

Laboratoire de domiciliation du Master : Etude des Langues et Cultures Etrangères.

To My dear parents

Mounir and Lysa

all my family

RYMA

To my parents

My husband

Maya

all my family

Hakima

Acknowledgments

This piece of research would not have been accomplished without the support and assistance of intellectual mentors and friends.

First and foremost, we are eternally grateful to the never-ending support and faith of our dissertation supervisor Mrs Larabi Sabeha without whose saintly patience, we could not have succeeded.

Special thanks to Professor Zerar Sabrina for her encouragements.

We owe debt to the pannel of Mrs Seddiki Sadia and Mrs Matmer Taous for their academic and professional assessment of our work. Their reading of our modest dissertation has been insightful and invaluable.

Abstract:

Authors and women's rights pioneers Lorraine Hansberry and Ama Ata Aidoo are known for dealing with daring issues that challenge the political systems of their countries. Their writings are mirrors that reflect the bitter reality of women and the African communities in the world. This piece of research falls within comparative African and Afro-American literatures. It handles Ama Ata Aidoo's 1964 play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959). It discusses the issues of patriarchy and gender resistance in both plays. To reach our purpose and to support our premise, we rely on *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984), a book written by the African American author and feminist activist bell hooks. The basic premise is that both Ama Ata Aidoo and Lorraine Hansberry converge in their depiction of African and Afro-American women of the postcolonial Africa and post-war America as victims of patriarchy, but more as resistant to it. They both use powerful women who strive to regain their womanhood.

Key words: African, African American, Patriarchy, Resistance, Gender.

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"We are not white. We are not Europeans. We are black like the Africans themselves . . . we and the Africans will be working for a common goal; the uplift of black people everywhere."

(Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*)

I. General Introduction

Throughout history, man has created myths, stereotypes and clichés about women to keep them under his control and prevent them to advance and go beyond the limits in society. Women are taught that they are worthless, emotional and weak. They are also taught that man is born to dominate. It is a rule of nature that cannot be changed and nothing can be done to avoid it. (Sultana, 2011:3) The great Greek philosopher Aristotle has defined women as mutilated men and inferior creatures which do not have souls and are unable to reason or make decisions.(Lerner, 1987:207) Religious belief has reinforced this hostility towards women and during the Middle Ages, women are thought to be the first to commit a sin which led to man's fall. (Weitz, 2003)

The Age of Enlightenment in Europe gave birth to liberalism, man started to think in a rational way for the first time. Liberalism led to the birth of feminism in the late nineteenth century. (Andersen, 2006) and feminists as Marry Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir came to call and urge women to fight for equality with men. In their quest for their identity and emancipation, a few number of privileged women gained certain power while patriarchy persisted and took other forms. Many thinkers and scholars have dealt with the concept of patriarchy and have defined it differently. British sociologist Sylvia Walby in her work entitled **Theorizing Patriarchy** argues that "patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990: 20) while Black American activist bell hooks says: patriarchy is the single most life-threatening disease assaulting the male body and spirit in our nation. (Hooks, 2016: 1)

Western feminism ignores the postcolonial realities of African women, and in the United States. It focuses on sexist oppression and neglects issues of race and class. It pays no

attention to the existence of non-white women whose experiences are different from that of white ones. Instead of liberating women, it reinforces patriarchal values. Consequently, black women and other oppressed groups reject the notion. Furthermore, to resist racism and white hegemony, womanist theory that aims at answering the needs of black women and their struggle for a better world is forged. (Ghani, 2011:1296)

The word Womanism is coined by Alice Walker, an African American Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist known for *The Color Purple* (1982). In her 1984 book entitled *In Search of our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose*, she introduces the word womanist which according to her comes from womanish, a black folk expression used by mothers to call their daughters. She states that womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender. (Walker, 1984: xii) She defines a womanist as a black feminist, an audacious woman who is interested in learning and questioning all things. Alice Walker used the term Womanism to distinguish black women from white feminism. Womanism is often used as means for analyzing black women's literature. It is unique and aims at honoring Black women's strength and experiences. (Ghani, 2011: 1296)

Although the term Womanism was not coined until the early 1980s, its concepts are noticeable in many literary works that appeared before that time as in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) and Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965). In fact, both Hansberry and Aidoo investigate in their writings what is meant to be a woman and black in post-war America and postcolonial Africa.

a. Review of Literature

Ama Ata Aidoo and Lorraine Hansberry are known for dealing with daring and challenging issues. Their works are like mirrors that reflect the bitter reality of their communities. Therefore, it is obvious that both authors and their works have received interesting critical attention. The perspectives are multivarious; we will try to browse some of the previous literature written on both. We will start with *The Dilemma of a Ghost* written by Aidoo, a play which has received much criticism. Georgia Axiotou in *Towards a Theatre of Impossible Forgiveness: Ama Ata Aidoo and the Dilemma of Slavery* (2009) argues that Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* preoccupied by the history of slavery, and that it reveals a number of conflicts and dilemmas. She adds that many issues are raised in the play such as gender, identity, the clash between tradition and the neocolonial present. (Axiotou, 2009:1). The same critic adds that Aidoo uses *The Dilemma of a Ghost* as a cultural site to demonstrate the trauma of slavery. (Ibid: 2). She thinks that the presence of the character of Eulalie in the play reflects Aidoo's claim to acknowledge the sensitive, ugly and painful history of slavery in Ghana. (Ibid: 5) It is clear that the critic believes that Aidoo is aware that the best means to heal the wound of slavery is to deal with it openly. Sure, it takes time and continuous engagement but it is not impossible. (Ibid: 2-3)

One more critical attention to Aidoo's play is Cynthia Elisabeth Osei's and Cecilia Addei in their study *Literature and the African culture: A study of the Dilemma of a Ghost and the Marriage of Anansewa* (2012). Both critics focus on how Aidoo uses literature as a medium to portray Ghanaian culture. (Osei and Addei, 2012:37). According to them, Aidoo portrays culture through the traditional marriage versus the Western one. The former is represented by Ato Yawson, an educated Ghanaian who has forgotten his culture and the latter by Eulalie, the black American wife. (Ibid: 39). The same critics contend that another aspect discussed in the play is childbirth. In fact, in the Ghanaian belief, they argue that every woman has to give

birth after marriage, but it is not the case with Eulalie who is described as a radical wife. (Ibid: 40). This study also concludes that Aidoo teaches culture through different issues such as marriage and female fertility. (Ibid: 41). In addition to this, she uses dramatic techniques as humour, songs and witty language to portray many aspects of Ghana's culture. (Ibid: 43)

As still another piece of criticism, *The Wo-Man Empire: A Womanist reading* (2016) by Adeniyi Tenitope Olorunsomo handles Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and *Anowa* from the feminist standpoint. Adeniyi asserts that gender inequality and beliefs are women's problem in African culture. (Olorunsomo, 2016:156). He argues that gender issues are a major preoccupation of Aidoo and many other writers who are considered as mouthpieces for other women. (Ibid: 157). He precises that Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* discusses the myth of childless woman in Africa. Thus, motherhood and nurturance are important aspects in traditional Africa, and the critic concludes that a woman should not fail in any of the two in her life. (Ibid: 160)

Again, it is apparent that Olorunsomo's perspective is very close to Aidoo's previous criticism. In fact Olorunsomo's study on feminism has enlightened us upon the issue we are ourselves handling in this memoir. However, it is surprising how Adeniyi did not compare Aidoo and her work to worldwide playwrights and plays, though comparative studies always add more perspectives to literature.

Like Aidoo's play, Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* has received success and considerable criticism when it opened on Broadway in 1959 and beyond. In an essay entitled *Inventing a Fishbowl: White Supremacy and the Critical Reception of Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun* (1999), Robin Bernstein argues that many "white critics praised the play's universality" but others classified it as particular and specific to black culture. (Bernstein, 1999:16). He also adds that though there are authors as novelist John

Oliver Killens and historian Leron Bennett Jr who noted Hansberry's ability to be "universal in her particularity", there are critics who categorize *A Raisin in the Sun* as either "universal or specifically black". (Ibid: 17). He thinks that their aim is to ignore the politics of the play and maintain the white supremacy. Moreover, he says:

By ignoring Hansberry's politics and recognizing only the play's specificity to black culture, white critics erased Hansberry's authority to speak about anything but herself. This action positioned blacks as if in a fishbowl: they could look at each other, but not at anything beyond their immediate context. (Ibid: 19).

It is clear that Bernstein's critique is a worthwhile contribution to the understanding of Hansberry's work, but for our research, it remains very limited in perspective.

