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who have always supported me and never ceased to believe in me.*

*I could not have done it without you
and I would not be where I am today.*

Thank you Mama and Papa!

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I hereby confirm to have conceived and written this diploma thesis in English by myself.
Any quotations, borrowed ideas or paraphrased passages from other authors have been clearly indicated within this work and truthfully acknowledged in the bibliographical references.

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1. Introduction

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
(Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948)

Education is a human right for everyone - as it was stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. It is the most effective way of improving a country's stability and ensuring its citizens' well-being. Education equips people with necessary tools to plan their future efficiently and provide for the next generations. Despite the obvious importance of education, not all children in the world seem to have equal access to schooling. In contemporary Africa, where tradition and modernity clash, millions of children, in particular girls are not given the possibility of education. Among the reasons are traditional worldviews and conservative attitudes. Although enabling females to receive higher education would contribute enormously to the continent's needs, girls drop out of school at an early age in most African countries.

Women have always been the bearers of African culture and tradition for it was them who raised the children and were in charge of the family's well-being. However, already in pre-colonial and colonial times their situation was disadvantaged over that of men. The latter easily obtained work in the cities and earned money whereas women were tied to household chores and field work. This thesis will examine women's role in society and how it impedes their access to education. Socio-cultural and economic factors seem to be the most relevant factors for parents to deprive girls of schooling. However, other obstacles that are related to school deserve serious considerations as well. The quality of education and teachers, for instance, often impair girls' willingness to attend school. Besides, the lack of female role models and male teachers' negative attitudes towards girls contribute to girls' insecurities. Another common issue is corruption and violence in Africa's educational institutions. Some children are exposed to excessive corporal punishment throughout their education. Especially girls frequently become victims of sexual harassment and abuse by their teachers or classmates. Finally, religion is a reason for Muslim parents in Northern Nigeria to forbid their daughters to visit school.

During the last decades, Africa has featured more and more women writers who depict the issue of gender inequality and the increasing desire for girls' education. Within the scope of this thesis I will analyze four novels that were exclusively written by female African authors. The novels' central characters are young women who try to reach self-assertion in a patriarchal society and free themselves of traditional Africa. Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* is set in Zimbabwe and describes a young girl's way to adulthood by facing numerous challenges such as a patriarchal brother and uncle but always having education as primary goal for herself. The second text is *Changes* by Ama Ata Aidoo and presents an educated woman's life in Ghana which is influenced by society's traditional expectations towards women. The novel shows how pressure from the outside can affect a woman's career, marriage, and love affair and finally evoke a personality change within the character. South African writer Zoë Wicomb's *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* tells the story of a young colored girl who tries to find her place in apartheid South Africa as non-white person and writer. Finally, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel *Half of a Yellow Sun* which is set during the Nigeria-Biafra war will be analyzed. The main character is an educated woman who fights for her relationship and her family during times of war. Apart from analyzing the central aspects and characters of the novels, this thesis will look at the historical backgrounds of the four countries in which the novels are set and elaborate their forms of education in the past which were influenced by Western institutions and colonial practices.

African women writers are only beginning to establish themselves on the literary market. For decades they have been silenced and their works rejected due to their critical and feminist approaches. Writers such as Dangarembga, Aidoo, Wicomb or Adichie give voice to young African women who stand up for their rights in postcolonial Africa and show that education is an important factor for girls and women to achieve independence and equality in their lives.

2. From tradition to modernity

African women have always led rather difficult lives. Their role and function in society is marked by hard work and respect for their husbands. They are mothers, wives, and their traditional role is highly valued by society. However, things have changed throughout the last century. Traditional and modern ways merged and women started to seek independence at the turn of the century.

2.1. Women in pre-colonial Africa

In order to understand the African woman's role in the family, it is necessary to define the significance of the word family. For many centuries the African family consisted of several groups whose members had a "*known* common ancestor" (Coquery-Vidrovich 9). The group was a so-called *lineage* and members could easily trace their descents back several generations. Depending on whether the couple lived with the man's family or – rather uncommonly – the woman's family, the lineage was either patri- or matrilineal (Coquery-Vidrovitch 10). Kinship, the connection to family by blood or marriage, has always been very important in African societies. Not only did it guarantee a person's identity but it also enabled one to survive in society. The birth of a girl was still less valued than a boy's, however, it was "a source of wealth" given that the guarantee of children as well as another workforce was ensured.

There was a clear distinction between the sexes in the family, especially in terms of labor. While men were responsible for trade, hunting and political affairs, household, agriculture and reproduction were assigned to women. In southeastern Nigeria, among the Igbo, for instance, women farmed, whereas among the Hausa in southwestern Nigeria field work was typically a man's task (Coquery-Vidrovitch 11). This division of labour was common throughout the entire nineteenth century. It is important to understand though, that both men and women had equally important tasks to fulfill. While men were fighting in wars, kept herds of animals such as sheep, goats and cattle, women cultivated and cooked food. It was also their task to wash the family's clothes and milk cows. Water was not pumped into houses, especially in rural areas, directly so that women had to walk to a ravine or the village water faucet to tap water. Even today women make these daily trips together with their children.

Apart from labor division, one could also notice a difference between a man's and a woman's social value. Whereas cooperativeness, fertility and willingness as well as work qualifications were typical characteristics of a woman, it was important for men to have courage, rhetorical competence and physical strength. Rules and decisions were made by men. The relation between husband and wife mainly consisted of sexual intercourse, and conversations were rather infrequent. Polygamy is a widespread concept in Africa which creates problems for some women considering the fact that they can be replaced by a "new" wife anytime (Cutrufelli 53). Jealousy and witchcraft are serious issues which many women believe to be cursed with by their co-wives.

Another reality in those times was slave trade. The majority of early African slaves were women. Apart from agricultural work, they performed tasks such as spinning, trading and naturally housework like washing clothes and preparing food. In many societies it was a sign of wealth if men held women slaves as wives or concubines. Slaves were separated from their kin and eventually became part of their owner's family. It was uncommon for slave women to have several children because "they were denied family lives and treated as objects" (Coquery-Vidrovitch 22). Islamic West Africa divided slave women into categories. They could be a chief's servant who took care of the children and was treated more like a member of a family or a common slave. Coquery-Vidrovitch (1994: 27) describes the condition of women at that time as the following, "A slave woman was an individual made to do a job that a woman would normally do". Nevertheless, a slave woman's status was still more positive than a slave man's given that she was integrated in the family more easily due to her domestic chores.

Women in West Africa had the possibility to gain more autonomy than in eastern and central areas of Africa which were particularly marked by the slave trade. Women of today's Benin, for instance, participated in the production of palm oil and transported it to Western companies' storehouses by means of caravans. Women of Sierra Leone and Senegal fished and then sold the catch on the markets. Another form of female industry is the sale of cola nuts, which grow on trees in the Ghanaian forest (Coquery -Vidrovitch 31). Yoruba women spent most of their time creating handicrafts and foodstuffs. These early forms of women work enabled them to enter the economy.

2.2. Colonialism - from country to city

Women in Africa, in particular women in West Africa, are known for their hard work and their sense of responsibility. During the early colonial period women were more and more excluded from the global marketplace. They lost power and economic autonomy due to the emergence of cash crops such as peanuts, coffee or cotton. Men cultivated these new crops and made a lot of profit from them while the women assisted their husbands, continued growing food and ran the family. This means that men gained a lot of money even though the women worked harder. The situation for women deteriorated when men left to work on the railroad or in mines between the World Wars. The majority of the women stayed in rural areas and it was their task to take care of the household and the children.

The legal system under colonialism put women into a disadvantaged position, given that they did not consider their rights which were established at pre-colonial times. Only men were involved when making political decisions, and this alienated women more and more from society. The loss of land rights was a result from this. Given that the colonies had control over the terrain, it became very difficult for women to cultivate crops, as there was just a limited amount of land. Women were considered “the second sex in town” until at least the end of colonialism (Coquery-Vidrovich 73).

At the end of the eighteenth century, more and more men moved to the cities for work. Salaries at that time were calculated for one person's need only and did not take his household into account. Therefore women stayed in the countryside with the rest of the family. In this way the continuity of land rights and the family's subsistence was guaranteed (Coquery-Vidrovitch 74). However, soon women also started migrating to the towns given that their lives in rural areas became increasingly difficult and the desire for economic and social freedom grew stronger. Slaves and young women treated unfairly and exploited by men, were thus the first ones who left the countryside.

One of the main reasons for women to migrate, however, was mistreatment by their husbands or excessive exploitation (Coquery – Vidrovitch 74). As a result, a social change took place in the early 1920s. Frequently, young women fled to the cities because they had refused to marry a man they did not approve of or simply followed a man they were in love with. What made young single mothers leave was the fear of being rejected by the family, given that virginity

before marriage was highly valued in most societies. Hence, women migrated because they were not able to make their own decisions in the countryside. Young girls came to the city and worked in their relatives' household or took care of the children. The city seemed to offer them independence, which was what they wanted.

However, negative attitudes towards this social change emerged when women started moving to the cities. The opinion that migration affects women in a negative way is still prevalent, especially in East Africa. Women were often found to linger around in towns becoming courtesans or prostitutes. This idea was generally used as “weapon” for preventing female migration and keeping them away from the “evil influences of the city” (Obbo 28).

Obbo (1980: 21) further suggests that some kind of “detribalization” took place during urbanization given that Africans were separated from their families and clans. Especially women's status changed a lot in the cities. “New societal structures [...] caused perceptible and immediate conflict between traditional structures and the novel, economic phenomena” (Cutrufelli 102). This means that the new situation women found themselves in was culturally and economically uncertain. Urban life did not change women's inferior position as they had expected because it was still men who gained more money in towns. Besides, it was difficult for women to find work by themselves as colonial politics made it almost impossible for women to manage life without a man. If they found work in an office, which was one of the most popular professions for a woman, it was not a rare phenomenon that their employers expected sexual favors in return (Cutrufelli 103). Even being a maid was considered a “dirty job” by society as it often led women to prostitution (Cutrufelli 103).

