu is mortified by this plan but, to her dismay, she finds she lacks the courage to assert her point of view. This deeply upsets her and she reflects on the link between her submissiveness and the respect and admiration she holds for her generous, educated uncle:

My vagueness and my reverence for my uncle, what he was, what he had achieved, what he represented and therefore what he wanted, had stunted the growth of my faculty of criticism, sapped the energy that in childhood I had used to define my own position. It had happened insidiously, the many favourable comparisons with Nyasha doing a lot of the damage. It was such a bed of confusion. I would not have been

here with Babamukuru if I had not been able to stand up to my own father, yet now I was unable to tell my uncle that his wedding was a farce (164).

Here Tambu identifies another cost of acquiring her education: her loss of confidence that, as a teenager, she attributes to her feelings about her uncle. Her position as a poor grateful relative compels Tambu to behave as her uncle wishes, obeying his instructions. In her eagerness to please the uncle she admires so much, Tambu has adopted the behaviour that he expects and prefers in girls -- quiet obedience. Tambu has spent her childhood in awe of Babamukuru and the opportunities he represents. She therefore finds it difficult to reconcile the fact that it is Babamukuru's expectations that have made her consistently suppress her independent spirit. Babamukuru is, simultaneously, Tambu's benefactor and a force draining her of her confidence. While Tambu dislikes the effect Babamukuru is having on her she puts up with it keeping sight of her goal of education. In contrast Nyasha refuses to obey her father, wanting to claim the freedom that her education offers her.

Nyasha's different reaction to the opportunity of education has to do with her experience and observation of sexism as well as alienation. She is unconvinced that education is the key to women's emancipation. There are two aspects of her life which influence her opinions. Both of them are experiences or observations that Tambu does not have and so they indicate factors which may cause girls to distrust education. Firstly, Nyasha observes that her mother has not been able to use her education to realise her full potential. This makes Nyasha aware that education is not a simple answer to female oppression but that there is a larger structure which oppresses women. Secondly, Nyasha has a different relationship to Babamukuru than Tambu -- he is her father whom she cannot escape. Nyasha's story draws our awareness to the complexities of female education, showing that increasing access to education for girls is only the beginning -- sexism remains to be addressed.

Like Tambu, Nyasha wants to be free of her father's control. But whereas Tambu stands up to her father and leaves home, Nyasha remains living in the same house as her father and so cannot escape the control he exerts over her. Nyasha is as desperate as her cousin to find an escape but whereas Tambu sees education as the key to women's

emancipation, Nyasha does not.²¹ This is because she has observed that education has not freed her mother, Maiguru, from being dominated by her husband. Maiguru has gained a high level of education but has been unable to use it to her full potential.

Maiguru has the same level of education as her husband yet never receives any recognition for it from her family. She earns money that helps the family but Babamukuru gets all of the credit. In fact, Maiguru never even receives her salary -- it goes straight to her husband (101). Maiguru talks to Tambu about the dilemma of being a woman with education in a society which expects a woman to devote all her time and energy to being a wife and mother:

When I was in England I glimpsed for a little while the things I could have been, the things I could have done if - if - if things were - different - But there was Babawa Chido and the children and the family. And does anyone realise, does anyone appreciate, what sacrifices were made? As for me, no one ever thinks about the things I gave up (101-102).

There is one person who think a great deal about Maiguru's predicament -- her daughter, Nyasha. She is very angry that her mother has had to forego opportunities because of the pressures to fulfil her traditional obligations as a wife and mother. The implications for Nyasha's own life are clear to her. She cannot endure the prospect of being educated but unable to use it and so she places no hope in education as Tambu does.

Tambu's level of understanding is more limited than Nyasha's. As Tambu reflects on her aunt's speech she fails to realise that she too will probably face the same conflicts as she pursues education,

I felt sorry for Maiguru because she could not use the money she earned for her own purposes and had been prevented by marriage from doing the things she wanted to do. But it was not so simple . . . if it was necessary to efface yourself in order to preserve his sense of identity and value, then, I was sure, Maiguru had taken the correct decisions (102).

²¹ As I have discussed, Tambu also has other factors motivating her -- namely her desire to escape poverty. It is her mother's poverty as well as her subordinate position that Tambu wants to escape.

Tambu is having difficulty accepting the contradictions implicit here. She knows what it like to be denied opportunities and so sympathises with Maiguru but she has also grown up with immense respect for Babamukuru and so she accepts the necessity of making sacrifices for this man. The passage suggests that in her own life Tambu will, when faced with this conflict, choose her traditional duties rather than the opportunities her education offers her. For Tambu concentrates on Maiguru's advantages over Tambu's mother -- she might not be independent but at least she has an easier life than Mainini. This is in keeping with Babamukuru's plan for her, in any case, since he only expects her to use her education, earning money for the family until she marries. Tambu later gains a greater awareness but even so she decides to continue pursuing her education for the benefits it will bring her family. She also holds onto the possibility that education might give her more freedom as a female. Nyasha, of course, is seriously concerned at the way her mother has been restricted despite her education. Nyasha can see no hope for women to take control of their lives. This is why she does not share her cousin's enthusiasm for education.

A glimmer of hope arises for Nyasha when her mother leaves Babamukuru. For most of the novel Maiguru is quiet, rather nervous and careful to please her husband. However, eventually she gets fed up with her husband's treatment of her and leaves him. This has a profound effect on Nyasha who supports her mother's actions because, as she explains to Tambu, "Sometimes I feel trapped by that man, just like she is. But now she's done it, now she's broken out, I know it's possible, so I can wait" (174). Nyasha sees some hope from her mother's defiant departure that she will finally take up some of the opportunities her education offers her. But her excitement is momentary -- she soon reflects that it is too late for Maiguru to start a career and Nyasha is once again plunged into despair. As Tambu's voice puts it, "Poor Nyasha. She could not conquer the hopelessness" (174). The contrast between the two girls is highlighted here -- Nyasha can see no hope but Tambu is determined to hold onto her hope that education will improve her life. Unlike Nyasha, Tambu will be content with a life like Maiguru's because it will be better than her own mother's and will enable her to bring her family material benefits.

Maiguru asserts herself again when Babamukuru tells Tambu his concern that the convent school might give her "too much freedom" and corrupt her "decent" behaviour.

Maiguru is incensed, recognising in her husband's speech the same prejudiced attitudes that she experienced when she pursued education twenty years earlier:

Don't you remember, when we went to South Africa everybody was saying that we, the women, were loose. . . . I don't know what people mean by a loose woman - sometimes she is someone who walks the streets, sometimes she is an educated woman, sometimes she is a successful man's daughter or she is simply beautiful.

Loose or decent, I don't know. All I know is that if our daughter Tambudzai is not a decent person now, she never will be, no matter where she goes to school. And if she is decent, then going to the convent school won't change her (181).

Bravely, Maiguru articulates her observations of her society's prejudice against any woman who displays some sort of independence or is deemed a threat to men. She exposes the emptiness of the notion of "decency" and dismisses her husband's argument as an effort to control Tambu, to ensure she doesn't get too many ideas about freedom. Interestingly, Nyasha fits three of Maiguru's descriptions of a "loose" woman: she is educated; her father, as the headmaster of the mission school, is by all accounts very successful; and she is described as being beautiful and aware of her sexuality. The pressures on Nyasha are, as a result, much greater than otherwise because her situation is quite unusual. Babamukuru is wary of his daughter's free-spirited behaviour posing a threat to his reputation. He much prefers Tambu's good, "decent" behaviour which he praises, hoping his daughter will benefit from the example.