In another piece of criticism entitled *To Be a Man: a Re-Assessment of Black Masculinity in Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun and Les Blancs* (2014), Julie M. Burell has studied the play from another perspective. She believes that "Hansberry's representation of black men and masculinity is not only positive but progressive" in *A Raisin in the Sun*. (Burell, 2014: 03). The critic also thinks that Hansberry as an intellectual has defended "black men against tendencies to fetishize and exoticize them" (Ibid: 04). She explains through her essay how the frustrated character of Walter Lee learns from his errors and finally denies the empty capitalist values he has absorbed to affirm the core values inherited from the African American tradition as freedom and dignity. (Ibid: 14)

If Julie M. Burell has focused in her study of *A Raisin in the Sun* on male characters, Hana Khalief Ghani in her article *I Was Born Black and Female: a Womanist Reading of Lorraine Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun* (2011) has given special importance to the female characters in the play. She asserts that although the term Womanism was not coined until 1983 by Alice Walker in her work *In Research of our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose*, its features are very apparent in Hansberry's play. (Ghani, 2011:1296). She also pretends that

A Raisin in the Sun is not only about an African American family living and experiencing racial segregation in Chicago. According to her:

"The play displays a very strong view on a number of womanist issues that would transpire during the decade following its initial production and beyond. It raises the issues of black man-black woman relationship, gender roles, women's right to education and better living conditions, the role of male in the black matriarchal society, black woman's identity, poverty and abortion"(Ibid).

Khalif Ghani's piece of criticism is, we believe, the closest in perspective to ours in the present research work. In fact, the critic does not only ground Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* within the feminist and womanist work, she also contributes to Afro-American woman literary criticism. What remains problematic in her critique is that, it is very large in perspective in that it pretends the comprehension of all issues treated consciously or unconsciously by Hansberry. It remains therefore our contribution to focus on only some aspects in Hansberry's work so as not to indulge ourselves in ungrounded pretentions.

From all what is said above, it is worth mentioning that the majority of critiques are valuable and important to the understanding of both Hansberry's and Aidoo's works. Yet to our understanding, they remain very limited in perspectives in that they limit Hansberry's and Aidoo's works to aspects that they depict in their plays.

b. Issue and Working Hypotheses

From our review of some of the literature written on Lorraine Hansberry's and Ama Ata Aidoo's works, we noticed that most of these studies give glimpses on the aspect of patriarchy and resistance without really exploring it. As far as we know, no previous study has ventured to compare Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and Lorraine Hansberry's *The Raisin in the Sun*. We assume that Hansberry's and Aidoo's belonging to different cultures and backgrounds did not prevent them from depicting the same issues in their works under study.

To achieve our purpose, we will rely on *Feminist Theory: From Margin To Center* in which feminist activist bell hooks defines patriarchy and addresses the problem of race, class and gender. She speaks about the social and cultural matters such as self-definition and self-realization for women.

The basic premise and assumption of this piece of research is Lorraine Hansberry's and Ama Ata Aidoo's depiction of women as fighters, not as surrenders, as heroines not as victims. In fact, though both authors converge in their representation of both African and Afro-American women under the siege of masculinity and patriarchy, they nevertheless make of their women heroines either through education or good-heartedness. We suppose that the dialogue between both women authors and their works owes much to their own upbringing within repressive areas and eras. We therefore assume that this pushed them to commit themselves to the depiction of women within and out of repression as it will be discussed in depth in the discussion section.

c. Methodological Outline

This piece of research is a portrayal of black women's experiences in post-war America and postcolonial Africa during the 1950s and the 1960s, as reflected in both Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* and Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. It is an investigation on how black women are seen and treated during this era, from a womanist approach.

Furthermore, it is undertaken following the IMRAD method. It starts with an introduction where we have introduced the term Womanism as well as both works under scrutiny. It comprises three sections. The Method and Materials is the first section. It contains bell hooks' Feminist Theory focusing on patriarchy and resistance. In addition, it refers to the historical background and the main events that characterize the era in which the two plays

were written. In fact, the events of both works and the characters reflect the African and Afro-American societies in post independent Ghana and post-war America. Further, this same section introduces the biographical background of both playwrights Ama Ata Aidoo and Lorraine Hansberry as well as the summary of their two plays *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964) and *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959).

Results is the second section where our findings are revealed. They are discussed in the Discussion section. This latter is divided into two chapters. In the first one, we have tried to discuss the aspects of patriarchy and the role of family in reinforcing sexism as presented by the two playwrights in their plays. Then, in the second chapter, we have attempted to analyse the extent to which the female characters' resistance is shown in both works, as well as the playwrights' resistance. We have ended our work with a general conclusion where we have summarized the main points tackled in our study.

II. Methods and Materials.

A. Method.

1. Bell Hook's *Feminist Theory: From Margin To Center* (1984)

In order to discuss the issues of patriarchy, gender and resistance in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* and Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, we will borrow our theoretical auspices from *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984) written by the African American theorist and author Gloria Jean Watkins, known as bell hooks. The theory is basically critical to the feminist movement of the 1970s. It is set in twelve chapters in which hooks explores interesting topics on the feminist movement as the role of men in feminist struggle to end sexist oppression and stereotypes, and to enhance solidarity between women.

In the first chapter entitled *Black Women : Shaping Feminist Theory*, hooks points out that because feminism in the United States is built upon the ideology of liberal individualism, it only serves the interests of "a specific group of privileged white women" who have never taken into consideration that their own experiences may be different from that of masses of women. (hooks, 1984:2). According to hooks, masses of women are poor white and non-white women as Native American Indian, Hispanic, Asian and black women who represent the oppressed "silent majority" in the United States and who are considered all the time as unequal and inferior. (Ibid: 12)

In the second chapter entitled *Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression*, hooks highlights the fact that liberal feminists reinforce materialistic and patriarchal values instead of liberating women (Ibid: 22). She also notices the absence of an adequate definition of feminism that helps bourgeois feminists to maintain their dominance over the movement and its directions (Ibid: 26)

The Significance of Feminist Movement is an important chapter for our memoir where hooks explains that the western religious and philosophical thought is the basis of all oppressions in the USA, especially sexist oppression. (Ibid: 35). She adds that domination starts at home, within the family and is accepted as natural. She affirms that the white supremacist and patriarchal society "relies on the family to indoctrinate its members with values supportive of hierarchical control and coercive authority". (Ibid: 38)

Another chapter which is of great significance is *Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women* in which bell hooks acknowledges that "the male supremacist ideology" makes women believe that they are "valueless" and powerless. She also focuses on the fact that patriarchal society teaches women that they are "natural" enemies and that solidarity will never exist between them which is something untrue according to her. (Ibid: 43)

One more point of interest for our discussion is hooks' assumption in the fifth chapter: *Men: Comrades in struggle*, that liberal feminist who consider man as "the misogynist", "oppressor" and "the enemy" are wrong. She mentions in the same chapter how the anti-male stance alienates many women particularly non-white ones from feminist movement. (Ibid: 68). For her, men are not all enemies to women because there are men who actively struggle against sexism. She calls them comrades. (Ibid: 80)

Another interesting idea for our dissertation which bell hooks refers to in the sixth chapter: *Changing Perspectives on Power* is the fact that women are taught values set by the patriarchal structure from childhood. As a consequence, they tend to accept them and accept sexism (Ibid: 85). hooks adds that to resist exploitation and sexist oppression, feminist movement has to challenge the male-dominated society by encouraging women to believe that they are powerful and not victims. It also has to show women their powers and how to use them to end sexism. (Ibid: 92)

Work is also another serious topic which bell hooks deals with in the seventh chapter of her book. In fact, she thinks that Bourgeois feminists believe that work will liberate women from dependence on men which is something totally incorrect for her. She says: "Work outside the home, feminist activists declared, was the key to liberation. Work, they argued, would allow women to break the bonds of economic dependency on men, which would in turn enable them to resist sexist domination. When these women talked about work, they were equating it with high paying careers; they were not referring to low paying jobs (...) They were so blinded by their own experiences that they ignored the fact that a vast majority of women were already working outside the home, working in jobs that neither liberated them from dependence on men nor made them economically self-sufficient". (Ibid: 95). Then, bell hooks mentions that in order to spread feminist ideas, educated feminists are compelled to teach illiterate women about feminism through word of mouth and door- to- door contact because feminist

movement will be no mass-based if it uses academic language that is not accessible to masses of women. (Ibid: 112). For hooks, education as "the practice of freedom" will be real if feminists develop an educational methodology that addresses all women. (Ibid: 115)

In the ninth chapter, hooks refers to the issue of violence against women in a male-dominated society. She explains how men in the pre-capitalist world, control women and decide their fate but lose power later with capitalism. (Ibid: 120). So, to restore their masculinity and strength, they use domination at home. (Ibid: 122). This chapter is of great significance to our dissertation because hooks demonstrates how the patriarchal ideology supports violence and links it to love through mass media. She finds that it is difficult to end oppression because patriarchy teaches women that man's violence is a sign of care. (Ibid: 124). She also adds that patriarchy teaches women that to be a man is a synonym of strength and to be a woman is synonymous to weakness. (Ibid: 126)

Revolutionary parenting is also an interesting chapter, where hooks believes that unlike white middle class women who think that motherhood is an obstacle to women's liberation, black women enjoy to be mothers. (Ibid: 133). Patriarchy teaches women that they are inherently life-affirming nurturers. (Ibid: 135). So, hooks finds that it is important to rethink the nature of motherhood and to cease making it compulsory. (Ibid: 136). Men have to be taught that fatherhood is like motherhood. (Ibid: 137)

Bell hooks end her book with a last chapter entitled ***Feminist revolution: Development through struggle*** in which she sums up her whole theory. She talks about a feminist revolution, a struggle to transform society and establish a new order to end sexist oppression. (Ibid: 157). She asserts that feminists have to focus on reforms, through educating masses of women and men about feminist movement, fighting for equality, as well as improving women's social status instead of reinforcing and maintaining male-dominance. (Ibid: 158).