Women are seen as “bearers of [African] culture” and therefore encouraged by men to stay in rural areas (Obbo 28). As farmers, wives and mothers they are an essential part of African tradition and therefore rather needed in rural areas than in cities. Despite the negative dispositions that men have towards female migration, the majority of the women prefer living in the city as they are still given more freedom than in the countryside where working on the fields is taken for granted and only “breaks their backs” (Obbo 28).

Cutrufelli (1983: 103), however, argues that women in towns, which suffered from the “aftermath of traumatic circumstances” such as the loss of a child or a husband, were found to be mentally unstable - even more than they would be in rural areas because they are economically more dependent in the cities.

“At the village it was she that, even though exploited by the man, produced, sold and exchanged the products. In town, as a wage-earning female labourer, she finds herself begging morning after morning: instead of decreasing, her dependence grows.” (Cutrufelli 103).

In general, men did not and still do not want their women to work outside of the house as they fear that they will lose control over them and she will become too independent. Some men claim that women who work neglect their maternal and domestic duties and only wait for the paycheck at the end of the month. This is also the reason why many men do not allow their daughters to receive education and consequently earn money.

Nevertheless, more and more women migrated during the 1960s and 1970s. After the Second World War men realized that they needed their wives' income and the cities filled with women. Nowadays, there are more women than men who migrate to the cities. One of the main reasons for this phenomenon is the possibility of education in the towns, especially for upper-class women. According to Coquery-Vidrovitch (1997: 80) “on average throughout the continent, the number of girls attending school doubled between 1960 and 1970”. Hence, those who received education ultimately moved to the city for work.

3. Education in colonial Africa

Europeans played a crucial role for African women and the education system in general. It is important to understand that there was already an education system before the colonizers appeared on the African continent. The education women received was conducted by their parents or other elderly people from the tribes. Women were educated in order to be able to respond to the needs of the community. The colonizers introduced education in a way to make women adapt to European concepts and values, meaning training them to be good housewives and farmers. They taught their knowledge, manners and competences and thus conveyed their “perception of the world” to Africans (Mérand 49). The goal was to transform Africa into a land with European values and attitudes. Schools seemed to be the place where this assimilation could take place. Naturally, students were not allowed to speak their native language but only the colonizer’s, hence English, French, Dutch or Portuguese. Even the schoolbooks were implemented from Europe and sold at European prices. Mérand (1989: 51) argues that in this way “the European mindset was forced on African realities”. Newton’s laws of motion or the Archimedes principle are European theories that influenced African inhabitants who originally learnt how to harrow and plough.

As mentioned earlier, students were forbidden to speak their native languages even though they had difficulties in understanding and speaking the colonizer’s. Due to all these influences from foreign cultures, children and adults who were educated during that time left school with a different identity from that which was perceptible by society.

Women’s position during colonial times was, as already discussed, inferior to a man’s position - a notion that derives from Christianity. The first colonizers relied on Catholic missionaries to educate Africans. They did not believe girls’ education to be important, as they were very conservative. Coquery-Vidrovitch (1997: 144) argue that “missionary ideology emphasized the differences between the sexes and male superiority”. Men were educated to take on monks’ and priests’ manners, rule the private farm and the family and profit from agricultural training, given that work on fields was considered inappropriate for women from that moment on. They were educated to stay at home practicing housekeeping and “[developing] qualities of docility” according to Christian morality (Coquery-Vidrovitch 144). Customs such as polygamy, early sexual relation or other rituals did not correspond with Catholic religion, and by teaching Christian practices they tried to transform African into

Western women. For all these reasons, education for boys and girls was hardly the same. As a result, “the number of each sex who attended school all [differed] according to gender” (Coquery-Vidrovitch 144). The following section will look at three countries in particular in order to understand how the education system developed and what role girls’ schooling played.

3.1. Ghana

Ghana is one of the most progressive African countries in terms of girls’ education. However, boys’ schooling has always been favored over girls. The first school for girls was opened in 1821 at Cape Coast. Learning how to be a good wife and housewife was especially important. Therefore sewing and home education were the main subjects. In 1836 another school was opened under a Methodist missionary’s wife. Reading and sewing were the subjects taught. Until 1840 the number of girls attending this school was 80. The first high school for girls was opened in 1874 but only girls with fluent English and good educational history had access to the school. Sewing, needlework and dressmaking were major subjects. These schools were regulated by missionaries which is why there were only a small variety of subjects taught. They did not find it important to teach girls anything else but “matters which are most obviously characteristic of females” (Cutrufelli 160).

In 1960 only 34% of 15 year-old Ghanaian girls received some education in school. More than half of the boys the same age, however, had schooling. In 1970 the situation ameliorated a little bit but there was still a big difference in school attendance for 15 to 24 year-old male and female students.

3.2. South Africa

In South Africa, in contrast, girls had better opportunities to obtain education, at least in primary school. South African schools were attended by both male and female students in the 1980s. Led by missionaries, girls obtained Christian teaching and were trained to acquire domestic qualities. These were of great importance at that time and girls who were educated to be a good housewife, which was in fact the only option they had, could expect a higher bride-price. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that African girls’ education was a

“retrogressive” one (Coquery-Vidrovitch 148). The Catholic missionaries clearly considered women as less valuable than boys and the prevailing domestic conviction that girls belong to the home was omnipresent in South Africa much earlier than in other African countries. In the mid 1960s only 432 girls attended secondary school and left before obtaining their certificate. Boys usually finished their last year and enrolled at the university, especially white males who received higher education such as the B.A. or Master’s degree. In 1970 only 30% of the girls were undergraduates and 16% graduates. The situation was worse for black women given that only 3% were allowed to go to university.

Interestingly, Lovedale, a school which was opened in 1838, had more girl students than boys. Initially, the subjects taught were conventionally female. Later, however, they were given the chance to obtain other vocational training than domestics, teachers and housekeepers. So the first African nurse graduated from Lovedale in 1907.

3.3. Nigeria

In Lagos, Nigeria, the situation was similar to the one in Ghana and progress was slow. During the 1920s Morenike Abayomi, daughter of the Nigerian’s founder of the magazine *Nigerian Pioneer*, obtained her degree in Britain and started raising funds for girls’ education at her return. She founded “The British West African Educated Girls’ Club” which enabled her to open the first secondary school for girls. Again, the main subjects were needlework, home management and singing. The number of female high school students remained low since there were only 1500 girls in Nigeria’s secondary schools in the 1950s.

All this shows that girls’ education was not of great importance in colonial times. It was only in the second half of the twentieth century that improvement in terms of schooling became visible when the first public primary education system was initiated between 1955 and 1957 in the southern Nigerian provinces. People from Southern Nigeria converted to Catholicism around 1900 and realized, probably through Western influences, that education was essential for social improvement. Hence, especially for Igbo women it was typical to pay for their children’s education. However, most of the schools were free and many families sent their children to school. It is thus understandable that there were a lot of riots and complaints when the government put an end to free schools in 1958. Women protested and demonstrated for months, shouting slogans and asking for free schooling again. Finally, the government

decided that the first four years of school were free but left the final decision to the local authorities whether to ask for fees or not. As a result, “100.000 children were again deprived of schooling and 2.500 teachers lost their jobs” (Coquery-Vidrovitch 154).

Finally, the Catholic Eastern Women’s Association (CEWA) brought thousands of women with the same goal together. They fought for their children’s free education and it was due to these actions that the number of schoolchildren doubled in the following three decades, in particular the number of boys.

Unfortunately, in most other African countries, the amount of children in schools was relatively low. Besides, boys were much more likely to go to school than girls, also after Independence. Robertson (1986: 96) points out that the inequalities between boys’ and girls’ education are most visible in Guinea-Bissau and Togo with a difference of 46%. Ghana had 44% of girl students and 61% boys which is average. Zimbabwe was one of the countries with a small difference and South Africa had equal numbers in male and female students. There are even countries, which favor girls, such as Botswana and Lesotho.

Considering that women do not go to school or leave school early in most countries, it is natural that many of them are illiterate. In fact, Lesotho is the only African country which has more illiterate men than women. The percentages of the female illiterate population in 1970 in Nigeria was 60, 8%, in Ghana it was 59,9%, in Zimbabwe it was 58,9%, and in South Africa 52,0%. Nevertheless, the number of illiterate females has decreased between 1960 and 1980, even if not as significantly as the number of illiterate males (Robertson 98).

4. Obstacles encountered in girls' education

Africa is an immense continent with more than 50 countries, each having a different culture, local language and political system. There are aid-dependent countries, countries involved in wars, more or less highly educated populations and almost entirely illiterate countries (see Girls's education in Africa: An Overview of what works website). It is therefore not possible to generalize and claim that girls' situations are the same throughout Africa.

However, various scholars have identified factors that can be applied to sub-Saharan Africa and stand in the way of girls' and women's access and retention at school. Socio-cultural and economic factors seem to be the greatest obstacles, nonetheless school-related factors, corruption, violence and religion have to be taken into account as well.

4.1. Socio-cultural factors

One of the main reasons why girls or young women are not given the opportunity of education in Africa is gender inequality. Parents estimate their sons' education of greater importance than their daughters' and believe that the girl's traditional role will be jeopardized when she goes to school, given that she might not find an appropriate husband in time or be influenced negatively.

Eweniyi & Usman (2013) found out that "the fear of public criticism of sending girls to school [and] cultural condemnation of mixing boys and girls together in school" was relatively high, especially in Northern Nigeria. Furthermore, parents do not seem to find it advantageous for their daughters to be educated, as she will marry into someone else's family, whereas the son will always be head of some family and therefore deserves more education (Martineau 16). It is understandable that due to these sexist attitudes towards girls, enrolments in school are rather low and dropout rates high in most countries. Besides, they do not help in increasing girls' self-esteem as will become more obvious when looking at a particular African novel in a later section.

Traditions are highly important in Africa and girls know their roles as housekeepers and caretakers from a very early age. Their role as mother and wife should always be in the foreground and by sending girls to school, parents, and especially fathers, are concerned that

they might forget this important fact. Ultimately, parents decide to choose a husband for their daughters before they can finish school. In Nigeria, for instance, 19% of female students declared that the reason for them to drop out of school was early marriage (Tuwor & Sosso, 368). Yet these early marriages are not the only reason why so many girls leave school earlier but also teenage pregnancies are responsible for the high dropout rates among female students (Brock & Cammish 1997). According to studies, there were 3404 pregnant teenagers aged 10 to 19 between the years 2003 and 2004 in Ghana. In Northern Nigeria 55% of girls between 15 or 19 years were either pregnant or already mothers (Tuwor & Sussou 368).