Babamukuru's frustration with Nyasha's behaviour reaches a climax one night when Nyasha, Chido and Tambu return from a school-dance. Nyasha is ten minutes later than the others because one of the boys, a friend of Chido's, is teaching her a new dance step at the end of the driveway. When she finally enters the house, Babamukuru demands an explanation for her lateness. He approaches the situation with all the disappointment, frustration and disapproval which has been building up towards his daughter for some time. Her lateness provides Babamukuru with an opportunity to discipline his daughter. There is nothing Nyasha can say to placate her father even if she were to try. As her father accuses her of staying out late with a boy, Nyasha, replies, "What do you want me to say? You want me to admit I'm guilty, don't you. All right then. I was doing it, whatever you're

talking about. There. I've confessed" (113). Nyasha does not feel that staying out for ten minutes with a boy constitutes wrong-doing but she knows that her father believes it does -- she knows it is an argument she cannot win so she gives in, reluctantly. Babamukuru takes great offence at the manner of her reply and warns her, "Do not talk to me like that, child, . . . You must respect me. I am your father", going on to impress on Nyasha the effect her behaviour might have on his reputation (113). The situation escalates until Babamukuru calls Nyasha a whore. Tambu describes how this affects Nyasha:

Nyasha grew uncharacteristically calm at times like this. 'Now why,' she enquired of no particular person, 'should I worry about what people say when my own father calls me a whore?' She looked at him with murder in her eyes (114).

Nyasha is deeply hurt that her father should call her a whore, both as a child who wants love and approval from her father and as a young woman who sees in her father's actions an example of the patriarchal control that has been exerted over women for generations.

Babamukuru responds striking Nyasha a blow to her face, telling her,

Today I am going to teach you a lesson . . . How can you go about disgracing me? Me! Like that! No, you cannot do it. I am respected at this mission. I cannot have a daughter who behaves like a whore (114).

The added tension of Babamukuru's position as the headmaster of the mission makes him more anxious that his daughter should display exemplary behaviour. As noted by Maiguru earlier, being the daughter of a successful man makes people more critical of her behaviour, she is watched more carefully. Nyasha begs her father not to hit her but instead he hits her a second time and she punches him in the eye. At this Babamukuru lunges at Nyasha and a violent fight follows. Tambu describes her uncle's intense anger:

Babamukuru insisted he would kill Nyasha and then hang himself. "'She has dared', he said, sweat pouring off him, his chest heaving with the grossness of the thought, 'to raise her fist against me. She has dared to challenge me. Me! Her father. I am telling you' and he began to struggle again, 'today she will not live. We cannot have two men in this house'" (115).

The seriousness of Nyasha's retaliation to her father's blows is conveyed in this passage. In hitting her father, Nyasha has defied his authority. That a girl should do this is unheard of, as

Chido reminds his sister, “You are the daughter There are some things you must never do” (117). Nyasha’s clash with Babamukuru then is far more dramatic than Tambu’s with her father. When Tambu lodged the money for her mealies with the school she had the support of a teacher who advocated for her. Nyasha has no such support. Tambu’s defiance involved a constructive attempt to be free of her father’s authority through education but Nyasha has no route of escape because she is so disillusioned about the supposed benefits of education that Tambu pursues.

The fight between Nyasha and her father is a critical event for Tambu’s understanding of the relations between men and women. She thinks to herself,

. . . how dreadfully familiar that scene had been, with Babamukuru condemning Nyasha to whoredom, making her a victim of her femaleness, just as I had felt victimised at home in the days when Nhamo went to school and I grew maize. The victimisation, I saw, was universal. It didn’t depend on poverty, on lack of education or on tradition. It didn’t depend on any of the things I thought it depended on. Men took it everywhere with them. Even heroes like Babamukuru did it what I didn’t like was the way all the conflicts came back to this question of femaleness. Femaleness as opposed to maleness (115-116).

This is the moment in the novel when Tambu realises just how deeply grow the roots of female oppression. It is not explicit that Tambu has realised that these same roots will affect her as she pursues freedom through education, but she has made the necessary connections to do so. Tambu has watched her childhood hero beat her favourite friend and she is forced to rethink her adoration of Babamukuru, recognising his sexism.

However, despite her sympathy for her cousin’s perspective, Tambu does not challenge Babamukuru’s authority. This is in part because her position is more fragile -- if she disobeys her uncle she might be sent home to her parents and lose the opportunity of education. Also her patience has a lot to do with her faith that education will give her a degree of independence, emancipation. While she, too, dislikes the power which men have over women, she does not share her cousin’s urgent desire to resist it:

I felt secure at the mission under Babamukuru’s shadow and I could not understand why Nyasha found it so threatening I thought there was time to see what

would happen, to decide what needed to be done. I thought I was wise to be preserving my energy, unlike my cousin, who was burning herself out (116). Tambu, as discussed, is aware of the ways she has modified her behaviour so as not to displease Babamukuru. But, education is her goal no matter what the cost -- and she believes that education will eventually bring her freedom as a woman, so she decides to save her fight until she is educated. This is a sensible decision as she will be better equipped with her education to challenge "the patriarchy" of her family and society. As she is aware, this path involves risks, but it is safer and more promising than the alternative of becoming ill with anxiety about the implications of becoming a Western educated woman, as Nyasha does.

The risk of alienation combined with the difficulties posed by sexism make education less desirable for Nyasha who does not value the benefits of material wealth which motivate Tambu. For Nyasha alienation and sexism are linked. Her knowledge and awareness of both stem from her exposure to another culture. In conversation with Tambu after the fight with Babamukuru, Nyasha interrupts Tambu, anticipating what she will say and trying to explain her feelings:

I know . . . It's not England any more and I ought to adjust. But when you've seen different things you want to be sure you're adjusting to the right thing. You can't go on all the time being whatever's necessary. You've got to have some conviction, and I'm convinced I don't want to be anyone's underdog. It's not right for anyone to be that. But once you get used to it, well, it just seems natural and you just carry on.

And that's the end of you. You're trapped. They control everything you do (117).

The "different things" which Nyasha has seen include educated women with successful careers. She suggests this exposure is an important reason for her refusal to accept her father's authority over her. Nyasha is determined to have control over her own life. She is terrified that she might forget or lose her conviction and become accustomed to being dominated by her father and other men, as her mother is. As discussed earlier, Nyasha has observed that her mother has not been able to fulfil her potential or even take up the opportunities her education offers her. However, in her desire to control her own life,

Nyasha is referring to colonial rule as well her father who represents the patriarchal structures of her society. She feels trapped by these two, interlinked forces.

The two restrictive forces -- colonial and patriarchal -- are even more closely linked in Nyasha's mind. For in her father's violence, Nyasha sees his own psychological pain and confusion caused by colonisation. He, like Nyasha, is torn between his culture, represented by the homestead and that of colonisers, represented by the mission environment and Western education. Thus, for Nyasha, Babamukuru represents both colonial and patriarchal oppression. While, in itself, the fight is a very frightening experience, it also symbolises the structural inequalities that Nyasha perceives -- both patriarchal and colonial. The fight marks the beginning of Nyasha's ill-health.

Nyasha's health deteriorates further, involving a serious eating disorder and obsessive studying. When Tambu hears Nyasha retching in the bathroom after an evening meal she asks her cousin if she is ill and Nyasha replies, talking about Babamukuru's affect on her, "it's all the things about boys and men and being decent and indecent and good and bad. He goes on and on with the accusations and the threats, and I'm just not coping very well"(190). Nyasha cannot bear her father's disapproval of the independence she exhibits by challenging patterns of behaviour that he takes for granted. Tambu gives the reader an idea of what it is about Nyasha that Babamukuru does not like by comparing her behaviour with Nyasha's:

I did not think that my reading was more important than washing the dishes, and I understood that panties should not be hung to dry in the bathroom where everybody could see them I was not concerned that freedom fighters were referred to as terrorists, did not demand proof of God's existence nor did I think that the missionaries, along with all other Whites in Rhodesia, ought to have stayed at home (155).

These are some of the ways Nyasha displays her independent spirit. She questions everything, and as a result makes her father very nervous and frustrated that his daughter is not quieter, like Tambu. Nyasha's relationship with her father gets worse and worse, until, after Tambu has left the mission for the convent school, Nyasha cries for help in a disturbing letter to Tambu. With her cousin gone, Nyasha is very lonely and is badly affected by her

classmates' treatment of her, "They do not like my language, my English, because it is authentic and my Shona because it is not! They think that I am a snob, that I think I am superior to them because I do not feel inferior to men I very much would like to belong, Tambu, but I find I do not" (196). Nyasha's feelings of alienation and her strong views about gender relations are here mixed together. Both cause her psychological pain and in her mind are inseparable.