Finally, she invites feminist movement to address the experience of people on the periphery and the margin who suffer from sexist oppression. (Ibid: 161)

It follows from this that hooks' theoretical contribution to the understanding of feminist literature sounds more than relevant to our discussion of the issues of resistance and patriarchy. We will use the above mentioned concepts and ideas as ground to our discussion section.

B. Materials:

This section of our work comprises the historical background of both the USA of the Jim Crow era and post-independent Ghana. It also includes the biographies of Lorraine Hansberry and Ama Ata Aidoo, in addition to the synopsis of their plays *A Raisin in the Sun* and *The Dilemma of a Ghost*.

1. Historical Background of the USA of the Jim Crow era:

Lorraine Hansberry once said in a speech to young writers in 1959:

"I was born on the South Side of Chicago. I was born black and female. I was born in a depression after WWI, and came into my adolescence during another. While I was still in my teens, the first atom bombs were dropped on human beings at Nagasaki and Hiroshima. And by the time I was twenty-three years old, my government and that of the Soviet Union had entered actively into the worst conflict of nerves in human history- the Cold War. I have lost friends and relatives through cancer, lynching and war. I have been personally the victim of physical attack which was the off spring of racial and political hysteria"(Hansberry, 1959: 41)

When *A Raisin in the Sun* was first performed on Broadway in 1959, no one expected its success because Hansberry was young and black. It was published in more than thirty languages and quickly became an American classic. (Bloom, 2009:12). Some of the material of *A Raisin in the Sun* reflects Hansberry's personal life. Therefore, to understand the play, we, as researchers, have to refer to one of the most important events in the American history

which is the African American "Great Migration". In addition, we have to mention one of the ugliest and shameful chapters in the history of the USA which is The Jim Crow era.

After World War I, black southerners who served their country, returned to their homelands in the South and noticed that nobody was ready to recognize their sacrifice. They were faced with the same racial violence and threats of lynching that existed before the war. Jim Crow Laws deprived them from their right to vote. They were considered as subhumans and inferior. Moreover, they were kept separate from whites in public places, restaurants and schools. (Tolnay, 2003:215). Looking for a better life and a better education to their children and searching for economic stability, hundreds of thousands of them left the rural South to the urban North. The movement is known as The Great Migration (1919-1960). (Hoffmann, 2013:12)

Afro-Americans migrated into cities like Chicago, Detroit, New York and Philadelphia where they created churches, community organizations and one of the greatest movements in the history of American literature and art which is Harlem Renaissance known also as The New Negro Movement (1919-1937). Harlem in New York was a cultural mecca and a literary haven for writers as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Jessie Redmon Fauset, Joseph Seamon Cotter Jr and others who emerged to discuss themes as alienation, assimilation, pride and unity. It was also a center for political activism as The Back to Africa Movement with its leader Marcus Garvey and the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) with its co-founder du Bois. Though black migrants were welcomed to the North at the beginning, they later experienced the same hostility as in the South. Whites often accused them of being lazy, dangerous and ignorant because of their ways. On the basis of these stereotypes, they were blamed for a variety of social problems as alcoholism, crime and venereal disease. (Tolnay, 2003:218)

Furthermore, as more African Americans migrated to the North, northern whites doubled efforts to restrict residential and occupational opportunities to them. As a result, the state of Illinois took a measure of establishing racially restrictive covenant, a type of private restriction on housing integration in 1920s because of the influx of new southerners which put great pressure on the overcrowded South Side of Chicago.(Ibid: 221)

As it is already mentioned, the Great Migration was one of the most important demographic events in American history, in the sense that it contributed to deep social, economic and cultural changes in northern cities. (Ibid: 209) and the Jim Crow Era is one of the bloodiest chapters in the history of the USA which ended with the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act which restored African Americans to full citizenship in America.

2. Historical Background of Ghana:

At long last, the battle has ended. And thus Ghana, your beloved country is free forever (.....) And as I pointed out (.....) from now on, today, we must change our attitudes and our minds. We must realize that from now on we are no longer a colonial but free and independent people. (Nkrumah, 1957)

Ghana gained independence from the United Kingdom on 6 March 1957, as the first former colony in West Africa to achieve independence from a colonial power. This event changed the Gold Coast from colonial to post-colonial era. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president maintained that: Ghana's independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa. (Ibid,)

Thus, Nkrumah's success in leading the independence movement marked a subsequent independence in other African countries. Nkrumah who emerged as the national leader of the liberation movement sought to develop Ghana. The government gave importance to the political and economic changes and looked up to increase stability in the country. (Adewale, 2007) Due to the disappointment of citizens, a new constitution was adopted from July 1,

1960, changing Ghana from a parliamentary system with a Prime Minister to a Republican State ruled by a president. Indeed, this political transition continued until 1964 when a referendum changed the country into a one-party state. (Ibid)

In 1966, Nkrumah's regime was overthrown by the Ghanaian army. In fact, Nkrumah's rule was characterized by corruption, oppression and dictatorial practices. Despite the vast changes that were brought after the overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah, many problems remained underlying ethnic groups' division in the Ghanaian society such as the conflict between religious and social classes, and the economic and educational decline. As a consequence, successive new leaders faced many problems in Ghanaian nation. (Miller, 2009:14)

All these facts that marked post-independence era led the population to travel abroad, looking for a better future. However, the African immigrants took another dimension that was the creation of new subjects abroad and new cultural conflicts were portrayed in the writings of many African intellectuals such as Chinua Achebe, Flora Nwapa, Efua Sutherland and Ama Ata Aidoo.

Post-independent West Africa gave rise to the limited, rarely recognized and critically condemned female voices who offered a critique of colonial values on the African colonized subject. Indeed, African feminist critics highlight specific issues that women faced such as, the struggle for self-recognition in society, contradiction of motherhood, issues of barrenness, mother/child relationships and the struggle for economic independence.

3. Lorraine Hansberry's Life Experience:

The American playwright Lorraine Vivian Hansberry (1930-1965) was born in Chicago, Illinois to Augustus and Nanine Perry Hansberry. She was the youngest of four children. Her father who worked as a real estate broker was an activist who supported African American causes. Authors as Paul Robeson and W.E.B Du Bois were friends to the family and often

visited their home. When Hansberry was only eight, her parents moved to a white neighborhood and faced humiliation and violent racial segregation. After high school, Hansberry attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison for two years. She also took courses at Roosevelt College in Chicago and the University of Guadalajara in Mexico.

In 1950, she moved to New York City and took writing classes at the New School for Social Research. In addition, she had the chance to work for Paul Robeson's Freedom newspaper and became involved in a number of liberal causes especially in Africa. In 1953, she married Robert Nemiroff, a Jewish songwriter, but the couple divorced in 1964. During her short life, Hansberry wrote many plays as *The Drinking Gourd* (1959), *The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window* (1964), and *Les Blancs* (1960) but she is best known for *A Raisin in the Sun*, a play that made her the first black playwright and the youngest American to win the prestigious New York Drama Critics' Circle Award in 1959. Hansberry died of pancreatic Cancer in 1965 at the age of 34. After her death, Robert Nemiroff adapted many of her writings as *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* and *Les Blancs*.

4. Biographical background of Ama Ata Aidoo:

Born in 1940, to a wealthy royal family, Christina Ama Ata Aidoo is Ghana's best-known woman novelist, poet, dramatist and academic. Describing her early life she says "I came from a people who told stories" (Fallen, 2005:14). She attended the prestigious Wesley school. At the age of fifteen she decided to be a writer, and four years later she won a short competition story. Later on, she inscribed the University of Ghana in Legon where she wrote her first play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* which was successful due to its engaging in the complexities affecting the postcolonial Ghanaian family. Aidoo worked as a lecturer in many Universities in Europe, North America and Africa where she gained the recognition of African American writer Alice Walker who asserts: Aidoo has reaffirmed my faith in the

power of the written world to reach, to teach, to empower and to encourage. (Frias, 2003:8) In 1982, she became Ghana's Minister of Education.

Aidoo is the first woman to publish in a colonial language in this era. Her plays, short stories and novels depict a variety of social and political issues of her society as marriage, motherhood, women's education and their resistance to oppression. She states that she learnt her first lessons in feminism from African women. (Ibid: 10). Aidoo is an outstanding African writer who tackles feminist issues in her drama, she experienced the conflict between African and Western culture. In fact, she deals with the impact of colonialism, post-colonialism, and neo-colonialism on African women who struggle against the social norms and cultural subjugation of the African tradition. (Ibid: 12)

5. Synopsis of Lorraine Hansberry's Play:

What happened to a dream differed?