Another reason for parents to discourage girls' schooling is the domestic work they have to fulfill; a daughter attending school means more workload for the rest of the family. So the girl has to work before and after going to school which makes it difficult for her to concentrate during the lesson or when doing homework. Additionally, due to the chores at home, a girl is more likely to be undernourished and more susceptible for diseases. Hence, the health factor also plays a crucial role in a girl's education.

4.2. Economic factors

Apart from socio-cultural factors, economic reasons hinder young women's access to school. Household related causes and the size of the family play a crucial role for parents in the decision which child to educate. The costs to send children to school vary from country to country; however, parents are more likely to spend money on their sons' education rather than on their daughters' for the reasons stated above. Most African countries offer free schools nowadays but in reality parents have to pay for enrolment, schoolbooks, uniforms and transportation. In some parts of Africa, as in Senegal or Cameroon for example, parents are even obliged to purchase their children's furniture that they will need in school. Tanko (2009) argues that expenses are higher for girls than for boys given that a transportation system that will get girls to school safely must be ensured. In poor families, girls are expected to contribute to the sustenance of the family by finding work as maid, tailor or seamstress. Therefore, the expenditure of money is the main reason for many parents to deprive girls from going to school.

According to the report *Because I am a girl* (2013) the issue of transactional sex is also a major concern in girls' education and a consequence of poverty. It means that young girls, but

also boys sometimes, offer their bodies in exchange for products they or their family urgently need: soap, clothes or as in most cases, money. Children, in particular girls, who have been sexually active, are described as less attentive during lessons by their teachers what leads to bad marks and ultimately dropout. Other consequences are pregnancy or sexual diseases.

Since nobody was taking care of me I received money and gifts from men; in order to please them I have to have sex with them. That is how I become pregnant in school...at first I wanted to abort the pregnancy but in the process I almost lost my life...with the man responsible he does not take care of me he only gives me money for my hospital bill. Because I am not schooling I feel very sad when I see my friends dressed in their uniforms, sometimes I cry. I dropped out of school due to the pregnancy and life is so unbearable. (female student from Ghana in *Because I am a girl* 2013)

This quote shows the seriousness of the situation female students find themselves in sometimes. Despite the will and motivation to go to school, her pregnancy prevents her from continuing.

In some countries, such as Ghana, Liberia or Kenya, there are official laws and policies that allow girls to remain in school during pregnancy. Unfortunately, these rights are often neglected by head masters, teachers or parents who believe that it is best for the girl and her family's reputation to avoid school. The report further suggests that 84% of Ghanaian parents find a girl's early pregnancy more likely to occur when she goes to school. Classmates and boyfriends are considered the main perpetrators for girls' pregnancies.

4.3. School-related factors

Apart from socio-cultural and economic factors, there are a handful of other reasons why girls' access to school is not favored. Sometimes the location of schools requires children to walk very long distances which can be a risk given that violence and rape are common issues in many African countries. Therefore parents decide to only let their sons walk to school and protect their daughters by keeping them at home. Besides, some students are obligated to carry their own furniture, which is normally a simple cardboard box and a wooden chair, to school. By walking such long distances girls' health is impaired. Dizziness and sunburns affect their learning and hinder them from arriving punctually at school, which results in corporal punishment.

Furthermore, there is a lack of material and qualified teachers in African schools. Due to the rapidly rising number of students during the last decades, there is only a limited amount of qualified and passionate teachers. Therefore, people without special teaching competences have been employed. What is definitely a barrier for girls' education is the lack of female role models in school. Some parents do not allow their daughters to go to school if there are only male teachers employed. According to the report *Because I am a girl* from 2013 43% of sub-Saharan primary teachers were female but only 29% were female secondary teachers even though it has been proven that female teachers have a positive influence on girls' motivation in school, their grades as well as their retention. By acting professional, motivated, and self-confident, they can serve as examples for young girls and prove that women can do more than traditional household tasks.

As mentioned earlier, girls' self-esteem is rather low in most cases and affects their behavior in the classroom (Wallace – Bruce 37). This can be traced back to the notion that girls are less intelligent than boys, which has its roots in the family and found its way into the school system. It has also been proven that most male teachers' attitudes towards girls are sexist and discriminate girls which naturally reduces their self-confidence and willingness to actively contribute to the lesson. Besides, school materials are filled with stereotypical gender roles presenting females as “weak and passive characters, and providers of household chores” (Wallace – Bruce 38). Classroom material is just as important as qualified teachers and must be designed in a way that it engages boys *and* girls.

4.4. Corruption in South African schools

According to various reports, corruption in South African schools is deteriorating. A study conducted by *Transparency International* elaborated the South African government's main deficiencies in the primary education sector. Those deficits have been detected “by assessing indicators of transparency, integrity, accountability, and participation” (see *Transparency International 2011*). The results of the study show that due to corruption and misconduct, education for young South African citizens is negatively affected.

The main findings reveal that there are several problems at the provincial level. District offices lack information, and communication between schools and districts is either bad or completely absent. 58% of district officials admitted that they inform schools about

“allocation of grants or their delay” either late or not at all. Consequently, school planning and administration lag behind (see *Transparency International 2011*). In fact, one student stated:

At school, I have problem with how our teachers’ salaries are not paid on time. Whenever their salaries are delayed, they stay away from classes; sometimes for months or weeks until they are paid. As a result of this, I have to remain at home until the teachers are paid and ready to come back to teach us. (student from Liberia in *Because I am a girl*).

Furthermore, the Provincial Department of Education does not state their rules and regulations explicitly which impairs the productivity of the work. Besides, the district offices are often overloaded and have little resources.

Another concern is the embezzlement of school funds, especially when constructing schools buildings, purchasing school books or paying school staff. The majority of the schools in Africa do not publish any financial data at all. What has also been discovered was the illegal collection of school fees. Despite the fact that primary education is free, 9% of Ghanaian parents stated that they have to pay fees to their school. In other countries, the percentage is even higher. The study also identified problematic areas at the school level. Lack of parental involvement in decisions contributes to the risk of corruption. Also, within schools, the highest risks of corruption are linked to absenteeism of teachers, harassment of learners and misuse of school funds.

Finally, the learning environment in most schools is unsafe and lacks adequate infrastructure. Fifteen percent of schools stated that there is no electricity and 10% reported that the water supply is insufficient.

4.5. Violence in schools

Physical punishment and sexual abuse are major problems in Africa. Not only domestic violence but also corporal punishment in schools is widespread throughout the continent. In March 2003 a South African newspaper reported that there were “133 cases of misconduct involving teachers in North West. The culprits included school principals who have been dismissed for fraud, misappropriation of school funds and sexual harassing of girls. Thirteen teachers were expelled for having sexual relationships with pupils” (Prinsloo 5).

In Ghana, sugar canes are used to beat children in the classroom in case they forgot to do their homework or bring their schoolbooks. Most of the time, children do not report this at home out of fear to get beaten again due to their misbehavior at school. Teachers stated that the reasons for them to punish their students are mainly anger and helplessness in the classroom due to their poor pedagogical competences (Antonowicz 19).

A study conducted in Ghana revealed that some kind of harassment was a serious issue, especially for girls. Male teachers and older male pupils but also men outside school were most likely to sexually abuse girls. What was interesting in this study was that interviewed girls were not willing to talk about their own sexual activity but referred to their friends and the sexual approaches by male teachers. The majority of female students interviewed stated that girls had sexual intercourse involuntarily with teachers or boys from school. In most cases, girls were either trapped for money or raped. The study clearly showed that sexual abuse was a “hidden problem” and girls were afraid or embarrassed to talk about it (see *Transparency International 2011*).

What seems to be the biggest problem, though, is the fact that not enough initiatives are taken in order to prevent sexual abuse towards girls. Sexual aggression goes unpunished and male teachers’ or pupils’ behavior in terms of power relation is almost never discussed. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the perpetrator pays compensation to the victim’s father or marries the girl to not embarrass her family. It is not surprising that this leads many girls to depression or even to suicide.

School should be a safe place for children where learning and interaction can take place without children being afraid of their teachers. Corporal punishment is only another reason for girls to avoid school.

4.6. Religion

An additional factor that hinders girls from going to school is religion. A high number of Muslim parents in Northern Nigeria are afraid that their daughters might evoke “moral decadence” (Eweniyi & Usman 2013). Early or pre-marital pregnancy, abortion or illegitimate children, and female promiscuity are only a few of parents’ concerns when it comes to

western education. The study also revealed that Muslim parents fear that when exposing their daughters to Western education, they might feel the urge to convert to another religion.

4.7. African Women writers and their way of self – assertion through authorship

During the last decades, African literature has received a lot of interest. Studies, novels and various papers have been published and sold as Third World literature. Brown (1981: 3) points out:

[...] the study of African literature has become both a distinctly Third World undertaking – that is, the study of the literature in relation to Africa itself – and a comparative discipline, with increasing emphasis on the relationship between African literature, and Western and black literature in the Americas.

The interest in African literature is increasing and it is very likely that the African writer continues to express himself as “artist, social analyst, and literary critic” (Brown 3). In the past, women were excluded by African literature and it was mainly men who wrote and published. Women were the unheard, other voices who were traditionally neglected. Due to the fact that women were denied education in most cases, there were only a few who were literate while the majority of male Africans were able to read and write. Considering that having a university education was a necessity and a condition for being a writer, women who lived in British colonial Africa had still better chances than those living in other colonial regions given that they acquired the English language and were thus able to write their book in English these days.

Most African women writers treat issues such as gender inequality or colonialism in their works and narrate personal experiences of a female individual who struggles in a society that oppresses her. Unfortunately, women writers were considered unessential and their works not worth discussing for a long time. Therefore, the image of African women in the Western world was much more positive than it was in reality. Brown (1981: 6) argues that male African writers contributed to this perception by stating at conferences and seminars that the African woman “doesn’t need to be liberated [and that] she has been free for many thousands of years”. This notion of freedom is perceived differently by African women and writers such

as Ama Ata Aidoo or Tsitsi Dangarembga make this obvious in their novels by insisting that African women still have to struggle for education and gender equality.