Nyasha's breakdown occurs one night when Tambu is visiting. Distressed and very unwell, she pours out her feelings to Tambu, hurried and desperate, no longer able to hold in her pain:

'I don't want to do it, Tambu, really I don't, but it's coming, I feel it coming.' Her eyes dilated. 'They've done it to me,' she accused, whispering still. 'Really, they have.' And then she became stern. 'It's not their fault. They did it to them too. You know they did,' she whispered. 'To both of them, but especially to him. They put him through it all. But it's not his fault, he's good.' Her voice took on a Rhodesian accent. 'He's a good boy, a good munt. A bloody good kaffir,' she informed in sneering sarcastic tones. Then she was whispering again. 'Why do they do it, Tambu,' she hissed bitterly, her face contorting with rage, 'to me and to you and to him? Do you see what they've done? They've taken us away They've deprived you of you, him of him, ourselves of each other.'

"They" are at first Nyasha's parents and then the colonisers. The confusion of just who Nyasha is talking about reflects the way both colonial and patriarchal oppression are mixed together in her mind. She feels restrained by both forces simultaneously. This is the clearest insight given into Nyasha's view of her father's colonisation. She does not want to blame him because she thinks he has been used by the colonial administration. The resulting tensions and frustrations are released on his daughter who is a clear reminder of the price he has paid for his education and subsequent wealth and status. He attributes Nyasha's resistance to his authority and her reluctance to behave as a traditional woman to her exposure to England --which would not have happened if he hadn't pursued education. While Nyasha understands that her father's treatment of her is related to his own frustration at his experience of alienation, she is nevertheless badly affected by that treatment. She feels

that even education will not free her from her traditional roles and a dominating husband. She sees no escape.

Conclusion

Dangarembga's novel presents the point of view of two girls who have different experiences of education. Both girls are aware -- to different degrees -- of the costs of alienation involved in being educated and of the limitations they will face as educated women. At the mission, years after her early struggles, Tambu becomes aware of the problems involved in being educated that her cousin perceives so clearly from a much earlier age. Nevertheless, Tambu determines to bear both these problems -- alienation and sexism -- convinced the benefits of education will be worth it. In contrast, Nyasha feels the injustice and hopelessness of these problems too keenly to be able to embrace education as Tambu does. She cannot accept the ambiguities and inconsistencies of acquiring an education to enjoy any rewards it might bring. She is unwavering in her view that education produces colonial clones who prop up the regime and that it reinforces gender inequalities. She watches painfully as her mother is prevented from fulfilling her potential by making use of her Master's degree, for which she gets no recognition. Their family backgrounds provide the key to understanding the girls' different experiences of education and hence their opinions about Western education.

Tambu's awareness does not stop her from pursuing education at all costs despite Nyasha's constant criticism of her eagerness. Her determination is largely because she views her education as belonging to her family as well as herself and is motivated by the desire to improve her family's life. Nyasha does not have any similar motivation and while she does put in very long hours of study, it is a form of obsessive behaviour which also takes the form of an eating disorder. In response to one of Nyasha's many warnings and criticisms of Tambu's steadfast pursuit of education, Tambu comments to the reader, "she could afford it, being my affluent uncle's daughter -- whereas I, I had to take whatever chances came my way" (179). Tambu does not have the same family resources to depend on that Nyasha does -- therefore her motivation is stronger. Tambu believes that Nyasha will enjoy a privileged

life regardless of how far she takes her education, simply because she is the child of wealthy, respected parents who will ensure she is provided for. Tambu cannot rely on her parents to provide for her in the same way.

As the first member of her immediate family to be educated, Tambu feels responsible to use her education to improve her family's life with material benefits. Furthermore, she has struggled for her education against her family's will and as a result her education is extremely precious. Nyasha, on the other hand, is among the second generation of her family to receive education and therefore does not have the same sense of responsibility to motivate her. This insight into the effect that having educated parents can have on girls' experiences of education suggests that, while daughters of educated parents are more likely to gain access to school, they may not feel as hopeful about the outcome of their studies because they do not have family members who stand to benefit from them. Development workers may be able to encourage girls in situations like Nyasha's by pointing out to them ways in which they can use their education to help other people.

At the end of the novel Tambu is attending the convent school and Nyasha has been voluntarily admitted to a clinic for rest and, hopefully, recovery -- although the novel ends without making this clear. The last words come from the adult Tambu, looking back on her life-story. As Tambu looks back to her time at Sacred Heart she recalls her gradual realisation that she could not accept the school "and what it represented as a sunrise on my horizon." She recalls how her questioning began,

Quietly, unobtrusively and extremely fitfully, something in my mind began to assert itself, to question things and refuse to be brainwashed, bringing me to this time when I can set down this story. It was a long and painful process for me (204).

Tambu is fortunate that her questioning began after she completed her education. Nyasha's begins much earlier and as a result she becomes ill and one imagines that she is unable to continue her education. It seems that while Tambu is at the convent school her most important lessons are to do with the patriarchal and colonial structures of her society which

she can now understand, critique, analyse, and express -- skills which enable her to write the story of herself, her cousin and their families.²²

It is a story that is valuable for students of Development Studies who attempt to understand the needs of girls in education and for practitioners who are addressing those needs. The novel's portrayal of Tambu accentuates the role girls play in challenging the attitudes that hold them back, emphasising the battles waged by girls for their own education. Nyasha's experience demonstrates the contradictions and tensions created for girls when the opportunities arising from education clash with the restrictions placed on them by traditional expectations. The novel portrays a father maintaining traditional expectations of his daughter despite having decided to send her to school. This suggests that while increasing access to education is important, it is not enough to challenge the patriarchal structures in which the education system operates. These structures must be challenged so that girls will be free to use their education once they leave school. Gail P. Kelly writes that,

Schooling alone can only provide women with knowledge, skills, and credentials, but the extent to which these translate into equality between men and women in society depends on whether the structures that keep women subservient to men are themselves changed Achieving equality in access to education is quite possible - it can and has been done. Achieving gender-based equality in the workforce and in society, however, takes more than opening schools to women (Kelly, "Education, Women and Change" 281).

Kelly's clear statement about the extent to which education can help bring about equality for women is consistent with the concerns of Nyasha and Sissie. Girls may gain access to education, as Tambu, does, but that alone will not free them from the expectations of women in a patriarchal society. Endeavours to increase access to education for girls must be accompanied by efforts to educate parents about the value of allowing their daughters to use their education to their full abilities.

²² Within the novel, Tambu is the author of the story and this is what I am referring to here. Dangarembga, of course, is the actual author and although elements of the novel are drawn from Dangarembga's own life, the novel is not an autobiographical.

As well as the patriarchal constraints which loom large in each girl's experience of education, both girls are aware of the risks of alienation involved in pursuing education. Tambu is wary of this but nevertheless is drawn further and further away from her family as she pursues education. She does not have the same depth of awareness as her cousin who has the experience of adjusting to her people's customs and language after three years in England as a child. Nyasha struggles to adjust but never attains the sense of belonging that she so greatly desires. Thus alienation is seen to be a powerful effect of education with a potentially heavy and painful toll on the individual. The portrayal of Mainini, Tambu's mother, suggests the feeling of loss that parents feel when their children come home from school speaking a foreign language. The effect on communities who lose their children through education is addressed in Our Sister Killjoy as well. Set in a neocolonial context, Aidoo's novel examines the connection between Western education and the alienation and internalisation of alien values that draws students -- the elite -- to Europe. She then links Western education and neocolonialism in her critique of the role of African elites in perpetuating neocolonial relations between developed and developing countries.

Chapter Five: A Woman's Critique of Western Education and Neocolonialism: Our Sister Killjoy

Introduction

Alienation from one's family, home and culture is one of the costs of pursuing Western education that Tambu and Nyasha identify in Nervous Conditions. In Our Sister Killjoy, Ama Ata Aidoo presents a Western-educated Ghanaian woman, named Sissie, who is critical of the development implications for African communities when their most promising students, the elite, go to Europe for tertiary study.²³ Sissie's "black-eyed squint", the subtitle of the novel, makes the reader forcefully aware that alienation and the accompanying internalisation of European values is a key factor in shaping the paths that students take. Aidoo sets this "brain drain" in the context of neocolonial relations between developed and developing countries and critiques Western "aid", in the form of scholarships, for its role in luring African students to Europe.