Does it dry up

Like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore-

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat

Or crust and sugar over-

Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

Like a heavy load

Or does it explode? (Hansberry, 1959:7)

Inspired by these words from Langston Hughes' poem **Harlem** (1951), Lorraine Hansberry wrote a three-act play entitled *A Raisin in the Sun*. It opened on Broadway at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre on March 11, 1959. (Bloom, 2009: 10)

A Raisin in the Sun is a play set in three acts and five scenes. It is about the Youngers, a poor African American family living in a tiny apartment in the Southside of Chicago. Act One,

Scene One opens with the members of the family talking about the insurance check that their mother Lena Younger or Mama is waiting for. In Act One, Scene Two, Walter Lee, Mama's elder son who works as a chauffeur tries hard to convince her to invest the money in liquor stores to get rich but Mama has one thing in her mind. She is determined to buy a house with a garden for her grandson Travis, Walter Lee's son. Mama in Act Two, Scene Two reveals that she has bought a house in Clybourne Park, a white neighborhood known for its hostility towards people of color. Beneatha, her daughter and Ruth, her daughter-in-law are shocked. Walter Lee, who feels that he has failed in life, accuses her of killing his dreams. Being afraid of losing him, she finally gives him the money he needs for his investment.

One week later, as they are preparing packages to move to their new home, a mysterious white man named Karl Linder visits them. He advises them to live within their own community and suggests to buy their residence in Clybourne Park at a financial gain because they are unwelcomed there. As a consequence, the whole family feels humiliated. Things worsen as Walter Lee learns that Willy Harris, a friend that he has trusted has gone with his money. The play closes with Mama who forgives her son. Being proud of their African heritage and looking for a better life, the Youngers are optimistic, and they decide to take the risk to move to their new home.

6. Synopsis of The Dilemma of a Ghost:

The Dilemma of a Ghost is a play written by Ama Ata Aidoo in 1964. It is set in five acts. It was first performed by the Student's Theatre, Legon, on the 12th, 13th and 14th of March, 1964, at the Open Air-Theatre, Commonwealth Hall, University of Ghana, Legon. (Aidoo, 1965:3)

The play tells the story of a young Ghanaian graduate named Ato Yawson who has just finished his studies in America and returns home with his Afro-American bride Eulalie. The

play begins with a prelude where the couple is optimistic. Eulalie who is an orphan is excited to see her new family and the land of her ancestors. She is happy to belong to somewhere again. The first act begins with Ato's whole family which is gathered to welcome him. His elder aunt, Akyere asks his mother EsiKom where is the sheep she is rearing for him. The latter responds that she has sold it to pay the bride price. When Ato heard them talking about his marriage, he revealed that he was married to Eulalie Rush, one week ago. Consequently, the whole family is shocked particularly EsiKom. They start to ask him about his wife's tribe and Ato explains that Eulalie or 'Lalie as he loves to call her, is from America and her ancestors are slaves. As a result, his mother breaks into violent weeping and his grandmother Nana feels ashamed and cursed because he has taken a wife from a "doubtful stock".

Throughout the play, Eulalie who was first excited to return to the source is now disappointed. She feels rejection and alienated, she sees her dreams fall apart. Her life turns into a nightmare because it is difficult to adapt herself to her new environment. She wonders if she has done the right thing to marry Ato. In Act Two, Eulalie who is aware that in African societies, marriage is subject for procreation feels pressure and asks her husband to have children but the latter suggests to postpone until they are ready. As a consequence, Eulalie is blamed of childlessness and barrenness. Furthermore, Ato's family comes to wash her stomach with a herbal concoction in Act Four. Eulalie feels miserable by the end of the play and Ato feels stuck between two different cultures and faces a dilemma between his family and his wife. The play ends in optimism. It closes with Esikom, Ato's mother who finally forgives and accepts Eulalie and leads her to her house.

III. Results

While handling Ama Ata Aidoo's 1964 play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* and Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*(1959), we have reached interesting findings as regards both authors, works and issues. First and foremost, we noticed that both authors have positively portrayed the female characters in their plays. In fact, to resist stereotypes that depict women as valueless and weak creatures who are emotional and unable to make decisions, both authors have created strong-minded and rebellious female characters who break customs, question and challenge the values set by the male-dominated society. Through their main characters Eulalie and Beneatha, they have rejected the traditional role of females.

Second, while fusing the theoretical auspices we have borrowed from *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* with both works under study, we have noticed that Bell hooks stresses that patriarchy teaches women that hierarchy and man's authority are natural. They have existed and will continue to exist. Besides, it teaches them that they are natural enemies and solidarity will never exist between them but as feminists, both Hansberry and Aidoo give positive images of women who love, help and support each other. They defy provoking stereotypes and clichés that are perpetuated through culture and portray EsiKom and Mama admiringly in their works. They describe them as warm, generous and good-hearted instead of depicting them as intrusive mothers-in-law who make life miserable for their daughters-in-law.

Patriarchy also teaches women that they are inherently nurturers but through the characters of Ruth and Eulalie, both Hansberry and Aidoo reject the idea that a woman's biology destines her only to motherhood. They challenge religion. According to them, it is possible for a woman to have a choice to control her own body and birth, and have an abortion to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Moreover, unlike bourgeois feminists, Lorraine Hansberry and Ama Ata Aidoo are convinced that the key to women's emancipation and liberation is education and not work. In their plays, they have described Eulalie and Bennie as educated women whose way of thinking disturb the male characters of both plays. They are feared and considered as a threat to tradition and man's position in society. Through these two strong characters, feminist activists Hansberry and Aidoo attempt to transform society and establish a new social order free from sexist oppression.

The third major finding concerns the kinship between both authors. In fact, though intellectuals Lorraine Hansberry and Ama Ata Aidoo come from two different cultural and social milieus, they dedicated themselves to the feminist cause because they both suffered from sexism and racism. If we look closer to their personal life and experiences, we will notice that on the one hand, civil rights and women's rights pioneer Lorraine Hansberry has encountered sexist oppression and racism in a white supremacist society. When she was eight, her family moved to a white neighbourhood and faced hostility and alienation. On the other hand, Ama Ata Aidoo suffered from discrimination throughout her career as a female scholar and writer. According to her, Ghanaian culture sees women as fit for tending the home and bearing children and a strong woman is suspected and feared and put back in her place.

IV. Discussion

To start our discussion, it is worth to remember that women in general and black women in particular have experienced throughout history many forms of alienation, discrimination, rejection and oppression by men. As a consequence, many white and black feminists have used their pen to denounce this injustice towards them. Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1965) and Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) are among those masterpieces which reflect the above mentioned issues. The discussion of the issues under study are undertaken through two chapters. The first chapter discusses family and patriarchy while the second one investigates the theme of patriarchal politics versus women's resistance as reflected in both works under scrutiny.

Chapter One: Family and Patriarchy

a. Walter Lee's and Ato's Initiation into Patriarchy

To begin with, *A Raisin in the Sun* is not only about a family experiencing intense hostility in the South Side of Chicago during the 1950s. It also centers around three women who are Mama or Lena Younger, Ruth, Walter Lee's wife and Bennie or Beneatha who suffer from oppression within a racist, capitalist, and patriarchal white society but what is patriarchy? To answer this question, we, as researchers are compelled to look for its meaning to understand its impact on women in both plays.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, patriarchy is "a system of society or government in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line". In her chapter entitled *Feminist Movement to End Violence*, Bell hooks describes patriarchy "as one in which theoretically men are the powerful, women the powerless; adults the powerful, children the powerless; white people the powerful, black people and other non-white people are the powerless." (Hooks, 1984:118). She also adds that

in the pre-capitalist society "patriarchy allowed all men to completely rule women in their families, to decide their fate, to shape their destiny. Men could freely batter women with no fear of punishment. They could decide whom their daughters were to marry, whether they would read or write" (Ibid: 120).

This domination and oppression of women by men are depicted in both Hansberry's and Aidoo's plays but before dealing with them, it is important to say that although the two authors and the women in both plays belong to the black race, the history of African American women who live in a society dominated by white people is totally different from that of African ones. So, the way African American women are dominated is quite different from the way African ones are oppressed. However, patriarchy seems to be the same in both plays.