Ghanaian author Ama Ata Aidoo was born in 1940 in Saltpond, Ghana. Not only has she been very successful and influential as author but also as playwright and academic. She graduated from the English Department of the University of Ghana and was consequently elected Junior Research Fellow of the Institute of African Studies. After studying in the United States she even achieved the position of Minister of Education in Ghana in the early 1980s. She has travelled abroad regularly and visited a great number of universities and colleges in the United States. Moreover, she is the Director of a foundation that has been created in order to help and promote the works of other African women writers. Aidoo counts as one of the most successful and influential African women writers of her time.

Azodo (1999: 399) states that there are three different characters that can be adjusted to Aidoo: the “intellectual”, the “ideologue” and the “revolutionary”. Many critics find her too outspoken for a woman writer considering the delicate matters of gender, colonialism and power struggle she deals with in her works. Aidoo who is aware of the fact that women are in inferior positions in most African countries is not afraid to write about these problems and has become well-known for her forceful personality in literary circles.

Aidoo was heavily influenced by her parents who were aware of the effects of colonialism on Africa and the importance of educated women. Her aunt advised her to receive education and make a difference in Ghanaian society. As a result, “Aidoo has become the mouth of those women who have no mouth to speak for themselves” (Azodo 401). Aidoo believes that Africa in general is still too dependent on the Western world and argues that Africa should finally start to “look into capital formation, rather than importation or exportation” (Azodo 401). She criticizes African politics in that they are not capable of keeping the intelligent citizens, who could really make a difference, on their continent. It is Western banks and other financial agencies that make decisions for Africa. It would be of great importance for Africa to learn how to cope with their problems independently and improve their social and economic situation without the help of others. Hence, education plays an important role in Aidoo’s life and works. In order to maintain African values it is essential to create curricula which deliver those to African children. More and more young Africans move to other countries to get a university degree and consequently lose their connection to their homeland as is the case with the two male characters Chido and Nhamo in Dangarembga’s *Nervous conditions*. Young

Africans who were educated abroad never return home again or if they do they come back as different people who have only little understanding for the African culture left. Azodo (1999: 416) concludes that Aidoo's desire would be to find a new Africa with a "reassertion of African values and communal social systems". She would like Africa to be independent of European influences and finally reject foreign enticement. However, this is only possible if the African people themselves work hard for a promising future.

Aidoo's career as a writer began in 1977 with the publication of *Our sister Killjoy*. Similar to her other novels, the main character is female and fighting for her rights in an African patriarchal society. Aidoo's choice of female protagonists in her works has certainly to do with her urge to encourage African women to stand their ground and take their rights as humans seriously. Her second novel *Changes* from the year 1991 won the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Africa. It portrays an example of the modern African woman who chooses education and career over a life as wife and mother.

Another widely discussed African female author is Tsitsi Dangarembga from Zimbabwe, a country in which women were still discriminated after Independence in 1980. When she publishes her novel in 1988 she is twenty-five years old and is therefore one of the younger generation's African writers. Tsitsi Dangarembga is born on February 14 in 1959 in Mutoko, colonial Rhodesia. In 1961 she moves to England with her parents until she is six years old. Back in Rhodesia, Dangarembga attends a Mission School and later an American convent, where she obtains her secondary education. Dangarembga sees herself as outsider in school and in order to come to terms with her loneliness, she starts writing diary. In 1977 she goes to Cambridge and studies medicine. Three years later, however, she returns to Zimbabwe as life in England is difficult for her; it is there that she experiences racism for the first time. She studies psychology at the University of Zimbabwe and works as a copywriter. Moreover, she is a member of a drama group in which she writes numerous plays. It is only shortly before Independence that Dangarembga becomes interested in African literature, Shona oral traditions and African American literature. She stages three plays at university and writes her first novel, *Nervous Conditions*, in the early 1980s which won the African section of the Commonwealth writers Prize in 1989. Dangarembga is the first female Zimbabwean author who publishes a novel in English. In 2006 the author publishes *The Book of Not*, a sequel to *Nervous Conditions*.

Dangarembga states in an interview that the publication of *Nervous Conditions* brought some conflicts with it considering that reading fiction for pleasure was very unusual in Zimbabwe at that time. Reading was only considered to be a means to increase reading skills. Also, there were no readings that “your ordinary Zimbabwean child or your ordinary young woman could relate to” (Dangarembga 311). Considering these aspects and the fact that publishers were male and in the position to choose what to sell and what not, it was very difficult for a female writer to publish a novel in which a young African woman tells a story about education and oppression. Henceforth, the novel was actually more successful in Europe and America than it was in Zimbabwe.

What was important for Dangarembga when she wrote *Nervous Conditions* was to include a sense of the past of the country. Due to the fact that she did not have a grandmother who told her about Zimbabwean’s/Rhodesian’s past, a certain lack of history emerged in her that made her create a figure like the grandmother in the novel (Dangarembga 311). She argues that reading was something that was considered dangerous and risky when she was a child and earlier because it is through reading that one learns and constructs “cognitive maps” in the brain. Therefore writers were not supported and the only African writings that existed were traditional tales about “witchcraft [or] wives poisoning their husbands” (Dangarembga 312).

Fortunately, this has changed throughout the last decades and women are now able to write about their personal lives which may help female readers understand that they are not alone and that their situation could be a different one if they stood up for their rights. Dangarembga is thrilled when women she has never seen before, call her on the phone and talk to her about her novels. This shows her that despite the difficulties she had to go through when *Nervous Conditions* came out, she had indeed had an impact on some.

Another author discussed in this thesis is Zoë Wicomb from South Africa. She is the author of *You can’t get lost in Cape Town* (YCGLICT) and numerous other short stories and essays. Wicomb is born in 1948 in Namaqualand, a small, remote town in South Africa. In order to improve her English skills, she attends an English speaking school in Cape Town. In 1970 she graduates from the University of the Western Cape and moves to England where she continues her studies at Reading University. Twenty years later Wicomb returns to her home country and teaches English for three years. Afterwards she moves to Glasgow, Scotland where she lives and works as University teacher until today.

It was of great importance for Wicomb's parents that their children were fluent in the English language for the chances of a better life were higher. In an interview Wicomb states that the reason for her decision to leave South Africa was "partly for adventure, partly because there wasn't much opportunity in South Africa" (see Interview in *New York Times*, 1987). Besides, the overall belief in South Africa was that life in Europe was better. Later, however, Wicomb realized that living in Britain for so long made it difficult for her to go back to her native country and feel like home although she has always felt connected to South Africa intellectually and emotionally. During her time as student in South Africa, the anti-apartheid movement was still very weak and inefficient and Wicomb wanted to flee to another country in order to escape the repression she suffered from. It was only two years after Wicomb's departure that the Black Consciousness Movement under Steve Biko's leadership became visible on the South African University campuses. In Scotland, however, Wicomb realized that race was even bigger issue there than it was in England and that race hate was something to fight against. By writing she found a way to accomplish this. In her writing, Wicomb shows that she is furious about the English way of never admitting that they are actually racist and at the same time troubled by a bad consciousness about having "[abandoned] her home", a feeling that is also expressed by Frieda in *YCGLICT* (see Interview in *New York Times*, 1987). Even though, *YCGLICT* is not an autobiographical novel, it still contains many parallels to Wicomb's own life. One of the most striking parallels is supposedly that both, Wicomb and Frieda, are traumatized by British supremacy whereupon they publish a cycle of short stories and upset their family members by writing about them.

YCGLICT was published in 1987, three years prior to the end of apartheid. It is difficult to assert to any genre as it is made up of ten stories all turning around the central character Frieda, a young colored African girl and later writer. One could thus argue that it has characteristics of a novel and a story at the same time. The lack of coherence and frequent inconsistencies were intended by Wicomb so that the reader would be challenged and not exposed to something he or she is already familiar with. In an interview the author points out that literature should not confirm what people already know but offer them new perspectives that enable them to reflect on their own.

What is repeatedly mentioned by Wicomb and other South African writers is that people should finally stop looking for the reasons behind apartheid and the injustices that coloreds

and blacks have to face in South Africa but rather focus on solutions and try to find a way how to cope with it. YCGLICT is about colored identity and the struggle for self-assertion by a young girl. The short story cycle was published in 1987 in apartheid-ruled South Africa. Wicomb's writing is especially unique in its ambiguity and plurality of meanings. In an interview, though, Wicomb states that she sees herself less as a writer than a teacher and therefore she prefers to be published by small presses rather than by big editors or publicists (see Interview "Zoë Wicomb, a writer of rare brilliance").

The last author relevant for this thesis is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. She was born in 1977 in Enugu, Nigeria. Her parents were Igbo and she was one of six children. The family lived in a house in Nsukka that was formerly inhabited by Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe (see The Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie website). Adichie's parents were both well educated, her father being a university professor and her mother the first female registrar at the same university. Adichie studied medicine and pharmacy at the University of Nigeria and at the age of 19 Adichie left for the United States to study communication and political science in Philadelphia and later Connecticut. Finally, she attended the John Hopkins University in Baltimore and graduated in 2001 in creative writing (see The Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie website). Her first novel *Purple Hibiscus* was published in 2003 and was even awarded the Commonwealth Prize for best first book in 2005. One year later *Half of a yellow sun* was released not only in Nigeria but also in the United States and United Kingdom. In 2009 the short story cycle *The thing around your neck* appeared. Another novel which was well received by critics was *Americanah* of the year 2013. Today, Adichie lives in the United States but frequently travels to Nigeria in order to give writing workshops.

The novel treated in this thesis is *Half of a yellow sun*. It is set during the Nigeria-Biafra war in the late 1960s and the reason for Adichie to write in such great detail about this difficult time her country was going through was to "engage with that history in order to start a discussion about the war" (see Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Interview). The war took place before Adichie's birth but naturally, the pain and the memories were still present when she was young. The answer to the question why she decided to write a book about the Nigerian civil war expresses how omnipresent the war still is in her own family:

[...] because many of the issues that led to the war remain unresolved in Nigeria today, because my father has tears in his eyes when he speaks of losing his father, because my mother still cannot speak at length about losing her father in a refugee camp, because

the brutal bequests of colonialism make me angry, because the thought of the egos and indifference of men leading to the unnecessary deaths of men and women and children enrages me, because I don't ever want to forget (see The Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie website).