When Sissie is given a scholarship by an international volunteer organisation she travels from Africa to Europe and observes two prominent paths taken by students on completion of their studies overseas -- both of which contribute to maintaining neocolonialism. She meets students who are reluctant to return to Africa and, instead, have entered jobs in Britain. In this case Africa's loss is twofold. On the one hand there is the loss of the specialist training, skills and knowledge that education has given these people -- a "brain drain". But there is also a "heart drain" as members of the community leave -- often those who have always shown the most promise of fulfilling leadership roles, before the prospect of Western education. Sissie learns that some of the most highly educated people

²³ This issue is addressed briefly in Nervous Conditions and Joys of Motherhood. In Nervous Conditions Babamukuru and Maiguru both study abroad and the alienation that takes place is seen in Nyasha who feels she has missed out on certain cultural knowledge because her parents have not passed it on to her. However her parents do return home after their studies and view their education and the material wealth it brings as assets that belong to all the family. In contrast, Joys of Motherhood presents Oshia (Nnu Ego's son) who goes to America to study and does not return. The family expect him to send money because his education was an investment for the whole family but Oshia views it as his alone and does not support his parents or his younger brothers and sisters. Therefore the benefits of his education are lost to his community. Our Sister Killjoy examines these concerns in great detail.

from African countries, with perhaps some of the greatest potential for leading African development initiatives, go to Europe and leave their communities bereft of their skills and knowledge. Africa's loss is Europe's gain, and in the context of neocolonialism people and their skills are another resource that enriches Europe instead of Africa. The students who do return continue the pattern, established since colonisation, of economic dependence on Europe. Again, European and other developed countries gain benefits at the expense of Africa's poorest people.

The novel goes beyond a mere critique, to suggest how such a brain and heart drain can be stopped: Sissie herself, while aware of the problems of education and herself tempted by the need to go to Britain to be a real "been-to", returns to Africa reflecting on what she has learnt about the links between Western education and neocolonialism in the course of her travels.²⁴ Sissie's ability to resist, and the clarity of her vision, show that Western education, while having the potential to alienate students from their own culture and perpetuate neocolonialism, also provides the tools of critical analysis with which to challenge and undermine alienation and its contribution to the brain and heart drain and neocolonialism.

The novel is highly critical of the combined effort of both African elites and Western interests to plunder the rich resources of the African continent. The most scathing criticism is directed at African elites who have failed to fulfil their people's hopes that political independence would bring a more just distribution of wealth. Independence did not bring an overhaul in the way the economy was structured nor was the stratification of society, between those with and those without power, transformed. Frantz Fanon has analysed the complex process of shifting allegiances that began to take place during the colonial period and during the national struggles for independence:

To them, ['the national middle class'] nationalization quite simply means the transfer into native hands of those unfair advantages which are a legacy of the colonial period (Fanon 122).

²⁴ In the novel, African people who have *been to* Britain or Europe are called "been-tos" when they return home.

African elites, educated in colonial schools and trained in the work of the colonial administration, moved into the positions vacated by the colonisers and for the vast majority of people very little changed. These elites maintained relationships with the old colonial power and sought new allies and markets for the new independent nation. Indeed, the narrator of *Our Sister Killjoy* captures the mockery of this situation, describing independence as “the dance of the masquerades called independence for Africa” (95). Sissie considers that,

Champagne sipping
Ministers and Commissioners
Sign away
Mineral and timber
Concessions, in exchange for
Yellow wheat which
The people can't eat (56-57).

The internalisation of alien values by African people is presented in the novel as a significant factor explaining the complicity of these elites in maintaining neocolonialism by continuing along the economic path introduced to their countries during colonial rule. Instead of focusing on the extraction and exploitation of mineral and timber resources, Aidoo chooses to focus on the migration of African people to other parts of the world which constitute a considerable loss to African communities. In so doing, Aidoo shows the effects of mining minds on the individuals, their families and those around them. She is concerned with the “extraction” of human beings that takes place as students’ internalisation of European values lures them to Europe.

Discussion and Analysis

Like Tambu who goes to the convent school with warnings from her mother and Nyasha about the risk of alienation ringing in her ears, Sissie begins her journey to Europe well aware of the risks and determined not to fall prey to “the powerfully seductive call of the overdeveloped nations” (Samantrai 142). Aidoo makes this clear in one of the few scenes

prior to Sissie's departure. Sissie is invited to an extravagant cocktail party at the home of the ambassador. Here she meets Sammy, a young person like herself who earlier received the same opportunity to go to Europe that Sissie is now being given. Sammy expresses tremendous gratitude for the opportunity he was given and keenly encourages Sissie to feel just as grateful:

He was very anxious to get her to realise one big fact. That she was unbelievably lucky to have been chosen for the trip. And that, somehow, going to Europe was altogether more like a dress rehearsal for a journey to paradise (9).

Sammy's enthusiasm for Europe reflects his internalisation of colonial attitudes that Europe is enlightened, civilised and altogether better than Africa. Sammy is an example of an African person keen to adopt European customs, habits, manners, education, tastes, clothes and so on.²⁵ Sissie finds Sammy's enthusiasm for Europe disturbing because she sees it accompanied by a devaluing of African values. Sammy fits into the second group of students that Sissie identifies: he returns home, only to "sing of the wonders of Europe" (9). This is the only appearance of Sammy in the novel. However, throughout her travels, Sissie meets many African people living in Europe who share his identification with Europe rather than Africa.

In Sissie's effort to understand how people come to devalue their own culture and internalise Western values, she reflects on how spending time in Europe can affect people from developing countries. She imagines these people as "migrant birds":

The feathers?

They

drop

and

drop

and

²⁵Ngugi wa Thiong'o calls this process the "biggest weapon" of imperialism, a "cultural bomb", the effect of which is to, "annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them, want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest away from them; for instance, with other peoples' languages rather than their own" (3).

drop, over

Many

Seas and

Lands,

Until the

Last wing

falls: and

Skins bared to the

Cold winds or

Hot,

Frozen or

Scorched,

We

Die (20-21).

The fall of each feather symbolises a loss -- the gradual weakening of a migrant's relationship to his or her home and family. It is an image of migrants becoming more and more estranged from their people and their land. The passage also evokes one of the more basic differences that people face when they move to live in another country -- the need to adjust to an unfamiliar climate. Acquiring an education in Europe involves the risk of becoming alienated from one's culture as students may begin to identify more with Europe than Africa.

Sissie, like Nyasha, thinks that this is a very high price to pay for education. Furthermore, like Nyasha, Sissie is rather suspicious of the motives of those offering European education to African people. Nyasha's criticisms were made in the context of a colonised country -- she considered that educating people in colonial institutions was a way of moulding people's minds to suit the colonisers. Sissie is critical in a neocolonial context and her suspicions are similar. When Sissie is asked who pays for her travel, she thinks to herself:

It is money well-spent.

Nobody's fault that they do not know

How to make use of their
Staggering natural resources.

But first!

Their leaders must be wooed
For now and tomorrow.

And, it's quite in order
To procure
One
Or two of their sable countenances,
To garnish dull speeches and resolutions -

We
Know
What
We
Want:

The airlines profit a little too (60).

Scholarships cannot be taken simply as gestures of goodwill. Sissie's selection may well be a token effort to include a black woman in the scholarship scheme as a good public relations technique. It is also possible that, being a bright promising student, she has been spotted as a potential future African leader. As such, giving her a scholarship is a way of introducing her to European habits, tastes and values in the hope that she will become one of the African elite who support Western exploitation of African resources. Lastly, although such scholarships are classed as official aid, the money, in part, returns to the country through airline profits. Thus, seemingly innocent scholarships can be seen to create wealth and advantage for the countries of the donors rather than those of the recipients. Sissie's observations suggest that giving the potential future elites of Africa opportunities to study

might be a means of securing their loyalty for future business deals and political support in the global arena. At worst, scholarships are a means of increasing support among the African elite for neocolonialism.