In fact, in Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, though Mama is described in Act One, Scene One as a strong matriarch who exercises power over the Younger family members, it appears through the play that she has no doubt that Walter Lee, her elder son is the patriarch of the family, particularly after the death of her husband Big Walter. This is shown in Act Two, Scene Two when Mama realizes that she was probably reckless and made an unwise decision through buying a house in a neighborhood that is hostile to people of colour. Being afraid of losing her son, she finally gives him the money he needs for his investment. She says:

Mama: listen to me, now. I say I been wrong, son.(...) Monday morning, I want you to take this money and take three thousand dollars and put it in a saving account for Beneatha's medical schooling. The rest you put in a checking account, with your name on it. And from now on, any penny that come out of it or that go in it, is for you to look after. For you to decide. (She drops her hands a little helplessly). It ain't much, but it's all I got in the world and I'm putting it in your hands. I'm telling you to be the head of this family from now on like you supposed to be. (Hansberry, 1959:107)

On the other hand, the character of Ato Yawson or Ebow in Ama Ata Aidoo's play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* is always reminded by the members of the Odumna clan that he is a

man and the role of his wife Eulalie Rush is to obey him. This is apparent in Act Three where EsiKom, Ato's mother brings two bundles wrapped in sack cloth to Eulalie and Ato asks what is inside. She then responds: Can not your wife herself go and see? After all, these are all women's affairs. Or do our masters, the Scholars, know what goes on in their wives' kitchen? (Aidoo, 1965:31)

Moreover, as Eulalie throws away the snails her mother-in-law brings to her, Ato tries to defend her by saying that she does not know how to cook them. Consequently, EsiKom says:

Esi: And what, my son? Do you not know how to eat them now? What kind of a man are you growing into? Are your wife's taboos yours? Rather your taboos should be hers. (Ibid: 33)

In Act Four, Petu, Ato's elder uncle arrives with Akroma, his younger uncle. They ask him to come with his wife Eulalie near the Stool Rooms but before, Ato has to join them first because he is a man. Petu says: But you are a man. So, you must come and drink with the men first. (Ibid: 41)

b. Mama and EsiKom and the Teaching of Subordination.

In the third chapter of her book, bell hooks describes how western philosophy and religion are the basis of "sexist oppression". She also explains that patriarchy and domination starts within the family and is accepted as "natural". She says that the white supremacist and patriarchal society "relies on the family to indoctrinate its members with values supportive of hierarchical control and coercive authority" (Hooks: 38). In Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, though Mama is black, she shares the same capitalist and materialistic values as the other white citizens. She wants to buy a house with a garden for her grandson Travis and her son wants to invest money in liquor stores to get wealthy. Mama is also a very religious woman for whom family is sacred. In a conversation about God in Act One, Scene One, she slaps her

daughter's face hard because she says that God is an idea that she is not ready to accept.

Moreover, she even forces her to say that God exists:

Beneatha: Mama, you don't understand. It's all a matter of ideas, and God is just one idea I don't accept. It's not important. I am not going out and be immoral or commit crimes because I don't believe in God. I don't even think about it. It's just that I get tired of Him getting credit for all the things the human race achieves through its stubborn effort. There simply is no blasted God. There is only man and it is he who makes miracles.

(Mama absorbs this speech, studies her daughter and rises slowly and crosses to Beneatha and slaps her powerfully across the face. After, there is only silence and the daughter drops her eyes from her mother's face, and Mama is very tall before her.)

Mama: now, you say after me, in my mother's house, there is still God.

(Hansberry: 53-54)

In Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, family and African religious beliefs are also the basis of sexist oppression. Though there was political and economic development in Ghana, the Akan way of life has not changed through time and the basic social unit of the Akan people is still the extended family. A man pays a bride price and gains control over his wife who enters his family unit. In addition, the Akan religion is centered on respect of the dead and the Akan people to whom Ama Ata Aidoo belongs to, believe that their ancestors are watching over the livings and punish those who break traditions. (Valestuk & Moss, 2000:89)

This is why when Ato told his mother that it is possible to control birth, she answers:

Esi: Yoo, if it can be done, do it .But I am sure any woman who does it will die by the anger of the ghosts of her fathers or at least, she will never get the children when she wants them. (Aidoo: 51)

Lena Younger or Mama in Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* is taught patriarchal values. She is socialized from birth to accept hierarchy and authoritarian rule. Consequently, she is determined that children have to obey parents and respect adults. She thinks that violence within the family is sometimes needed and it is a sign of love and care. She also believes that Walter Lee's authority is totally natural since he is the male of the family. Throughout the play, she is always on his side and covers his mistakes. When he lost all the money she gave

him at the end of the play, she was the first one to forgive him because the love of the family and respect of the elder were more important for her than money. However, it was difficult for Beneatha, her daughter who is considered in *A Raisin in the Sun* as Hansberry's voice to forgive him because she is convinced that he is selfish. Mama is angry with her because she insulted her brother instead of showing him respect. This is apparent in Act Three, where Beneatha says:

Beneatha: that is not a man. That is nothing but a toothless rat.

Mama: yes, death done come in this here house. (She is nodding, slowly, reflectively). Done come walking in my house on the lips of my children. You what supposed to be my begging again? You, what supposed to be my harvest. (To Beneatha). You, you mourning your brother?

Beneatha:he's not a brother of mine

Mama:what you say?

Beneatha: I said that individual in that room is no brother of mine.

Mama:that's what I thought you said. You feeling like you better than he is today? (Beneatha doesn't answer). Yes? What you tell him a minute ago? That he wasn't a man?Yes? (...)Well, who give you the priviledge?

Beneatha: be on my side at once! You saw what he just did, Mama! You saw him, down on his knees. Wasn't it you who taught me to despise any man who would do that? Do what he's going to do?

Mama: yes, I taught you that. Me and your daddy. But I taught, I taught you something else too ... I thought I taught you to love him. (Hansberry: 144)

In Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, women are taught to serve and show respect to men because the Akan society is male-governed. Their role in society is to cook, to clean and bear children. Though the eldest members in the Akan societies are highly respected, Nana, Ato's grandmother has no authority because the authority in a clan is not the oldest woman but rather her brother. (Valestuk & Moss: 88)

For the Fanti tribe to which Ato's family belongs to, marriage is very important and having children is the best way for a woman to secure a place in society but through the two village women's gossip in Act Two, we deduce that Monka, Ato's sister is neither married nor has children. She is also uneducated because the Fanti tribe does not allow females to have access

to education. Aidoo belongs to the Fanti tribe too but fortunately for her, her father encouraged her to become educated. (Ibid: 87) He taught her the famous words of the Ghanaian educator James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey: if you educate a man, you educate an individual. If you educate a woman, you educate a nation. (Aidoo: To Be a Woman: 259)

Monka as a female character is depicted throughout the play as a mean girl especially towards her brother and his wife. She is passive and the sole role she knows is to bring chairs during her family's gatherings, cook to them and execute orders without even complaining. She never calls Eulalie by her name. To mock her, she uses words as "Ato's morning shine" and "wonder." Monka is a perfect example of how women are oppressed by men in the Akan culture. Her mother, EsiKom has done nothing for her but has done everything for Ato. She has sent him to learn in America and has paid the bride price for his marriage. For EsiKom, cooking and serving men are women's duties. In Act Three, She says to Ato when Eulalie accepts the snails she brings to her:

Esi: Tell her I am glad she likes them...Now; I think I will go and prepare the evening meal. Monka will cook you and your wife some rice and stew. If you need anything, you come and tell us or just shout for any of the children. (Aidoo: 31)

From all what is said above, we as researchers, notice that by supporting male-dominance, Mama in *A Raisin in the Sun* and EsiKom in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* unconsciously accept sexist oppression and support the patriarchal structure that uses religion and family as means to maintain its values. bell hooks in her chapter *The Significance of Feminist Movement*, says that " in most societies, family is an important kinship structure, a common ground for people who are linked by blood ties, heredity, or emotive bonds; an environment of care and affirmation, especially for the very young and the very old who may be unable to care for themselves; a space for communal sharing of recourses. However, she argues that in the American society, sexist oppression distorts the positive function of family

and family exists as a space where people are socialized from birth to accept hierarchical and authoritarian rule. (Hooks: 36)

c. Walter Lee and Ato embrace Patriarchy and oppress Ruth, Bennie and 'Ialie.

In Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* Ruth is another female character who is different from Beneatha and Mama. She is portrayed in Act One, Scene One as a woman who is "about thirty". In spite of the fact that "she was a pretty girl" in the past, it is apparent now that "disappointment has already begun to hang in her face" (Hansberry: 27). Ruth is a modern woman who works and smokes cigarettes but always feels tired, valueless, and lost. It seems that work does not liberate her because she is still poor.

Her husband, Walter Lee underestimates her efforts to make their family happy. Throughout the play, he makes her feel that she is responsible of his own failure in life. It seems that something is broken between them. This is apparent in the way they talk to each other. To hurt her and make her feel that she is worthless, he uses verbal abuse. He says in a conversation with her about his ambitions: "we one group of men tied to a race of women with small minds." (Ibid: 38). According to Bell hooks, the "male supremacist ideology" encourages women to believe that they are powerless and can obtain value only by relating to men (Hooks: 43). She also adds that: sexist ideology teaches women that to be a female is to be a victim. (Ibid: 45)

Ruth's husband, Walter Lee is depicted in Act One, Scene One as an "intense young man" who is "inclined to quick nervous movements and erratic speech, and always in his voice there is a quality of indictment". (Hansberry: 28). This is probably due to the fact that he lives in a racist society that alienates him. bell hooks pretends in one of her chapters entitled *Men : Comrades in Struggle* that men in the white racist society are not equal and non-white men especially blacks are marginalized because of their race and their class. As a

consequence, they oppress black women and reinforce the patriarchal values instead of asking for their rights. (Hooks: 74).