One of the reasons for the novel's success was certainly the inclusion of so many details which is only possible with a lot of research. Adichie spent four years on *Half of a yellow sun* and her primary source were her parents' stories, books and photos. Before she started writing the actual novel, she wrote a play and short stories about the Biafran war because she wanted "to approach the subject with little steps [...] before starting the novel" (see The Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie website). Adichie felt that people still talk about the Nigeria-Biafra War but omit certain things and only repeat what they have been told. This is why it was important for her to add political views and events in the novel. Nonetheless, the love story between Odenigbo and Olanna is in the foreground because according to Adichie, a novel needs to have "emotional truth [which is] a quality different from honesty and more resilient than fact" (see The Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie website).

Her view on education in Nigeria is that it is alarming and sad that children do not learn to write Igbo and a consequence of this is the loss of their culture and a sense of history. Adichie states that the upper class in Nigeria today is "a collection of illiterates who read nothing [...]" and people treat their housekeepers or servants in a very condescending way (see Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Interview). This is why in *Half of a yellow sun* Adichie wanted to show that class influences and forms people's lives but does not necessarily have to shape relationships. So her character Odenigbo, the university professor and Olanna's husband, treats his houseboy Ugwu with respect and like an equal human being (see The Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Interview).

5. TSITSI DANGAREMBGA – NERVOUS CONDITIONS

Nervous Conditions was a very influential novel in African literature. Dangarembga gives voice to a young African girl, Tambudzai, who narrates her personal experiences in colonial Rhodesia during the 1960s and 1970s. Patriarchy, colonialism, oppression and education were issues; black women had to face during that time. *Nervous Conditions*, can be classified as *Bildungsroman* as “its narrative structure corresponds to the protagonist’s growing emotional and intellectual maturity” (Berndt 80). The novel treats issues such as “colonial and patriarchal dependence” that arose after colonialism in Rhodesia (Berndt 80).

At the beginning of the novel the reader learns that the narrator Tambudzai lives on a homestead in rural Rhodesia together with her parents, Jeremiah and Mainini, her brother Nhamo and her sister Netsai. The family is very poor which is why Jeremiah’s brother Babamukuru offers to support Nhamo’s education. Given that a boy’s education is valued higher than a girl’s, Nhamo had the chance the opportunity to go to a mission school even though Tambu receives better grades in primary school than Nhamo. In order to raise the money herself, she starts growing a field of maize. When Tambu realizes that her spiteful brother steals vegetables from her field in order to prevent her from going to school, Tambu’s feelings for Nhamo change into hate. It is only after Nhamo’s death that Tambu is offered her brother’s place in the mission school. “I was not sorry when my brother died” is the first sentence of the novel which seems shocking at first as it is rather unusual for a sister to feel this way after the loss of a brother. Later, however, when Nhamo’s personality is described in greater detail, the reader empathizes with Tambu and views the sentence from a different angle.

After her brother’s death, Tambu leaves her family on the homestead and lives with her very influential and patriarchal uncle Babamukuru, his wife Maiguru and her cousins Nyasha and Chido. Maiguru has pursued her education in England and therefore Nyasha and Chido are influenced by English values or the “Englishness” as Tambu’s mother likes to refer to it. Tambu eventually finds herself torn between two families. One is her own poor, traditionalist and rural family and the other is the “Western-educated [and] affluent” family (Coundouriotis 120). By sharing a room with her cousin Nyasha and having long discussions and conversations with her, Tambu develops a stronger personality and forms her own opinion about the two different families, female oppression, and colonialism that surround her. In

order to understand Tambu's transformation and the time, in which the novel was set, it is necessary to give a brief overview over Zimbabwe's colonial history.

5.1. Colonial history of Zimbabwe

Nervous Conditions is set in the Rhodesian reservations, now called communal lands that surrounded the town Umtali. Before Rhodesia's colonization by Britain, the country was divided into Southern and Northern Rhodesia, consisting of today's Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Rhodesia is only called Zimbabwe since Independence in 1980. The first European settlers arrived in 1889 and took over lands that originally belonged to the Shona and Ndebele tribes. The number of settlers in the region rapidly increased and by 1892 there were 1500 Europeans in the territory. Rhodesia was governed by Cecil Rhodes who was the owner of a British South Africa company. During that time thousands of Africans were deported to communal lands and "land was taken without compensation to the owner and given to Rhodesian soldiers, or later to veterans of the two World Wars of the twentieth century" (see Embassy of Zimbabwe website). The Apportionment Act of 1930 as well as the Land Tenure Act of 1969 secured this racial land division that prevented blacks from owning territory in white regions (see Embassy of Zimbabwe website). Furthermore, Africans were excluded from political processes. They had no right to vote; work in the army, police, or other public services. Schools and residential areas were reserved for white children only.

In the war of liberation of 1896, which is also known as the First Chimurenga War, Natives resisted colonial rule but were defeated by the British South African company. From 1923 onwards Rhodesia became a "self-governing crown colony" and the European population rose to 220.000 until 1950. In 1965 the Unilateral Declaration of Independence was published by Prime Minister Ian Smith but it was not until 1980 that Rhodesia became independent and took the ancient name Zimbabwe.

5.2. Colonialism in Nervous conditions

Dangarembga refers to Frantz Fanon's work *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) in the epigraph when saying that "The condition of native is a nervous condition". Both, Dangarembga and

Fanon illustrate the psychological consequences of colonization for Natives with their works. In *Nervous Conditions* it is not only colonization that evokes nervous conditions but also gender and female education (Hill 79). Nyasha is an example for a female who wants to achieve equality in society but fails and is then punished for her “misbehavior”. According to Hill (1995: 79) Nyasha is the character whose health has been impaired most due to colonialism. By refusing food she expresses her anger and tries to show resistance through her body. After spending five years in England, she becomes suspicious of colonialism and Africans’ acceptance of it at her return. She seems to be the only one who is not willing to adjust without questioning the dominating culture. By spending time with her and getting to know her opinions and views, Tambu begins to reflect upon colonialism and male supremacy as well.

The influence of colonialism is omnipresent in the novel. At the beginning, Tambu recalls the history lessons her grandmother had given her when they were working on the fields together. These stories show the inferior positions Natives found themselves in and the oppression that was forced on them by the colonists. The reader learns that Tambu’s family was very rich in former times and that her great-grandfather possessed many herds of cattle and large fields. Tambu’s grandmother tells the story of the colonists coming and occupying their land similar to a fairy-tale and refers to the colonizers as “wizards”: “Wizards well versed in treachery and black magic came from the south and forced people from the land” (Dangarembga 18). The grandmother continues that one day she heard of “beings similar in appearance to the wizards but not of them, for these were holy” (Dangarembga 19). When she asked them to take her son, Babamukuru, and educate him at night, they agreed and were very satisfied with his performances at school. Even though he had to work on the farm throughout the day, he could still focus enough and study at night. This is why he was able to attend secondary school, besides accepting other jobs to pay the fees and supporting the family. Thus, it seems that the main message Tambu’s mother wanted to communicate to her was “endure and obey, for there is no other way” (Dangarembga 19).

Tambu’s desire to go to school grows stronger every day and increases her motivation to work even harder on the fields and at home. Nonetheless, her family does not support or encourage her. Mainini, Tambu’s mother, reminds her that she is not different from the other women and that nothing better will come along for her as she is no exception and just a woman, too. When Tambu expresses her urge for education to her brother Nhamo, he only laughs at her and wonders how his sister could have expected to go to school given that she is a girl, while

he himself was meant to be educated. This is the moment when Tambu realizes that her brother has turned into a patriarchal young man who adopted the old established attitudes towards women and education. She has no sympathy left for her brother and describes her feelings by saying, “My concern for my brother died an unobtrusive death” (Dangarembga 21). Education that took place during colonialism had important effects on African citizens.

5.3. Colonial education in Zimbabwe

Similar to South Africa, racial discrimination was omnipresent in colonial Zimbabwe. The main areas concerned were workplaces, religious congregations and education. The education system among the races was highly unequal due to the policies that were established. Indigenous people had no power during that time and were therefore not able to attend “Whites-only schools” (Shizha & Kariwo 13). Only a few black children with remarkable grades, affluent parents and/or catholic denomination were accepted by private Catholic schools once or twice a year (Zindi 44). Zindi (1996: 44) argues that the budget that was spent on European education in Rhodesia at that time was ten times more than that spent on Africans who represented 99% of the country’s total population. Those European schools, which were also known as “Group A schools” were frequented by white children only until Independence and even after 1980, when policies changed, the majority of children attending school were white. Africans who could not pay their school fees were simply denied education, whereas Europeans were financially supported. The discrepancies between African and European schools are also discussed in Dangarembga’s novel when Tambu states: “Everybody knew that the European schools had better equipment, better teachers, better furniture, better food, better everything. The idea that anything about our mission school could be better than theirs was clearly ridiculous” (Dangarembga 182).

The European culture was the dominant one and the education system was thus similar to the British middle-class education system. Everyone who wanted to live “a good life” was encouraged to obtain such an education which was presented as indispensable. Similar to the situation in other African countries, European values and concepts were forced on the African culture which valued its own education very highly in pre-colonial times. However, colonial education was the new means to increase African’s assimilation to European lifestyle. Indigenous traditions and knowledge were regarded as inferior and invalid, settlers did not

even attempt to understand the culture they tried to erase. Through religious and educational institutions the Western colonial system predominated. Shizha & Kariwo (2011: 15) point out that “a myth of the superiority of Western worldviews was widely promoted”. These colonial attitudes towards natives become once more visible when Tambu remembers her grandmother’s story about her son’s education. Babamukuru is described as “cultivable, in the way that land is, to yield harvests to sustain the cultivator” (Dangarembga 19). When Tambu comes to live on the mission with her uncle, she notices that there are a lot of white people. She describes them as “holy” and believes that they gave up their own lives at home and came to Africa in order to support them. This is why they are perceived superior by Africans and regarded as “deities” according to Tambu (Dangarembga 105).