This, of course, has serious effects for African communities. They not only lose their cherished family members but also their skills and expert knowledge given them by their education in which the family has invested. Sissie reflects that while scholarship recipients work extremely hard, they end up,

Giving away
Not only themselves, but
All of us -

The price is high,
My brother,

Otherwise the story is as old as empires. Oppressed multitudes from the provinces rush to the imperial seat because that is where they know all salvation comes from. But as other imperial subjects in other times and other places have discovered, for the slave, there is nothing at the centre but worse slavery (87).

For students the cost of studying in Europe involves the endurance of a poor, isolating and uncomfortable existence while living overseas, as well as the risk of gradually becoming alienated from their culture. Sissie ponders the disappointment of many African students after living in London for a short while. Their hopes and expectations, their images and ideas about life in the former colonial country are met with the cold, harsh reality of daily life as a struggling student in London. This highlights the need to challenge the myth that going to Europe is “a journey to paradise” that those who return to Africa, like Sammy, perpetuate for reasons that are discussed later in the chapter. However, there are adverse effects for the whole community, as well as the individual. Students who do not return are quite literally lost to the community but even the students who do return are likely to disappoint their community by encouraging Western values at the expense of local African values, such as accepting monetary wealth as a measure of success and status. Such consequences for the

community at home need to be looked at more closely by Development Studies, especially as it is a field that attracts many scholarship recipients from developing countries.

Students who choose to stay in Europe deny their communities the skills, knowledge and expertise gained from their education. The number of students who take up jobs in Europe rather than return to Africa after completing their studies concerns Sissie. She is convinced that they should return because they are needed at home. Letters from mothers to their children studying abroad illustrate the desire among the community for the return of their brightest members. I have chosen to quote parts of one of these letters at length so that the voice of one mother can be heard. Her words carry mixed emotions of anxiety and pride. She is proud of her son's success overseas but also very anxious that he should return home and, with his skills and increased earning potential, attend to the community's needs:

Now
it is me,
Your Own Mother
speaking.

There is nothing bad here

And I am not complaining
My Child.
You also know
we are proud
that
you are overseas.

But when I see some women are getting well-looking after by their children who only finished low-low schooling, I think hard. Every day I tell myself I must have patience and that no one ever got full reward for doing half-job. . . .

Kunle,
I am not begging
you for

money.

Am I not a mother?

Do I not know you need

money yourself, and if I was rich like my friends, would I not send you some myself?

But my son,

there is

nothing here at all. So if someone gives you a penny gift, send half to us.

Finally,

may God protect you where you are and bring you back soon. For there are many jobs waiting for you to do . . . ' (105-106).

This passage illustrates the need for people to return home to serve the needs of their families and communities. The mother's voice emphasises the keen awareness of women about the loss of resources which their absent sons represent. At once, she feels pride and hope as well as frustration and anxiety about her son studying overseas. In the end, her pride is overwhelmed by her anxious awareness that her son is needed at home. Significantly, the mother talks about having questioned the importance of going to Europe for education because, while she still waits for the fruits of her son's education, other women are already quite well supported by sons who were educated locally. The mother's observations suggest that students who are educated locally are more likely to remain in the community and address development needs than those who go to Europe to study.

The mother's perspective raises pertinent questions about the link between on-going development problems and the absence of those most capable of addressing them. One might think that this is a link that would be taken seriously at government level. But Sissie points to the corruption of many African rulers and elites:

From all around the Third World

You hear the same story;

Rulers

Asleep to all things at

All times -
 Conscious only of
 Riches, which they gather in a
 Coma -
 Intravenously - (34).

This text portrays the leaders of the Third World as having “sold out” to the demands and offers of Western companies and governments. They have fallen asleep to the day to day needs of the poorest in their countries and are only attentive to their revenue. Frantz Fanon has described such African leaders as fulfilling “the role of the Western bourgeoisie’s business agent” (Fanon 122). They are certainly not concerned, as Kunle’s mother is, at the connection between the absence of students and their community’s development problems.

Indeed, Sissie perceives a correlation between the numbers of African people working in Europe to the persistence of development problems at home. Specifically, Sissie considers that the African doctors she meets working in London should be addressing the need for improved health care facilities in many parts of Africa. She notes that this “brain drain” is a worldwide phenomenon:

Gambian ophthalmologist in Glasgow
 Philippino lung specialist in Boston
 Brazilian cancer expert in
 Brooklyn or
 Basle or
 Nancy.
 While at home,
 Wherever that might be,
 Limbs and senses rot
 Leaving
 Clean hearts to be
 Transplanted into
 White neighbours’ breasts. . .
 And

Peace Troops and other volunteers
 Who in their home towns, might not
 Get near patients with
 Hayfever in league with
 Local incompetence
 Prepare
 Rare cases for
 Burial . . . (32).

Thinking globally, Sissie reflects that while African health professionals work in highly specialised areas in the hospitals of industrialised countries, African communities suffer a shortage of trained, qualified people for even the most basic healthcare. Sissie dislikes the fact that international volunteers, sometimes without much training, are left to respond to this need. She attributes some responsibility for the lack of trained, educated, skilled people - in this case doctors -- to the departure of local doctors for jobs in other parts of the world, often developed countries where there is not such a grave need for basic medical care.

Aidoo points out that the lack of doctors is not simply due to inadequate medical training facilities or adverse living conditions that cause disproportionate numbers of people needing healthcare. Rather, the shortage of doctors is related to the unequal relations between developed and developing countries which leads to an elevation of developed countries in the minds of African people and an internalisation of inferiority. In this way the novel suggests a key reason why jobs in Europe are more attractive for African doctors than those in Africa.

That resources flow from impoverished areas of the world to developed countries, rather than the other way around, is also illustrated in the passage just referred to. The doctors have skills and abilities which African countries are losing to developed countries and are thus part of this resource flow. Ngugi wa Thiong'o writes about the flow of resources which characterises neocolonialism:

Africa actually enriches Europe: but Africa is made to believe that it needs Europe to rescue it from poverty. Africa's natural and human resources continue to develop

Europe and America: but Africa is made to feel grateful for aid from the same quarters that still sit on the backs of the continent (16).

Ngugi turns upside down the popular myth, encouraged by media representation of Africa, that African countries have always been poor and lacking in resources. In fact, many African countries are not and never have been lacking in resources. Colonial and neocolonial powers continue, however, to plunder and control Africa's resources to the advantage of the industrialised countries of the world even while they respond to poverty and hunger by donating so-called aid to the continent, often in times of "disaster." Aid is a comfortable response for Western governments, keen on maintaining the global "free" market, because it means they do not have to challenge the causes of poverty: the existing unjust structures of the global capitalist economic system.

That powerful people do well out of the misery, poverty and oppression of poor people is forcefully illustrated by the novel's discussion of the world's first heart transplant, the research for which took place in South Africa under apartheid. Sissie meets Kunle, the relative of a friend whom the narrator describes as, "practically a Londoner, having lived in that city for seven years" (95). Straight away Kunle's primary sense of identity is made clear. When Sissie arrives at her friend's hotel, he and Kunle are not discussing the war in Nigeria, as Sissie might have expected, but instead, "The Heart Transplant" which has been announced in the evening news. Kunle is very excited about this event, not only as a landmark medical feat but because a coloured man's heart was used for the operation of a white man. Kunle sees the operation as "the type of development that can solve the question of apartheid" (96). Sissie and her friend are stunned by Kunle's reaction to the heart transplant and argue passionately with him, pointing out the likelihood that the doctor practised the operation using the hearts of black or coloured people. Sissie is furious at Kunle's enthusiasm for the heart transplant and refuses to share his point of view. She sees it as a prime example of the powerful and wealthy doing well out of the poor and powerless. The context of apartheid makes the example more potent because the poverty and powerlessness of the black majority is sanctioned by law. Once again, I have chosen a lengthy passage to illustrate the example. Consumed with anger and frustration, Sissie considers all that the heart transplant signifies to her:

THE DONOR'S heart
 Lived for a year and more,
 we heard, while
 His name
 Lived an evening's news.
 Wife of Dying-White-Man-Now Dead
 Should have made a little
 Money from
 His insurance policy against
 Surgical risks, and all the nice
 TV coverage of him
 Meanwhile
 The Christian Doctor has
 Taken a couple of press pictures
 In the company of a
 Movie Queen
 Acquired another
 Mrs Christian Doctor and a couple of rand
 Millions
 Effected quite a few more Heart transplantations.
 He is the only one
 Who seems
 Now to be doing well;
 The rest?
 A veritable catalogue of
 Death and just plain
 Heartbreak.
 As for
 Dying White Man's daughter's
 Black neighbours,

Only a few more
 Millions
 Have had to carry passes, to
 Breathe
 Where they
 Work,
 Just a coupla thousands
 Raided and
 Arrested,
 A few dead from torture
 Just a few more hanged . . . (101-103).