Walter Lee is a victim of a capitalist society that gives importance to materialistic values. In the daily life, he is subjected to all kinds of oppression and his crime is the fact that he is poor. He lives in a small apartment in the overcrowded Southside of Chicago and works as a chauffeur. His family shares one bathroom with other neighbours of the same floor and outside their neighborhood, they face alienation and segregation. In addition, the fact that his son Travis has no bedroom and sleeps on the sofa in the living room kills him inside. He is frustrated and feels that he is less than a man because he cannot provide a better life for his family. In Act One, Scene One, he says to Ruth:

Walter : this morning, I was lookin' in the mirror and thinking about it...I'm thirty-five years old; I been married eleven years and I got a boy who sleeps in the living room and all I got to give him is stories about how rich white people live...(Hansberry: 37)

Walter Lee is depicted throughout the play as a violent patriarch who drinks alcohol and who is yelling all the time. He is also authoritarian. In Act One, Scene One, Ruth asks him during breakfast to eat his eggs because they are getting cold. As a reaction, he slams the table, jumps up and says: damn my eggs. Damn all the eggs that ever was! (Ibid). In Act Two, Scene One Ruth wants to know where was he when he is drunk, he responds:

Walter: (Yelling) Don't start!

Ruth: Start what?

Walter: Your nagging! Where was I? Who was I with? How much money did I spend? (Ibid: 88)

Mama considers Walter Lee's authority as natural since he is the man of the household and his violence as a sign of love and care. For her, he has taken all the money she gave him because he wants to make their life better. bell hooks contends in *Feminist Movement to End Violence* that women who are raised in patriarchal homes, believe that a person in authority has the right to use force to maintain authority. (Hooks: 119) Furthermore, she thinks that it is

difficult to end violence because the patriarchal structure teaches women that man's violence is a sign of love and care and that eliminating violence will lead to the loss of love. (Ibid: 124)

In Ama Ata Aidoo's play, though the Ghanaian graduate Ato Yawson seems at first different, he becomes later as selfish and violent as Walter Lee and even worse. In spite of the fact that he promises to support his wife, he acts like a coward by the end of the play. Ato is portrayed as a man who is culturally unstable. He wants to please his wife and his family at the same time but he fails. His wife, the Afro-American graduate Eulalie Rush is totally different from his mother EsiKom and his sister Monka. Ato met Eulalie in a University Campus in New York. He asked her for marriage and she became his wife. On the one hand, she was excited to go to Ghana, meet her family-in-law and see the land of her ancestors, but on the other hand, she was afraid of being deprived of her independence once there. This is shown when she said to Ato: I suppose African women don't talk? (Aidoo: 8)

As it is already said, Ato swears to love and support his wife. He also promises her to postpone having children until she is ready but Eulalie is anxious because she knows that the African culture is different from the western one. Ato reassures her and says:

Ato: (...) Children, who wants them? In fact, they will make me jealous. I couldn't bear seeing you love someone else better than you do me. Not yet darling, and not even my own children.

Eu: You really sure?

Ato: (...) My darling, we are going to create a paradise, with or without children.

Eu: Darling, some men do mind a lot.

Ato: (vehemently) Look at me, we shall postpone having children for as long you would want

Eu: But still, I understand in Africa...

Ato: ...Eulalie Rush and AtoYawson shall be free to love each other, eh? This is all that you understand or should understand about Africa. (Ibid: 10)

However, once in Ghana and among his people, Ato finds himself in a difficult situation. He is stuck between his wife who is too radical and his family who is not ready to accept her as a daughter-in-law especially after they heard that she is a descendant of slaves.

Eulalie is unable to embrace her husband's culture and becomes a victim and an easy pray for every member of Ato's family. Even the two village women who comment on the Yawson's troubles are hostile to and unfair with her. In a conversation about Ato in Act Two, they say about her:

1STW: (...) But where is his wife?

2ND W : I do not know my sister

But I heard them say that his mother

Had gone to knock the door of Yaw Mensa

To ask for the hand of his daughter for him.

1STW: Oh, he would have had a good woman

I saw that girl when she came home last Christmas.

School has not spoilt her, I think

2NDW: And that is the sad part of it, my sister.

He has not taken this girl

Whom we all know and like,

But has gone for this

Black-white woman.

A stranger and a slave (Ibid: 22)

Rejected and alienated by Ato's people, Eulalie feels pressure and asks Ato to start a family.

As a reaction, he accuses her of being emotional. He says in Act Two:

Ato: Heavens, women! They are always getting feelings. First you got the feeling you needed a couple of years to settle down and now you are obviously getting a contradictory feeling. (Ibid: 27)

Ato wants to be a loving husband but he has forgotten to tell Eulalie how having children is important to his people. In fact, in Akan society, a woman is measured by her success in bearing children and a woman who is unable to conceive is among the most despised creatures.(Valestuk & Moss :88) This is shown in Act Four, where the first neighbour woman who is childless says about Eulalie:

1st W: Barren! . . . If it is real barrenness, Then, oh stranger-girl,

Whom I do not know, I weep for you. For I know what it is,

To start a marriage with barrenness. (...) My people have a lusty desire to see the tender skin on the top of a child's scalp (...) Your machines, my stranger-girl, cannot go on an errand. They have no hands to dress you when you are dead...But you have

one machine to buy now. That which will weep for you, stranger-girl. You need that most. For my world which you have run to enter, is most unkind to the barren (...) Yes, my young woman, I shall remember you. I shall remember you in the hours of the night - In my sleep, In my sleepless sleep. (Ibid: 39-40)

Blamed for barrenness, Eulalie feels angry and betrayed because her husband has lied to her. She insults his people and their customs. As a result, he smacks her on her cheek by the end of the play:

Eu: (...)Have they appreciation for anything but their own prehistoric existence? More savage than dinosaurs(..).

Ato: Look here. I won't have you insult...

Eu: ...'My people.' Add it, Moses. I shall say anything I like. I am right tired. I must always do things to please you and your folks... What about the sort of things I like?Aren't they gotten any meaning on this rotten land?

Ato: (with false forcefulness) When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

Eu: (Contemptuously) I thought you could do better than cliches. Since you can preach so well, can't you preach to your people to try and have just a little bit of understanding for the things they don't know anything about yet?

Ato: Shut up! How much does the American negro know?

Eu: Do you compare these bastards, these stupid narrow-minded savages with us? Do you dare ...? (Like the action of lightning, Ato smacks her on the cheek and goes out of the house going by the path on the left ...) (Ibid: 47-48)

Like Eulalie, Beneatha in Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* feels also betrayed by her brother Walter Lee who took the money that Mama, her mother kept for her studies. In Act Three, she says to Joseph Asagai, her Nigerian suiter:

Beneatha: Asagai, while I was sleeping in that bed in there, people went out and took the future right out of my hands! And nobody asked me, nobody consulted me. They just went out and changed my life. (Hansberry: 134)

In spite of the fact that Beneatha is an independent and a strong woman, she becomes her brother's victim. Unlike Mama, Walter Lee has never encouraged her to fulfill her dream to become a doctor. He says:

Walter: Who the hell told you had to be a doctor? If you so crazy 'bout messing 'round with sick people, then go be a nurse like other women or just get married and be quiet...(Ibid: 41)

Walter Lee thinks that it is time for his younger sister Bennie to forget her dream and make sacrifices to help the family. He says to her:

Walter: (...) me and Ruth done made some sacrifices for you. Why can't you do something for the family? (Ibid: 40)

From all what is said above, we conclude that patriarchy is a system where men are socialized to act violently and sexually. It is the basis of sexist oppression and racism. It teaches women that they are weak, valueless and victims while man is central, powerful and authoritarian.

Chapter Two: Patriarchal Politics vs Women's Resistance

a. Resisting Patriarchy through Education

As it is already mentioned in the first chapter of our discussion, patriarchy is the basis of sexist oppression. It teaches women that they are natural enemies, emotional, worthless and inherently nurturers. According to Bell hooks, bourgeois feminism reinforces patriarchal values instead of liberating women from men. As a reaction, black women and other oppressed groups in the USA withdraw themselves from feminist thought because it is full of contradictions. (Hooks, 1984:22-23)

Moreover, bell hooks thinks that though patriarchal tyranny persists, black women, as well as other groups of women who live daily in oppressive situations develop strategies to resist it. (Ibid: 10). In the sixth chapter of her book, she is convinced that women, even the most oppressed ones do exercise some power. She adds with reference to Elizabeth Janeway's work entitled *Powers of the Weak* that the most significant forms of power held by the weak is "the refusal to accept the definition of oneself that is put forward by the powerful". (Ibid: 90) So, according to Bell hooks, women's personal power to reject the powerful definition of their reality is an act of resistance and strength. (Ibid)

In fact, to transform society, both feminists Lorraine Hansberry and Ama Ata Aidoo attempt to resist patriarchy through questioning and criticizing its values in their plays *A Raisin in the Sun* and *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. As a member of an oppressed group who lives in a racist and white supremacist society, Hansberry challenges the patriarchal structure by dealing with daring and sensitive issues such as abortion, religion and the institution of marriage. Through the character of Beneatha, Lorraine Hansberry rejects the idea that women are weak, passive and unassertive.