Tambu and Nyasha discuss mission and European schools and are well aware of the fact that they would not have the possibility to go to one of the European schools where “exciting, interesting, useful things were about to happen” (Dangarembga 107). They believe that life in one of those multiracial schools had more things such as games, books, and cultural activities to offer. The fees are so high, though, that Babamukuru decides to only allow Chido to take the entrance examination. He obtains scholarship with the help of a missionary friend of Babamukuru, and thus Chido, can go to the private boarding school. At this point, the reader also learns that Nyasha is currently in Form Two and has to take examinations which would allow her to continue to Form Three. Those children who do not pass this exam, drop out of school. Nyasha, however, can afford to fail and even repeat it since she is the headmaster’s daughter and was therefore considered Babamukuru’s “good African child” since he is a “good African”, too (Dangarembga 109). The only woman in *Nervous Conditions* who has a degree is Maiguru, Babamukuru’s wife. Tambu learns this very late because nobody ever talks about it, whereas Babamukuru is always praised by the extended family for his education and his goodwill. These differences in the importance of education towards males and females can be explained by the patriarchal structures that are ubiquitous in the Shona culture and also in *Nervous Conditions*.

5.4. Gender inequalities in Zimbabwe

Since its Independence in 1980 Zimbabwe has tried to achieve gender equality. Policies such as the Gender affirmative action policy of 1992, the Nziramasanga Commission of 1999 or

the National Gender Policy of 2004 set promising goals for women and their participation in decision making on all levels (Chabaya, Rembe & Wadesango 236). These policies were introduced because the administration of the education system was male-dominated and the government tried to raise women's visibility. The fact that the policies did not fulfill their aims can be proven because there are still more men department heads than women in Zimbabwean primary and secondary school headship positions (Chabaya, Rembe & Wadesango 237). In 2004 there were 246 secondary school heads in Masvingo province, south-eastern Zimbabwe, with only 14 female heads and 8 deputy heads. In primary schools the number of heads in general was 693 with 68 being female heads and 56 females taking the position as deputy heads (Chabaya, Rembe & Wadesango 237). Parpart (1995: 7) argues that it is true that since Independence women have gained more rights and entered the job markets but still, "men have historically dominated waged employment in Zimbabwe, and this trend continues". They also profit more from education which becomes obvious when seeing that in 1992 82 women to 100 men were literate (Parpart 7).

Gender disparity is still an issue in Zimbabwe. In fact, the country was considered a "highly unequal society" in 1998. According to a study conducted by Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango (2009) the reasons for the low amount of women headmasters in school were on the one hand the fear of women to accept jobs away from their husbands and children and on the other hand their low self-confidence. As already discussed in earlier sections of this thesis, girls were taught to stay in the house and take care of younger siblings in the family in order to prepare them for their later lives as married women. The decision to take on headship positions is therefore often influenced by societal expectations. Other concerns that make women reject job offers are also that husbands might start affairs or relationships with other women and the consequential risks of contracting HIV.

The problem with the low self-esteem that females often have, is a result of the long lasting believes that women depend on their husbands and need to be led. Through early male prejudices against women's abilities, they automatically develop a feeling of inferiority and many of them lose their self-confidence. As some women interviewed in the study mentioned above state that they are used to having inferior positions as compared to that of men and do not even want to try to be positioned elsewhere because they feel that "these are men's jobs" (Chabaya, Rembe & Wadesango 241).

According to Parpart (1995: 15), statistics show that men still dominate the "highest levels of government, education, and employment". These patriarchal structures influence girls' and

women's lives to a great extent in Zimbabwe until today. However, there are women who challenge male superiority and try to gain control over their lives and properties. In *Nervous Conditions* the issue of patriarchy and male dominance plays an essential role. The reader is introduced to a diversity of male and female characters through which male dominance and females' desire to be finally seen and heard becomes obvious.

5.5. Patriarchy in *Nervous Conditions*

Nervous Conditions is written from a female perspective. However, it is essential to discuss the men's and women's roles in the novel since it is through these characters that Dangarembga displays how diverse relations between male and females can be, and in what ways women defend themselves and react to patriarchal attitudes.

Tambu's uncle, Babamukuru, being the only one having a Master's degree, is the most educated man and therefore the head of the family. After his studies in South Africa he went to England for his Master's degree and knew that his education would ensure his own family's future and could also support his brother's family. Thus, it is expected from him to help his brother Jeremiah and his family who are, unlike Babamukuru's family, poor and uneducated. When Nhamo, Jeremiah's son, moves in with Babamukuru and his family, he is given the opportunity to go to the school, where Babamukuru is the headmaster. Jeremiah and his wife praise Babamukuru's eagerness to help them out and see him as rescuer. Also Tambu observes that whenever her uncle holds a speech or announces something important, "[...] you couldn't help being overwhelmed by the good sense of his words and resolving to do exactly as he suggested, whatever that happened to be" (Dangarembga 44).

Nervous Conditions is written from a female perspective and it is interesting to observe the women's different ways and relationships with Babamukuru, the patriarch of the family. Tambu sees in Babamukuru a strong, masculine and intelligent man who wants the best for his family. When she moves to the mission, however, she soon realizes that her uncle's behavior is tyrannical and that every family member is afraid of him to some extent. Babamukuru uses his power to control his wife Maiguru and other women in the family. If things do not go his way, he becomes very aggressive and justifies his anger with the attitude that women must be punished in case they do not behave in a "decent" way. One night, when his daughter Nyasha comes home late from a night out with two male friends, he beats her for

“[behaving] like a whore” (Dangarembga 116). This shows that Babamukuru’s urge to control and oversee everything in the lives of the women he lives with leads to not only verbal but even physical injuries and pushes his own daughter further away from him.

Also Maiguru, his wife, who has a Master’s degree as well, has no right to decide what so ever in the house or in their daughter’s life. Even though she earns more money, she is obliged to give it to Babamukuru and his family. Instead of discussing this issue with Maiguru, Babamukuru takes it for granted that the money is spent for his purposes such as “ridiculous weddings” for his brother (Dangarembga 174). When Maiguru finally speaks up and tells her husband that she no longer accepts having his family in her house and providing them with her salary, he angrily tells her to leave. The fact that Maiguru eventually leaves indeed, surprises Babamukuru because he underestimated her courage and self-esteem.

Babamukuru takes his traditional Shona role very seriously and even though he encourages Nyasha’s and Tambu’s education, his support only goes as far as the women do not neglect and forget their place in society. His power over the extended family is obvious once more when he decides that Jeremiah and his wife should have a Christian wedding. Tambu, who finds it very inappropriate for her parents to get married in this way, refuses to attend the wedding whereupon she gets beaten for her disobedience. Besides, she has to perform Anna, the maid’s duties, for two weeks.

Tambu’s brother, Nhamo is the only educated son of Tambu’s family. He represents another traditional male character who might be the most offensive one of the novel. He does not hide his malicious joy about Tambu not being allowed to go to school and even prevents her from earning money by stealing vegetables from her fields. Nhamo’s behavior changes after his stay on the mission. He refuses to come back to the homestead during vacations and uses studying and examinations as excuses. Nevertheless, Babamukuru forces him to go home at least once a year in order to support his family with the crops. The lifestyle on the homestead is so different from life on the mission where people eat with cutlery and are provided with electricity and running water that Nhamo has difficulties to re-adapt to these conditions.

It seems to Tambu that “all this poverty began to offend him, or at the very least to embarrass him after he went to the mission” (Dangarembga 7). Nhamo takes advantage of his role as elder son in the family and forces Netsai, his younger sister, to carry his luggage only “to demonstrate to [his younger sisters] and himself that he had the power, the authority to make [them] do things for him” (Dangarembga 10). Nhamo beats his younger sister Netsai and

exercises power over her in the same way he exercises power over Tambu by showing her that she is inferior to him because she is a girl. Tambu realizes that her brother acts in this way because it is expected from him by society. She is well aware of the fact that “the needs and sensibilities of the women in [her] family were not considered a priority, or even legitimate” (Dangarembga 12). This is why Tambu understands her brother to a certain degree. However, she develops a dislike for him that resulted from her brother’s sexist behavior. He constantly reproaches her being a girl and instead of expecting to be allowed to go to school, she should do “less thinking and [have] more respect” (Dangarembga 51).

Years after Nhamo’s death, Tambu sees that her brother acted according to the patriarchal structures that are so widespread in her culture. She concludes that Nhamo’s intention might actually not have been to hurt her personally but that female oppression and gender inequality are long-standing problems which are enshrined in tradition.

Jeremiah is Tambu’s uneducated father and Babamukuru’s brother. He also holds strong patriarchal views and favors his son’s education over his daughter’s. Jeremiah relies on his older brother who always seems to make the right decisions. Jeremiah sees himself as “the Big Man’s supporter” (Holland 126). He is ready to follow Babamukuru’s advice without questioning it any further and obeys his older brother in every situation. This becomes obvious when Jeremiah utters the proposition to make Lucia, Tambu’s mother’s sister, his second wife as he found her “desirable” (Dangarembga 129). Besides, Lucia was expecting a boy and Jeremiah would find it advantageous to have another man in the family. Babamukuru, however, is bewildered that his own brother is considering bigamy and explains to him that in his family, this is absolutely unacceptable, given that “such things were sinful and would bring the wrath of God down on the entire family” (Dangarembga 129). As a result of this, Jeremiah never speaks of the issue again because he has more respect for Babamukuru than for God according to Tambu. His lifestyle differs greatly to Babamukuru’s. When Tambu returns to the homestead after having lived on the mission for several months, she realizes how poor and unhygienic her family is, saying, “As far as I could see, the only affection anyone could have for that compound had to come out of loyalty. I could not imagine anyone actually wanting to go there, unless, like me, they were going to see their mother” (Dangarembga 125). Tambu is shocked when she sees the holes in the walls and the falling roof that would let the rain inside the house. She is filled with disgust when she sees that her parents are not capable of taking care of the home and disappointed by her father who is obviously not capable of taking care of his own home.