The media's disinterest in the donor is juxtaposed with the attention given to the recipient and his family and, of course, the doctor. The doctor's success is dependent on the donor and yet it is the doctor who makes all the gains. Set against the injustices suffered by black people under apartheid, which the media also neglects, the success of the doctor who carried out the first heart transplant becomes a powerful example of a person using a relationship of power to his advantage. Sissie points out that the occurrence of the heart transplant in South Africa is no simple co-incidence because, as she tells us: "the Christian Doctor has himself said that in his glorious country, niggerhearts are so easy to come by, because of the violence those happy and contented bantus perpetrate against one another" (100). These lines depict the racism of South Africa and the doctor himself. It is made clear that the South African context provided opportunities for experimentation, without which, the doctor could not have achieved the successful heart transplant. With characteristic sarcasm, Sissie goes on to refute the justification for apartheid, made by white South Africans, that the black population of South Africa are better off under apartheid than "Any other Africans Anywhere on the continent" (100). The questions raised about the South African context are more important to Sissie than the advance of science that the heart transplant represents to Kunle. Sissie feels that Kunle's interest is misplaced, that he should be more concerned with South African politics or the Nigerian civil war, than with the heart transplant. To Sissie,

Kunle's great enthusiasm for the heart transplant indicates his high regard for science and progress -- key values of the European enlightenment which Kunle has internalised.

Perhaps his mother's letters finally have an effect, for Kunle does eventually return to Africa. The narrator gives an insight into the pressure upon people like Sammy, Kunle and Sissie to return when they would really rather stay:

Kunle, like many of us, wished he had had the courage to be a coward enough to stay forever in England. Though life 'home' has its compensations. The aura of having been overseas at all. Belonging to the elite, whatever that is. The sweet pain of getting a fairly big income which can never half support one's own style of living, not to mention the inescapable responsibilities (197).

The narrator draws the readers attention to the very mixed feelings that students from developing countries can have about returning home after studying in developed countries. The effect of alienation is exemplified by placing the word "home" in quotation marks, indicating the student's uncertainty of which place he feels most at home. The prestige of being a "been-to" demands leaving behind a lifestyle that is often easier, more comfortable and more free of responsibilities. Like Sammy, Kunle returns to Africa eventually, bringing with him the habits, customs and values to which he has become accustomed during his seven years of living in London. Kunle is an extreme example of a student who returns home after his studies. Eager to display his wealth, and the status that he acquires as a "been-to", Kunle buys a car and--even more extreme-- he employs a chauffeur to drive it. That Kunle is killed in this car is heavily ironic: it is Aidoo's way of pointing out the destructiveness of alienation and the internalisation of Western values.

There are two important instances in the novel where Sissie takes action to try and stop the brain / heart drain. Aidoo portrays Sissie speaking to students from developing countries studying in Europe, as well as graduates who have not returned. In the first instance Sissie meets an Indian doctor and asks him why he has not returned home,

'Why did you remain

Here?'

'Do they need you as a Doctor

Here,

As desperately?’ (29).

Sissie is convinced that doctors, like this man, are needed in their home countries. She believes that if they were to return home they could work towards alleviating many of their country’s development problems. The same conviction gives her the courage to stand up and speak to a group of African students and graduates--all men--at a student union meeting. She speaks to them about their reluctance to return home, “pleading that instead of forever gathering together and virtuously spouting such beautiful radical analyses of the situation back home, we should simply hurry back?” (121). She is frustrated by their display of apparent interest and concern over their countries’ futures, because, in her opinion, their absence from home is part of the problem.²⁶

The reaction of both the Indian and the African doctors are similar: they both remind Sissie that there are no jobs at home that could offer them equivalent pay, conditions and future career prospects. Sissie is sympathetic towards the Indian doctor, acknowledging that he,

would
Starve
Today
Should he ‘open a
Private practice
Anywhere at
Home’ (31).

Sissie admits that she does not know what she would have him do. She is aware that there are no easy answers to the doctor’s situation. The African doctors eagerly present Sissie

²⁶ Sissie is very critical of African doctors who stay and work overseas after gaining their qualifications at overseas institutions. She urges them to return home and accept payment of chickens (for example) rather than aspiring for large salaries only available in other parts of the world. A character in Bessie Head’s novel When Rain Clouds Gather, Makayha, illustrates the choice educated people face:

Well-educated men often come to the crossroads of life, . . . One road might lead to fame and importance, and another might lead to peace of mind. It’s the road of peace of mind that I’m seeking (20).

Makayha’s education gives him many opportunities, such as pursuing a career that will make him rich and famous (although his refugee status limits him a great deal). He chooses to use his education for the benefit of the African poor rather seek ‘fame and fortune’ overseas and spends his time working with local people to build a self - sufficient community in rural Botswana. This is the sort of attitude to one’s education that Sissie of Our Sister Killjoy would greatly admire.

with numerous reasons why they can not return home. Many present economic reasons, similar to the Indian doctor's. Others claim that they are pursuing titles for status: "they only begin to treat you like a human being when you have a PhD", and one man even argues that he cannot return home until he manages to grow a beard (121). The range of reasons and their vehemence suggest that these African men take Sissie's criticisms seriously and are eager to defend their decisions not to return home. Their defensiveness suggests that they are painfully aware of their moral obligation to return to their communities. It is important that development workers trying to reduce the "brain drain", or even just to understand it, realise the complexities of people's situations as illustrated in this novel. Like these African doctors, students and graduates may well be aware of the need for them at home but are constrained by economic considerations and their personal desire to further their career.

That Aidoo portrays Sissie speaking to doctors from India as well as Africa highlights the fact that the brain / heart drain is a problem that affects more than one developing country. However, it may also signify the limitations of Sissie's squint, her critical blindspot. Firstly, she does not acknowledge the different contexts of, for example, India and Ghana that might affect individuals' situations. To Sissie, all the explanations she hears, from students and graduates, are wholly symptomatic of their alienation and internalisation of Western values such as individualism and striving for capital. This is why she responds to all their defensive explanations by challenging those values:

Once in a year, some man of means will come to give you thanks, with a sheep. Or a goat . . . most of the time, it will be humble expressions of humbler means. A Hen. A Cockeral. An old woman would carry you eggs laid by home-reared chicken. A widow might bring you her last tuber of yam . . . most of the time, it will be plain old verbal "thank-you" very timidly said, and in silence, a blessing of the womb that bore you . . (130).

One of the main considerations of the African doctors was economic: their pay and their career prospects. Sissie challenges the underlying assumptions of such a consideration--that monetary payment is of greater value than any other. She appeals to them to revalue the payment that they would receive at home. Sissie's thoughts and reactions make it evident that she sees only alienation and internalisation of European values as the true motives of

students who decide to stay abroad. She is unable to recognise the plurality of motivations that the two previous novels show is crucial to understanding individual people's decisions. Whether or not we agree with Sissie's interpretation is not as important as Aidoo's portrayal of the complexities of the brain and heart drain and all its ramifications.

The internalisation of alien values is presented in the novel as a key reason for the brain and heart drain. Sissie reflects on the tendency of African people to elevate European customs and values above those of African people. Sissie considers the common perception, especially among elites, that European goods and services are of higher quality than the equivalent from Africa:

Father is the Minister of Education
At home. He knows where to get
Quality, so for
Education and other
Essentials, he orders straight from
Europe (42).

A Minister of Education, this person is in a powerful position to influence the education system and the aspirations of students. The approach taken towards his own children's education sets an example for the whole country. In Sissie's opinion the preference for education from Europe is symptomatic of the internalisation of alien values. This becomes a continual cycle -- when African people return from Europe with increased prestige they become the subject of another generation's aspirations to acquire European education.