Beneatha as a female character in *A Raisin in The Sun* is curiously different from Lena Younger, her mother and Ruth, her sister-in-law. She is described in Act One, Scene One as a young woman who is "about twenty". "She is not pretty as her sister-in-law, but her lean, almost intellectual face has a handsomeness of its own" (Hansberry, 1959:38). Unlike her mother and Ruth who tend to accept patriarchy without protest, Beneatha is rebellious and her views sometimes shock the members of her family as her ideas about religion that we mentioned before, in the first chapter of our discussion. Beneatha is courted by the rich African American George Murchinson. Although he is a good-looking man who has a car and takes her to nice places, she rejects him in Act Two, Scene Two because he does not encourage her intellectual abilities but rather considers her as a sexual object. She is attracted to Joseph Asagai, a Nigerian student who courts her too. He asks her to marry him and go to Africa by the end of the play.

Beneatha has the privilege of having access to education. She is aware of many things and against some patriarchal values as the institution of marriage. Ruth asks her in Act One, Scene One if she is going to marry her suiter, George Murchinson. She answers: listen, I'm going to be a doctor. I'm not worried about who I'm going to marry yet, if I ever get married.(Ibid :52-53) This shows that she has no intention to get married because she has other preoccupation. Beneatha is also conscious that the male-dominated and capitalist society she belongs to oppresses poor people. bell hooks shares the same opinion with her. In her chapter entitled *Re-thinking the Nature of Work*, she mentions that capitalist patriarchy depends on the exploitation of underclass groups for its survival. (Hooks: 101) Furthermore, Beneatha is a strong woman who is proud of her African heritage and hates "assimilationist Negroes". When Ruth, her sister-in-law asked her in Act Two, Scene One what did the word assimilationist mean? She answered: it means someone who is willing to give up his own

culture and submerge himself completely in the dominant and in this case oppressive culture! (Hansberry: 83).

As it is already said in the first chapter of our dissertation, Beneatha as a female character is Hansberry's mouthpiece. As a feminist, she wants to become a doctor first and then get married. She is independent and has a strong character. George Murchinson and her brother Walter Lee in the play are very critical to her way of thinking except Joseph Asagai who encourages her to fulfill her dream. This proves that men are not all enemies to women's emancipation. Bell hooks mentions this fact in the fifth chapter of her book. She argues that men are not all oppressors and misogynists because there are men who struggle for women's liberation. (Hooks: 80) Bennie or Beneatha is young, clever and very proud of her African origins. When Joseph Asagai brought to her from Nigeria some records and colourful robes, she was excited and said: oh, Asagai! You got them for me! How beautiful. (Hansberry: 63). Moreover, in a conversation about the African heritage and the Ashanti empires, George Murchinson says to annoy her.

George: let's face it, baby, your heritage is nothing but a bunch of ragged-assed spirituals and some grass huts!

Beneatha: see there...You are standing there in your splendid ignorance talking about people who were the first to smelt iron on the face of the earth! The Ashanti were performing surgical operations when the English were still tattooing themselves with blue dragons! (Ibid : 83).

As Lorraine Hansberry, Beneatha is also aware and preoccupied by the struggle of African countries against colonialism. In a conversation about Africa in Act One, Scene Two, Mama says:

Mama: (...) why should I know anything about Africa?

Beneatha: Why do you give money at church for the missionary work?

Mama: Well, that's to help save people.

Beneatha: You mean save them from heathenism

Mama :(Innocently) Yes.

Beneatha:I'm afraid they need more salvation from the British and the French. (Ibid: 59)

In Ama Ata Aidoo's play, the character who is closer to Beneatha and has many qualities in common with her is Eulalie Rush, Ato's wife. As Beneatha, Eulalie is Ama Ata Aidoo's voice in *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. Throughout the play, she is depicted as a strong and a rebellious woman whose behaviour shocks Ato's family. Everyone fears and suspects her because she acts like a man and this is against nature according to the members of the Odumna clan. Monka, Eulalie's sister-in-law, says about her in Act Three:

Monka :

She reminds me of the words in the song
She is strange,
She is unusual.
She would have done a murder
Has been a man.
But to prevent
Such an outrage
They made her a woman! (Aidoo, 1965:33)

EsiKom, Ato's mother is rearing sheep for him but sold it later to pay the bride price. She thought that her daughter-in-law is like the other women of her tribe but Eulalie is too different. She is an Afro-American who grew up in Harlem, New York. Unlike the other women of the Fanti tribe, she is educated and strong-minded. Throughout the play, she is described as a modern woman who smokes cigarettes and drinks whiskey and gin. However, in the Akan Culture, only men are allowed to smoke or drink alcohol. In Act Four, Ato says to her when he saw a glass of whiskey in her hand:

Ato: (...) Sweetie Pie, don't drink too much.

Eu: But I have not been drinking at all.

Ato: This looks too strong.

Eu: I needed it so badly. I was getting rather nervy when I came back.

Ato: Well, now that I am back I don't think you need it, do you, Sweetie Pie?

Eu: Just let me finish this. (Voices behind the door to the right.)

Ato: I think some of my people are coming. (Anxiously) Let me put your drink in the room for you.

Eu: Why?

Ato: I don't think they'll approve.

Eu: (Taking a sip) Nonsense. (Voices draw nearer.)

Ato: (Trying to take the glass from her) But 'Lalie, don't let them find you in the very act.

Eu: (Sarcastically) is this a taboo? (Ibid: 41-42).

In addition, Eulalie works and spends her money in buying clothes and machines. This is probably due to the fact that she grew up in a white supremacist and capitalist society that gives importance to materialistic values. In New York, she was poor but it seems that even in Africa, work has not liberated her entirely. Though she is financially autonomous, to be a full woman, she has to be able to conceive in order to be accepted in her husband's community. The two village women, who serve as a chorus commenting in the action of the play, say about Eulalie:

2nd W: [. . .] Esikom is not better than she was.

1stW: Why?

2nd W: They never ask her 'Why' It is the young man's wife.

1st W: What has she done now?

2nd W: Listen, I hear she swallows money as a hen does corn.

1stW: Oh, Esikom?

2nd W: One must sit down if one wants to talk of her affairs. They say that the young man gets no penny to buy himself a shirt... But the strangest thing is that she too works.

1st W: Then how does she spend all the money?

2ndW: By buying cigarettes, drinks, clothes and machines.

1st W: Machines?

2nd W: Yes, machines. Her water must be colder than hailstone. I heard it said in the market place. Monka's teeth were set on edge for drinking water in her house. And her food never knows wood fire. [. . .] As for you, my sister! She uses machines. This woman uses machines for doing everything. (Ibid: 37-38)

As the character of Beneatha in Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun*, Eulalie is eager to know everything about the source Africa. She seemed very excited to see Ghana when she was talking to Ato at the University Campus in the USA. She says:

Eu: (...) I'm optimistic, Native boy. To belong to somewhere again...Sure, this must be bliss.

Ato: Poor Sweetie Pie.

Eu: But I will not be poor again, will I? I'll just be 'Sweetie Pie'. Waw! The palm trees, the azure sea, the sun and golden beaches... (Ibid: 9)

Though Eulalie belongs to an oppressed group who suffers from racism and discrimination, her deceased mother taught her to be strong and proud of the colour of her skin. In her soliloquy in Act Two, Eulalie is talking to her mother.

Eulalie: (...) Ma've come to the very source. I've come to Africa and I hope that where're you are, you sort of know and approve. "Lalie", you shall not stop. Chicken, you must have it all.' And I had it all, Ma, even graduation. 'You'll be swank enough to look a white trash in the eye and tell him to go to hell.' Maain't I telling the whole of the States to go swing! Congress, Jew and white trash, from Manhattan to Harlem...'Sugar, don't let them do you in.' Ma, I didn't. 'Sugar, don't sort of curse me and your Pa every morning you look your face in the mirror and see your face black (...) 'Sugar, the dear God made you just that black and you canna does nothing about it.' (Ibid: 24)

b. Religious Thought vs Birth Control

Patriarchy teaches women that they are inherently nurturers. (Hooks: 135) As sexual objects, their role in society is to give birth to children but Hansberry re-examines this idea and criticizes religion in her play *A Raisin in the Sun* through the character of Ruth, Walter Lee's wife and Travis' mother. In Act One, Scene Two, Mama who lost her baby Claude because of poverty tells her son Walter Lee that Ruth is expecting another child and thinking to have an abortion. She wants him to act like his father but he does nothing. As a reaction, Mama who represents patriarchy and religious thought says:

Mama: well, well, son, I'm waiting to hear you say something... (She waits) I'm waiting to hear how you be your father's son. Be the man he was... (Pause. The silence shouts) your wife says she going to destroy your child. And I'm waiting to hear you talk like him and say we a people who give children life, not who destroys them. (Hansberry: 77)

Instead of answering her, Walter Lee picks up his keys and his coat and walks out. So, Mama says bitterly: "you are a disgrace to your father's memory." (Ibid)

Through the character of Ruth, Lorraine Hansberry challenges the idea that the sole role of women is to give birth to children. She thinks that a woman can control birth and have an abortion if she does not want to have a child.