Nyasha's brother Chido only appears briefly in the novel. He raises important questions concerning tradition and male strength, though. He was educated mainly by white colonists and thus seems to not really fit into the traditional African male role. Tambu describes her cousin as being calm and far less condescending than her own brother. In the night of Nyasha's and Babamukuru's fight, he tries to protect his sister by telling Babamukuru that Nyasha did not do anything disgraceful with her male acquaintances. After the fight Chido tells Nyasha that "[she] is the daughter [and that] there are some things she must never do" (Dangarembga 119). It seems that Chido only tells her this because society expects him to and not because he actually feels like it. He is the only male character who silently accepts everything and distances himself further and further from his family throughout the novel. He seeks a white family's company rather than his own family's and eventually has a white girlfriend.

The male characters that Dangarembga created in *Nervous Conditions* clearly show that gender inequality and sexist attitudes still exist. Patriarchy is deeply rooted in the culture and part of men's personalities. Even men like Babamukuru who are educated and civilized do not neglect their traditional patriarchal role. The male characters in the novel differ in their personalities and hold different patriarchal views. This becomes obvious when considering Jeremiah who is a weak and lazy man who imitates his brother instead of expressing his own thoughts and opinions. Chido represents a post-colonial character which seems to only defend patriarchal notions out of tradition rather than conviction. Holland (1979: 134) argues that colonial structures are still strongly perceptible in the time the novel is set and therefore men hold on to "various restrictions with little respite ahead".

5.6. Women in Nervous Conditions

The female characters of *Nervous Conditions* all suffer from patriarchal oppression. Not only are they inferior in their own Shona culture but also in the English colonizer's culture. Berndt (2005: 85) argues that they all "live in a cultural in between space that is characterized by the transition from colonial to postcolonial society". The fact that *Nervous Conditions* is particularly feminist is accentuated at the end of the novel when Tambu states that the story is her own without apologizing or being afraid of having told the truth and spoken about the still existing inequalities that hinder girls in various ways in Zimbabwe (Moyana 23).

The women in *Nervous Conditions* are all linked with each other and undergo several trials and struggles that will change them throughout the novel. All of them, though, show different reactions to the “changing social structure” (Berndt 85). Especially the narrator, Tambu, gains important insights into gender inequality and patriarchal traditions which is mainly due to the long conversations with her cousin Nyasha. Tambu accentuates that her story is about the women in her life, “[...] my story is [...] about my escape and Lucia’s; about my mother’s and Maiguru’s entrapment; and about Nyasha’s rebellion – Nyasha, far-minded and isolated, my uncle’s daughter, whose rebellion may not in the end have been successful” (Dangarembga 1). These descriptions already imply what actions the women have taken in their lives to overcome the power relations in society. Tambu and Lucia escape whereas Maiguru and Nyasha are entrapped and rebel (Moyana 27).

Nyasha and her brother Chido both grew up in England and were thus influenced by Western traditions. At their return, Nyasha’s classmates exclude her, make fun of her accent and conclude that Nyasha “thinks she is white” (Dangarembga 95). They also remark that her behavior towards boys is different and “loose” as they call it. These statements show that Nyasha’s education in Britain separated her from the traditional African culture and now stands between her and her classmates. Nyasha is torn between two worlds. On the one hand she is grateful for the education she received in Britain as it broadened her horizons and opened up new perspectives. On the other hand, though, her awareness of patriarchy and the struggle against it eventually make her sick.

Nyasha surely is “the most explicit and most intelligent opponent of masculine chauvinism in the novel” (Ogunyemi & Allan 214). She does not perceive her father as “hero” as Tambudzai does as all she sees in him is an ignorant man who believes to have the right to suppress and control the women in the family. Nyasha’s strength and courage are not only reflected in her words but also in her actions, especially when she defends herself and punches her father. Babamukuru has difficulties handling his strong-willed daughter and constantly feels threatened by her which becomes obvious in his extremely violent behavior towards her during their fight (Ogunyemi & Allan 214).

Boehmer (2005: 182) points out that Nyasha’s “starving protest” was an act of rebellion which was fruitless at the end considering that she eventually becomes anorexic and “a nervous wreck” (Ogunyemi & Allan 214). Dangarembga is one of the first authors to write about anorexia nervosa in African literature. Berndt (2005: 83) indicates that it is a result of

Nyasha's "stay abroad" in England considering that the disease is more likely to occur in Europe and America. Nyasha can neither identify with the Shona culture nor with the English culture "but sees through the mechanisms of colonialism without being able to influence them or to find a place" (Berndt 83). Tambu notices that Nyasha loses more and more weight and realizes that something must be done in order to help her. She is also aware of the fact that Nyasha vomits after every meal she eats. Nyasha's health state deteriorates dramatically and reaches its peak when Tambu returns to the mission after having spent some time with her own family on the homestead. Nyasha wakes Tambu up in the middle of the night and starts screaming incoherent things. Her nervous breakdown is a result of all the oppressed feelings she has for her father, colonialism and the English culture. This becomes clear once again when she concludes with the words "I'm not one of them but I'm not one of you" (Dangarembga 205). After this incident, Babamukuru and Maiguru send her to a clinic for several weeks.

Tambu, who was brought up in a small village and educated under traditional values, has difficulties understanding her cousin's provocative behavior and cannot identify with her at all when she moves to the mission. When her aunt Maiguru announces that she is going to share a room with Nyasha, she is slightly distressed and filled with anxiety.

"From what I had seen of my cousin, I was intrigued and fascinated with one part of my mind, the adventurous, explorative part. But this was a small part. Most of me sought order. Most of me was concrete and categorical. These parts disapproved of Nyasha very strongly and were wary of her. [...] There was something about her that was too intangible for me to be comfortable with." (Dangarembga 76)

Soon, however, the two girls become close friends and "come together in an intimacy which Tambu openly describes as her 'first love affair'" (Boehmer 181). By the time of her first school day, Tambu has already grown proud of her cousin and even "[imitates] her walk and the set of her head so that everyone would see that [they] were a unit" (Dangarembga 94).

It is not only living on the mission, Babamukuru and school that have an effect on Tambu's life but also Nyasha plays an essential role for Tambu's development. Western education enabled Nyasha to see things from a different angle and at one point she explains to her cousin: "[...] when you've seen different things, you want to be sure you're adjusting to the right ones" (Dangarembga 119).

Tambu is well aware of the fact that something in her life is about to change when she enters Babamukuru's car to leave the homestead and start a new life on the mission. Her life in poverty finally comes to an end and she plunges into the world of books and wisdom: "[...] I knew I was being educated and I was filled with gratitude to the authors for introducing me to places where reason and inclination were not at odds [...]" (Dangarembga 94). Tambu refers to this process as "period of [her] reincarnation" (Dangarembga 94). However, this transformation alienates her from her family on the homestead and creates a distance especially between her mother and herself. When Tambu returns to the homestead after having spent some time on the mission, she is shocked at the sight of the dirty toilet and asks her mother why she has stopped cleaning it. Her mother angrily responds, "Clean it yourself if you want it clean" (Dangarembga 125). This aggressive response of Tambu's mother shows that the latter perceives her daughter as threat these days given that her lifestyle is a different one now.

When Tambu is offered a Western style education at a later stage of the novel, she knows that her relationship to home will never be the same again: "I was to take another step upwards in the direction of my freedom. Another step away from the flies, the smell, the fields and the rags, from stomachs which were seldom full, from dirt and disease" (Dangarembga 186).

At the end of the novel, however, Tambu realizes that despite her desire for Western education, she "began [...] to question things and refuse to be brainwashed" (Dangarembga 208). This means that she does not completely absorb the colonizer's culture while forgetting about her own but discovers that she can be a mix of several cultural traditions and use her Western education as a tool "to appropriate to the emerging postcolonial society" (Berndt 85).

Berndt (2005: 82-83) argues that when Tambu's brother, Nhamo, attends the mission school, she blames him for being arrogant and proud. She cannot understand his authoritarian behavior and envies him for his education, which she would have liked to have as well. Though, later when she lives with Babamukuru and Maiguru, she too is impressed by their way of life that is made up of luxury and comfort. Tambu is fascinated by their house and cannot believe her eyes when she sees that Babamukuru owns a garage for his cars: "It was built to shelter cars, not people!" (Dangarembga 64). She is most grateful for the chance to go to the mission school. She longs for education because it signifies improvement, growth and success for her. Babamukuru is the one who enables Tambu to achieve all this and therefore she admires him endlessly at the beginning of her stay on the mission. It is only after a while,

however, that Tambu sees his real character which is “quite autocratic and self-righteous” (Berndt 83).

The only female character who successfully stands up to Babamukuru is Lucia, Tambu’s aunt. She is a young, independent woman who does not suffer from a “nervous condition” like Nyasha after trying to assert herself over the patriarchal structures in her family. Lucia has an affair with both, Tambu’s father Jeremiah and his cousin Takesure. When she gets pregnant with Takesure’s child, she refuses to marry him and asks Babamukuru to help her to find a job instead. She knows that Babamukuru always tries to claim his superior position in the family and instead of criticizing she exploits him for getting what *she* wants. In that way she is finally able to leave the homestead and lead a new life at the mission station. Lucia is an influential figure for Tambudzai because she accepts life as it is and tries to make the best out of it. Like Tambu, she takes “advantage of the socio-political changes introduced by colonialism“ (Berndt 101). She sees in it a possibility to escape poverty and satisfy her personal needs.

Unlike Lucia, Tambu or Nyasha, Mainini, Tambu’s mother, is uneducated and lacks motivation to change this. She accepts her inferior position as a woman and tries to make Tambu understand that “the burden of womanhood” is something that comes naturally and if there are “sacrifices to be made, [she is] the one who has to make them” (Dangarembga 16). Her attitude towards Western education decreases after seeing what it did to her son Nhamo who turned into a different person while living on the mission. She has difficulties accepting that her own son has been influenced by English traditions. Even though she is relieved when Nhamo starts school she later finds that he has become a “cultural foreigner” (Berndt 93). This is why, when Tambu moves to the mission, she turns into a desperate, pessimistic woman who finds that her family is endangered by the influences of this “Otherness” (Berndt 94).