Sissie herself has been impressed by the "been-tos" and their embellished tales only to feel betrayed by them when she goes to Britain. For example, when she arrives in England she tastes fish and chips and is bitterly disappointed. They do not live up to the standard she has been led to expect. Sissie wonders why people "never told the truth of their travels at home", and the narrator tells us,

that if they were to keep on being something in their own eyes, then they could not tell the truth to their own selves or to anyone else. So when they eventually went back home as 'been-tos', the ghosts of the humans they used to be, spoke of the

wonders of being overseas, pretending their tongues craved for tasteless foods which they would have vomited to eat where they were prepared best.

Fish and Chips.

They lied.

They lied.

They lied.

The Been-tos lied.

And another generation got itself ready to rush out (89-90).

Something else that the been-tos do not disclose is the large numbers of black people living in London in poor circumstances. Sissie is surprised and dismayed at the sight of so many of black people wearing inadequate clothing and cheap shoes in very cold weather, “Sissie bled as she tried to take the scene in”, and to understand why these Africans came to London in the first place and why they continued to stay (85). These Africans whom Sissie observes may be students who have not completed their courses and their family members or people who came for work but are now unemployed. In part, they have all come to Britain because of the distorted view that Europe is somehow altogether better than Africa. The “been-tos” play a crucial role in perpetuating this view because the alternative -- telling the truth and dispelling the myth that Europe is paradise -- involves admitting their own deception by that same myth. Thus the cycle continues and the belief persists that by attending institutions in Europe students somehow receive an education of intrinsic superior quality. The effect of elevating European education is of course to belittle or devalue education received in African institutions. This sort of attitude is at the root of the accolade Sissie receives when she leaves for Europe. Her photograph is published in the local newspaper and we are told, “Our Sister had made it” (9), for going to Europe is a supreme achievement. Sissie is very critical of this glorification of Europe which the “been-tos” encourage.

However, while Sissie criticises the “been-tos” she cannot resist the prospect of visiting England, although she justifies her desire to go there by reflecting on the importance that people at home place on going to England:

If anyone had told her that she would want to pass through England because it was her colonial home, she would have laughed.

She generally considered herself too smart to exhibit such weaknesses.

But to London she had gone anyway, consoling herself all the while that that was the only way to get people at home to understand where she had been. Abroad. Overseas.

Germany is overseas.

The United States is overseas.

But England is another thing (85).

Long after political independence, England, as the former seat of colonial rule, has a unique attraction for Ghanaian people. Years of colonisation have left imprinted on many people the internalised view that England and English ways are a measure of success and wealth.

Sissie, though, believes that she is beyond the view of England that the general population holds. The narrator reveals a certain arrogance in Sissie's opinion of herself. She pretends not to be interested in visiting England, claiming that she is only going there to fulfil the expectations of people at home. However, she does go there, because she is aware how much people will be impressed when she tells them she has been to England. Probably, the stories she tells will fill people with the desire to become a "been-to" as well. While she criticises the "been-tos", Sissie fails to realise that she is also falling into the same arrogant pattern of placing oneself above the general population.

However, Sissie does recognise a serious limit of her education at the end of the scene with the African doctors, referred to above. This is one of the few scenes of the novel in which Aidoo portrays Sissie to be aware of sexual dynamics. Despite her efforts to persuade the group of male doctors that they ought to return home, in the end, Sissie is silenced: "I was like a stone staring into his face" (128). She is forced to recognise that much of the description the doctors give of the situation at home is true, even if she still argues that they should return home. Furthermore, Sissie stops speaking when she notices that one of the doctors is holding the hands of a white woman. This sight stuns Sissie into silence and she almost collapses. At this point one of the doctors comes to her rescue and leads her away from the crowd. Sissie is defeated by the men's arguments at the point when

she realises the sexual dynamics involved as she tells a group of men that she disapproves of their actions. Although she may be as educated as the men, as a woman Sissie does not have equal authority to speak and be heard. Aidoo thus points to a serious limitation of Sissie's education -- it has not freed her from the constraints placed on women in patriarchal societies, just as it could not free Nyasha.

Conclusion

Our Sister Killjoy depicts Sissie, an astute, educated woman who travels from Africa to Europe. She connects the presence of African students and professionals in Europe to development problems in Africa, and forms the opinion that they should all -- including herself -- return home and contribute to easing problems with the skills, knowledge and expertise gained from their education. With her knowledge of colonial history and her analytical skills gained from her own education, Sissie is able to place her observations and perceptions in the context of the neocolonial relationship between African countries and more powerful ones. Aidoo thus presents an important role for Western education in two different ways. Firstly, her education provides Sissie with the analytical tools for making her criticisms and secondly education provides African people with skills which, as Sissie argues, are needed by their communities. Sissie values the education and training of the doctors she meets, for example, because she knows there is a need for improved healthcare in many parts of Africa.

What concerns Sissie, though, is that many of these doctors and other professionals do not return to Africa after completing their studies and training. Aidoo points out that when this happens their skills do not benefit their communities but instead become one of the many resources of African countries that enrich other more developed countries. Although the reader may disagree with Sissie's squint on the world, Aidoo uses this novel to make readers aware that even seemingly innocent efforts to help African development can contribute to neocolonialism. Her novel emphasises the role that internalising alien values and pursuing Western education can contribute to this process, just as Nyasha did in Nervous Conditions. Moreover, Aidoo demonstrates that some of those who do return have

in the past used their education to gain positions of power in which they have ill attended the needs of the poor. Nevertheless, Aidoo shows the value of education through her character, Sissie, who uses her analytical skills to speak out and persuade African professionals to return and contribute their skills to projects which help the poorest people. She urges them to avoid power, greed and corruption and to accept jobs with less pay and worse conditions than those available to them in developed countries. In this way Aidoo is suggesting that the cycle, which Sissie discerns as she travels, can be broken and the “been-tos” might begin to tell the truth about their experiences and impressions of Europe – that going to Europe is not the “journey to paradise” that they thought it would be. Sissie returns to Africa and looks likely to break the cycle by telling true stories about what she has seen and learnt about Europe. Thus, the overall message of the novel is that many African communities will have a brighter future when their most highly educated and trained members return. The greatest contribution that Our Sister Killjoy makes to Development Studies is its portrayal of the connections between the alienating effects of Western education, the complex political structures of neocolonialism and the lives of individuals.

Conclusion

Summary of Thesis

My overall objective in this thesis has been to explore the contribution of fiction to the study of development. The thesis focuses on women writers because women's voices have for too long been silenced, ignored or mocked. Organisations such as DAWN are making efforts to give Third World women space in which to speak, to listen to their views and to take notice of their ideas. This thesis is one way of hearing women's voices. Development projects designed to encourage the participation of women in development have become more and more popular with both official development assistance and independent development agencies since the 1970s. More recently Gender and Development (GAD) literature has criticised such efforts because they do not adequately challenge the status-quo, but simply encourage women to take part in existing, patriarchal systems. The GAD perspective hinges on the concept of empowerment which involves challenging those structures that cause women's oppression and enabling women to carve their own paths rather than be subsumed into already existing development projects. I have responded to GAD's call for a commitment to seek the views of women, encourage them in their efforts to express themselves, to listen and to take heed of their voices, by studying the voices, views and insights of women in three novels by African women.

— I focus on the theme of education because it has been widely recognised as a development issue since the 1950s and because it features as a major theme in African writing, by both men and women. The novels demonstrate both the complexities of a single theme and the range of issues addressed in fiction.

Implications of Study

The Joys of Motherhood's most important contribution for Development Studies is its portrayal of two women whose different approaches to educating their daughters is shown to relate to their family background, their position in the household, the number of children

they have, and whether or not they have sons as well as daughters. The novel suggests that the under-valuing of girls combined with limited financial resources are crucial reasons why girls are denied access to school. This is particularly relevant for those working to increase access to education for girls. The value of Western-style education for women is made clear through the life of Nnu Ego, a woman who migrates to an urban centre and finds herself disadvantaged without formal education.