The Ghanaian author Ama Ata Aidoo also criticizes patriarchy in her play *The Dilemma of a Ghost* through dealing with the issue of religion, barrenness and the myth of a childless woman in the Akan culture. After Ato Yawson's marriage with the African American graduate Eulalie Rush, the whole family expects that in few months, Eulalie will be pregnant and give birth to a baby. It is obvious since marriage is a subject for procreation and her role in life as a woman is to be a mother but Eulalie decides to postpone having children until she is ready. Through attempting to control birth, she challenges religion and the patriarchal structure that say that women are inherently nurturers. As a consequence, she is blamed of barrenness. In Act Four, Petu, Ato's elder uncle says to Akroma, his younger uncle:

Petu: (...) When two people marry, everyone expects them to have children. Or I am lying, Akroma?

Akroma: How can you be lying? It is very true.

Petu: Therefore, my nephew, if they do not have children, then there is something wrong. You cannot tell us it is nothing. There is no disease in this world but it has a cure. It may cost a great deal, but money is worthless if it is not used to seek for people. If it is your wife...

Ato: (Aggressively) Why do you say it is my wife's fault? (Aidoo: 44)

Eulalie is miserable in Act Five. She feels betrayed because she is blamed alone for barrenness. She says to her husband:

Eu: (...) why don't you tell them you promised me we would start having kids when I wanted them?

Ato: They won't understand.

Eu: Ha! And so you make them think that I am incapable of having kids to save your own face?

Ato: It isn't that.

Eu: Then what is it?

Ato: They simply won't understand that one should begin having children when one is prepared for them. (Ibid: 47)

Moreover, Eulalie does not understand why Ato's family interferes in every detail of her life. She says to Ato: (...) Who married me, you or your god dam people? (Ibid)

When Ato finally told his mother that Eulalie was not childless and if they wanted children, she would give birth to some, this latter who is very spiritual found great difficulty to understand because she is taught that only God creates life. She says in Act Five:

Esi:Ei, everyone should come and listen to this. (She walks round in all attitudes indicating surprise.) I have not heard anything like this before...Human beings deciding when they must have children? (To Ato) Meanwhile, where is God (Ato is confused since he does not know how to reply to this) ...Yet only a woman who is barren will tell her neighbours such a tale. (Ibid : 51)

She also adds: Why did you not tell us that you and your wife are gods and you can create your own children when you want them? (Ibid)

c. Mama and EsiKom Defy Stereotypes

In the first chapter of *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, bell hooks tells how she was astonished when she entered her first women's studies class at Stanford University in the early 1970s and found that white women were happy to be together for the first time.(Hooks :11) This is probably due to the fact that the patriarchal politics teaches them that they are natural enemies and solidarity and unity will never exist between them. (Ibid: 43) As a black woman, hooks has never known a life where women have not been together or not helped, protected and loved each other. (Ibid: 11)

Hansberry thinks that through sisterhood and unity, women can resist patriarchy. *A Raisin in the Sun* is full of examples where women are not enemies and where solidarity really exists between them. Throughout the play, Mama who is supposed to be a monster-in-law, acts as a second mother towards Ruth. She is always kind with and cares about her. Ruth and Mama

are poor and work as maids but with the cheque that Mama received, she buys a house with a garden to help her to have a better life. In Act Two, Scene One, Mama says to Travis:

Mama: well, what you think your grandmamma gone and done with that money?

Travis: I don't know, Grandmamma.

Mama: she went out and she bought you a house! You glad about the house? It's going to be yours when you get to be a man.

Travis: I always wanted to live in a house. (Hansberry: 92)

Moreover, to save Ruth's marriage, Mama has a serious conversation with Walter Lee because she is afraid that he is seeing another woman. She says in Act One, Scene Two:

Mama: seem like you getting to a place where you always tied up in some kind of knot about something. But if anybody asks you just yell at 'em and bust out the house and go out and drink somewhere. Walter Lee, people can't live like that. Ruth's a good, patient girl in her way, but you getting to be too much. Boy, don't make the mistake of driving that girl away from you.

Walter: why, what she do for me?

Mama: she loves you. (Ibid: 74)

Unlike Walter Lee, Mama encourages Beneatha, her daughter to fulfill her dream and become a doctor though she is sometimes harsh with her. Ruth asks her what is she going to do with the insurance cheque she has received, Mama answers: I ain't rightly decided. (Thinking. She speaks now with emphasis) some of it got to be put away for Beneatha and her schoolin' and ain't nothing going to touch that part of it. Nothing. (Ibid: 47)

Ama Ata Aidoo also challenges the patriarchal politics in her play *The Dilemma of a Ghost*. Through the character of EsiKom, she stresses that solidarity may exist between women. In fact, though Eulalie acted badly with her by refusing her gifts and insulting her people and their costumes, EsiKom forgives her and accepts her as a daughter by the end of the play. In a conversation with her son Ato, EsiKom says:

Esi: (...) And we must be careful with your wife You tell us her mother is dead. If she had any tenderness, Her ghost must be keeping watch over All which happen to her. (There is a short silence, then clearly to Eulalie.) Come my child. (Aidoo, 1964: 52)

Though feminists Lorraine Hansberry and Ama Ata Aidoo attempted in their works to challenge patriarchy, their struggle to liberate women from men and transform society is not an easy task. Patriarchy persists because people are socialized from birth to accept hierarchy and authoritarian rule.

V. Conclusion:

This piece of research has dealt with the issues of patriarchy and women's resistance in Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (1964) and Lorraine Hansberry's 1959 play *A Raisin in the Sun*. Our analysis has focused on two main elements which are patriarchy and females' resistance to the patriarchal politics and male dominance as reflected in both works.

The first chapter has provided us with a definition of the concept of patriarchy given by the feminist activist bell hooks in her book *Feminist Theory From Margin to Center*. Relying on this theory, this chapter has been an analysis of how patriarchy uses family and religion as a means to maintain its values and persist in society. It conducted us to the conclusion that patriarchy is the basis of all oppressions especially sexist oppression. It is not only a system where men are socialized to act violently and oppress women. According to bell hooks, it is also a racist ideology that alienates not only black women but even black men. In addition, it is a structure that exploits underclass groups for its survival. Moreover, it has been demonstrated through this chapter that it is difficult to end patriarchy and sexist oppression because people are socialized from birth to accept hierarchy and coercive authority.

Through this chapter, we intended to show that both Lorraine Hansberry and Ama Ata Aidoo have dealt in their works with a first category of women who are Mama or Lena Younger, EsiKom and Monka. These latter are traditionalist women who consider patriarchy as natural and tend to accept it without complaining. Whether they are victims of their environment or not, they support patriarchal values and accept sexist oppression within their families.

However, in the second chapter which has been devoted to the theme of patriarchal politics versus females' resistance, it has been shown that in spite of the fact that men put obstacles and do everything and anything to keep women under their control, these latter do

not give up and always develop strategies to resist patriarchy. Through the characters of Bennie and Eulalie, Lorraine Hansberry and Ama Ata Aidoo have dealt with a second category of women who instead of accepting patriarchy, they question things, protest, break customs and refuse the traditional role of women. Their way of thinking and behaviour disturb the patriarchal politics as well as the male characters in both plays. They even shock the traditionalist female characters who are against any change that may occur in society. Through creating two independent female characters, both authors challenge the patriarchal structure and reject the idea that women are weak, emotional, passive or unassertive. Furthermore, both authors defy annoying stereotypes and clichés that are perpetuated through culture, and positively portray EsiKom and Mama who instead of being intrusive and nosy mothers-in-law, they are kind-hearted and friendly with their daughters-in-law.

According to bell hooks, education is the practice of freedom and work does not liberate women. Both authors share the same point of view and this is shown in their works. Though Ruth in Hansberry's play works, she is at the mercy of her husband. On the other hand, although work has liberated Eulalie economically in Aidoo's *The Dilemma of a Ghost*, she is not a full woman until she gives birth to children. For both authors, if women are given the opportunity to have access to education, they will be free and can see things clearly.

To conclude, our research does not cover all the issues that can be tackled in both Lorraine Hansberry's and Ama Ata Aidoo's plays. We hope that we helped our readership to understand the issues explored in this memoir. Furthermore, we believe that this topic is still an interesting subject that needs further investigation. Other studies can explore other issues using different perspectives.

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