The second novel, Nervous Conditions, invites readers to consider the perspective of girls affected by decisions such as those portrayed in The Joys of Motherhood. As girls' views are rarely sought in development discourses, this novel demonstrates an important attribute of fiction for Development Studies: that it is a source for voices that are seldom heard. The experiences of Tambu and Nyasha illuminate many of the difficulties that girls face regarding education. Tambu is a girl whose poor, rural family choose to favour their son's education at the expense of Tambu's when they are faced with limited resources. Tambu's determined struggle to return to school and pursue education as far as possible demonstrates the active role of girls in achieving access to school.

Furthermore, the novel demonstrates that gaining access to school is not the end of girls' battles with education. Tambu and her cousin Nyasha are both aware that education is not a magic cure-all for women's oppression. This they learn, in part, from the example of Nyasha's mother, Maiguru, whose Master's degree gains her neither recognition from her family nor freedom from her responsibilities as a mother and wife. Her subservience towards her husband is a frustrating reminder to both girls, especially Nyasha, that an education is not enough to free them from the expectations of women in a patriarchal society, of which Babamukuru's harsh restrictions on Nyasha's behaviour are a constant reminder. In this way, Nervous Conditions demonstrates, painfully at times, that girls will continue to face pressure to fulfil the roles of wife and mother until the traditional expectations of women in patriarchal societies are successfully challenged. As long as sexist attitudes remain, parents will continue to restrain even those daughters who do gain education. The way Dangarembga exposes the limitations of education for girls is consistent with GAD literature which emphasises the need to challenge underlying structures of women's oppression.

As well as addressing the patriarchal constraints that girls face in education, Nervous Conditions echoes The Joys of Motherhood's recognition that Western education alienates African students from their families, homes and cultures. Tambu tries to resist being seduced by the material wealth that accompanies her education; Nyasha suspects that educating "intelligent natives" is a plot by the colonisers to capture, at a young age, those most likely to rebel against them; Tambu's mother, Mainini, is distraught and quite angry when her children return home from school speaking the colonisers' language, sensing that, "the Englishness . . . it'll kill them" (202). The novel demonstrates that acquiring a Western education can alienate one from one's culture through internalising alien values. Nyasha and Mainini voice the concern that this cost is too high.

In addition to addressing two key problems with education for girls, Nervous Conditions suggests that girls respond to the challenges presented by sexism and alienation differently, influenced by their levels of motivation. The novel suggests that girls like Tambu, who come from a poor background, may value the material wealth and improved living standards that education can bring their whole families. In contrast, girls like Nyasha can be less motivated in their quests for education because they come from households that have already benefited from material wealth as a result of education. Both The Joys of Motherhood and Nervous Conditions emphasise the importance of family background and class in decisions people make and their motivations. The portrayal of women from different backgrounds serves to emphasise the diversity of women and girls in Africa.

The concerns about Western education and alienation that Nervous Conditions raises are also addressed in Our Sister Killjoy. These concerns challenge Development Studies to continue to critique the processes of globalisation and their effects on the world's poorest people. Aidoo links Western education to neocolonialism in two ways. Firstly the novel examines the lure of Europe for African students and the subsequent brain and heart drain that constitutes part of the on-going resource flow from Africa to Europe. Secondly, it critiques the role of African elites, alienated as a result of Western education, in maintaining the patterns of dependence established since colonisation. In this way readers are called to consider seriously the negative effects of Western education for people, communities and entire countries. However, it is because of the analytical skills that Sissie acquires from her

education that she is able to articulate her critique of Western education and its connection with neocolonialism.

In conclusion, the novels suggest that, despite the problems of sexism and alienation which girls confront, Western education does nevertheless give them valuable skills and greater opportunities. Therefore strategies for increasing girls' access to education that involve, for example, efforts to convince parents of the value of their daughters' education, must continue. However, the serious concerns about Western education addressed in the three novels raise the question as to whether girls (and boys) might be able to acquire the skills that Sissie displays without becoming alienated from their cultures by studying in institutions which have African, rather than Western orientations. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to suggest concrete strategies which development workers could implement in practice, the concerns highlighted in each novel suggest key principles on which future efforts to address the needs of African children in education could be based.

These principles must resist alienation: instil pride in African children for their own cultures, teach them their countries' history of colonisation, encourage them to speak their own languages and include the study of art, literature, philosophy, science from Africa and around the world, rather than solely those of Western cultures. The principles of such an education present a challenge to the hegemony of Western cultures and therefore begin to address the concerns about alienation and neocolonialism raised in the novels.

To challenge the novels' concerns about patriarchy, an education built on such principles would need to take place in an environment committed to giving girls equal opportunities in learning, encouraging girls' self-esteem, and enabling them to fulfil their potential. Both boys and girls could be encouraged to question and challenge existing patriarchal attitudes, through gender sensitive textbooks, for example, and to explore the impact of colonialism on African gender roles.

The novels indicate that there is also a need to make education relevant and practical to people's needs, both immediate and long-term, as they define them. It is important to value learning in everyday life and the passing on of traditional knowledge as forms of education.

The discussion and analysis of the three novels has shown that the value of fiction for Development Studies lies in its powerful ability to convey the interconnectedness of people's personal relationships, their motives, aspirations and all manner of emotions, and the larger structures in which they live -- their families, wider communities, and the world. The result is that complex development issues are able to be treated in a holistic way. In addition, fiction, as a medium that people use to express themselves, a mode of communication and a forum for the discussion and presentation of ideas, is a valuable source for development workers and others committed to seeking the voices and views of the people with whom they are working for change. For both these reasons, the three novels challenge Development Studies to broaden its interdisciplinary approach still further to include the study of fiction by people from developing countries. A way of introducing fiction to students of development is to approach works of fiction, such as the three novels studied in this thesis, as teaching tools. For example, these novels could be used in Development Studies courses on education or on Gender and Development.²⁷

Areas for Future Study

I have explored the contribution of three novels by African women to a Development Studies understanding of educational issues. One could base a study of fiction around many other themes relevant to development, including some related to education which I have touched on -- neocolonialism and identity politics. Other themes such as migration and resistance struggles would make fascinating studies. One theme which might yield particularly interesting results is agricultural reform, and other environmental issues. Bessie Head's novels When Rain Clouds Gather and A Question of Power would make an

²⁷ For example, a course in education could begin with Nervous Conditions as an introduction. This would ensure students know a) that African women, like Dangarembga, are actively involved in addressing educational issues that affect girls in particular, b) that girls themselves can be instrumental in gaining access to school through the portrayal of Tambu, c) the limitations of education to free women from patriarchal oppression, particularly through the struggles of Maiguru and Nyasha. It could provoke discussion of the ways Western education alienates students from their own cultures and enable students to appreciate that girls may respond differently to these problems through the contrast of Tambu and Nyasha, thereby demonstrating that family background can influence people's motivations for education according to whether or not they perceive their education as a communal benefit. Throughout, the medium of fiction would enable students to grasp the centrality of people's emotions, their relationships and their hopes and fears to the complexities of development issues.

interesting study of this theme. A study devoted entirely to works of fiction that portray girls growing up in developing countries could build on the work I have done on Nervous Conditions. This would be timely given that groups who work with children, such as UNICEF, as well as feminist organisations, are beginning to recognise the particular needs of girls and to address them. In addition to studying the insights found in fiction, one could study other art media such as poetry, painting, sculpture, song, dance and oral storytelling for what they can contribute to understanding in Development Studies. The political content of art and literature used for consciousness-raising in Third World countries would make an interesting study.

Such approaches -- like mine in this thesis -- focus on what Development Studies can learn from art and literature. There is also tremendous scope for studying the use of art and literature in social and political development. This approach lends itself to studying performative oral forms such as drama, storytelling, song and dance because of the large numbers of people in developing countries who cannot read and write. In resistance struggles the use of song, drama and storytelling are an extremely important part of keeping up people's morale and educating people of the need to resist, the focus of resistance, encouraging people in their work and so on. For example, the work of the Sistren Theatre in Jamaica -- a women's drama group -- would make a fascinating study. One could focus on the topics that the group address or on the effect their work has on people. There is much scope for future study of the content of Third World art and literature, the effect it has on people and the role it plays in their lives.

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