For all these reasons, Tambu finds a role model in her aunt Maiguru who is educated and appreciates life more than her mother. This contributes to the problematic relationship between Tambu and her mother and even goes as far as her mother one day points out: “I’ve been listening to you laughing and talking for a long time and wondering when you would remember that somebody gave birth to you” (Dangarembga 131). This shows how neglected Tambu’s mother feels and one can already presume the jealousy that has established itself within Mainini. Especially when she sees how much Tambu relies on Maiguru, she cannot keep her feelings to herself and shouts, “See what a proud woman your Maiguru is [...] proud

and unfeeling. Do you think she cares about you? Never! You are no relative of hers. It's my blood that's in you. Not hers!" (Dangarembga 142).

It becomes obvious that Maiguru's reserved behavior, when the issue of Takesure's and Lucia's relationship arises, troubles Mainini. Maiguru does not want to be involved in her husband's family's problems and eventually makes this clear to all the family members whereupon Mainini gets very upset. She cannot accept the fact that Maiguru is able to state her opinion without being attacked while she herself is not. She concludes that Maiguru's educational background is the reason that everybody listens to her. Once again, the matter of education plays a crucial role as it draws an obvious distinction between the two women's characters. Mainini might have liked to be educated as well in the past, but was never given the possibility. Seeing Maiguru making her own decisions reminds her of the fact that she missed something in her life and could have done a lot differently. Even though she never admits that she might have liked to be in Maiguru's position, it becomes evident. She even blames Maiguru for her son's death and calls her a "witch" that has not only taken her son but also her daughter away from her (Dangarembga 143).

All five women created by Dangarembga in the novel show different ways of rebellion. While Nyasha struggles almost to death to free herself from the restrictions society imposes on her, Tambu tries to make the best of it by gaining as much education as possible that will help her plan for a successful future. Maiguru proves her strength as an independent woman when she leaves her husband for some days. The fact that she returns, however, shows that she is, unlike Lucia and Tambu, "entrapped" at the end (Moyana 27).

The women in *Nervous Conditions* are the victims of "double colonization" as they are not only oppressed by the English but also by their men (Berndt 114). This *Bildungsroman* is one of the "most complex and insightful coming-of-age narratives in the postcolonial African literary tradition" (Mugambi 199). It presents a young African woman growing up during times of profound social and political changes. Through Tambu the reader can grasp the significance of being female and growing up in a patriarchal society which does not have much understanding for girls' education. Tsitsi Dangarembga states in an interview that even though she personally resembles Nyasha more, she gave voice to Tambu who is mentally stable and not Anglicized like Nyasha. In this way it might be easier for the great majority of African women to identify with the narrator and maybe gain some strength and hope for a better future from it.

6. AMA ATA AIDOO – *CHANGES*

Another novel in which the issue of women and education is depicted is *Changes: A Love Story* by Ama Ata Aidoo. Esi Sekyi, Ama Ata Aidoo's protagonist in *Changes*, takes the role of a young, educated woman who values her independence and education highly. The other two female characters are Opokuya and Fusena. The three women lead very different lives not only in terms of family formation but also in their personal aspirations and identities as women. Despite all these differences, they undergo similar struggles in post-independent Ghana. The line between tradition and modernity is still a very thin one and women encounter difficulties when trying to break from traditions. This chapter tries to demonstrate in how far Western education affects Ghanaians. Like Tambu, a character explored in a previous chapter, these women attempt to find their place in a male-dominated environment in a new Africa.

6.1. The role of Western education in Ghana and its reflection in *Changes*

The first European settlers come to Ghana in the fifteenth century. At first the Portuguese arrive and are then followed by the British hoping to find gold on the coast. From that time on a lot of European trading places are created on the coast which is now referred to as the Gold Coast. Ghana becomes the most important African country for Europe not only because of the gold but also the slave trade which has become the main merchandise. Enslaved Africans are shipped to North and South America to work on the plantations and later European countries such as Denmark, France, Germany, Portugal and the Netherlands all take part in the slave trade as well.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the first coastal urban centers developed. These cities which were once fishing villages had turned into intensive European trading places. Especially the Ashante, which were one of the dominant Ghanaian states, expanded towards the coast in order to trade in “guns, powder, cloth, and rum in exchange for slave surpluses (Foster 42-43). The consequence of this coastal trade was the “transformation of traditional [social] status systems” (Foster 43).

Also educational developments, which took place during that time, affected the traditional society. The first schools have been introduced by the Portuguese on the Gold Coast and were

intact until 1644 with the end of their coastal occupation. Other educational experiments have been conducted by the Dutch, who constructed a school in Elmina, which remained for two hundred years. The Danes founded a school in Christianborg in 1722 and Thomas Thompson, an English missionary started a similar institution at Cape Coast Castle in 1751 (Foster 44). The main aims of these early schools were to increase reading and writing skills as well as biblical instructions. However, most Africans were not interested in sending their children to European schools. Foster (1965: 45) argues that it was mainly those Africans who “were already marginal or peripheral to traditional status structures” that decided to profit from the education. It was only in the early nineteenth century that educational institutions were of greater interest and even a separate school for girls was founded. However, particularly in central areas of the country, British missions had difficulties attracting children for their schools. They had to use bribes such as clothes and food to convince them to join school. The reason for Africans’ hesitations towards European education was that they believed, it was appropriate and fruitful for “the white men” but not for “the black men” (Foster 59). The whites have always considered them superior and created curricula without taking into account the Africans’, the less privileged, mentality and culture (Azumurana 2). The colonists built schools and libraries almost everywhere on the African continent and by doing so, they gradually obliterated African history. Until today Africans are influenced by Anglocentric traditions rather than Afrocentric ones in schools which leads to a “dis-identification of Black Africans” (Azumurana 2). This has already become obvious when discussing Dangarembga’s novel and characters such as Nhamo or Nyasha who were, after receiving Western education, torn between two cultures. Their identity was transformed and major conflicts within their family arose.

In *Changes: A Love Story* this problem is also touched upon by Aidoo. Her protagonist, Esi tries “to apply her Western education to her relationship with her husband only to regret it afterwards” (Azumurana 7). As will be illustrated in greater detail in the next chapter, there are several situations in the novel, which show that Esi is different from the other women in relation to marriage, work and children. Her way of thinking has been shaped by Western education and made her understand that she, being a woman, has the right to decide over her life. The fact that she agrees more with Western culture has come between her mother and herself, though. Esi becomes aware of this when she listens to the intimate conversation that takes place between her grandmother and her mother and realizes that she could never talk to her mother as her mother does with her grandmother. As was the case with Dangarembga’s

protagonist Tambu, Esi also concludes that it is because of her Western education that she has no understanding for her mother's perspectives anymore whereupon she wonders why they decided to send her to school in the first place and what it was that they hoped to gain from it:

Why had they sent her to school? What had they hoped to gain from it? What had they hoped she would gain from it? Who had designed the educational system that had produced her sort? What had that person or those people hoped to gain from it? For surely, taking a ten-year-old child from her mother, and away from her first language — which is surely one of life's most powerful working tools — for what would turn out to be forever, then transferring her into a boarding school for two years, to a higher boarding school for seven years, then to an even higher boarding school for three or four years, from where she was only equipped to go and roam in strange and foreign lands with no hope of ever meaningfully re-entering her mother's world...all this was too high a price to pay to achieve the dangerous confusion she was now in and the country now was in (Aidoo 114).

The passage shows that Esi is aware of the fact that Western education separates African children from their parents and alienates them from African culture. She refers to herself as “her sort” which means that Esi perceives herself as different from other citizens who have not received Western education. Although she is, like Tambu in *Nervous Conditions*, proud of the education she was given, she questions the way it was imposed on her because now Esi has to face problems that no one of her family or friends seem to understand. When Esi once finds herself in a terrifying situation with her husband, she cannot tell anyone about it because no one would understand her. This is why she describes the state she finds herself in as “dangerous confusion” (Aidoo 114). What Aidoo is supposedly trying to express is that Western education is absolutely crucial for African women writers as it enables them to write and publish their works in English but Western values should not be blindly adopted as they transform and gradually erase the African mindset.

6.2. On tradition and modernity: Love, relationships and being a woman in *Changes*

The dichotomy tradition-modernity has been widely discussed in African philosophy. According to Ciaffa (2008: 121) the central question is what “the relevance of indigenous African traditions [is] to the challenges of contemporary life”. Whether traditions are barriers or supports for new and modern concepts, such as industrialization or urbanization is highly

debated among various scholars. They all have different perspectives and explanations of the concept of tradition and modernity.

The term “modernity” usually describes the social, economic, political, cultural and technological development of a society (Walufa 136). It is used to mark a transition “from primitive [...] to more advanced” lifestyles. Industrialization, capitalism, and finally the creation of democracy are markers of the modern era that had its roots in the eighteenth century (Walufa 136). In traditional societies, the family as well as traditional values and beliefs, are of great importance. As already discussed in previous chapters, the traditionalist families passed on their knowledge about gathering food and growing seeds to their children. Walufa (2011: 136) states that one cannot draw a distinct line between tradition and modernity, given that all societies constantly change and can be both modern and traditional at the same time.

Various historians stress that there are three important stages in the discussion of tradition and modernity (Mamacos, 13). During the pre-colonial stage, African societies developed their own indigenous ways of life. What followed was the colonial era, when European settlers arrived on the continent and forced their worldviews on African citizens. The last stage refers to the post-colonial phase during which old ways blend with new ones. As already examined in previous chapters of this diploma thesis, the colonial period was a crucial one for the African culture. Europeans influenced the continent to a great extent, especially in terms of education and politics. As Ciaffa (2008: 121) states, they “imposed [...] European forms of thought and social organization upon colonized peoples”. Until today, European ways are considered progressive and modern whereas African ways are “primitive and impediments of progress” (Mamacos 13). Various African authors have addressed this issue in their novels by portraying characters who struggle for modern ways of life in traditional families or societies.

Esi Sekyi is an example of a modern, independent African woman who took advantage of the educational programs that were introduced by Ghana’s first president, Kwame Nkrumah (Holmgren 1). Esi has a Master’s degree in statistics and holds a position at the Department of Urban Statistics. She is married to Oko, a traditional, strong-minded African man who occasionally has difficulties with Esi’s lifestyle and particularly the fact that Esi earns more money than him. They have one daughter together and unlike Oko, Esi has no intention to have more than one child. The fact that she is on “birth control” is incomprehensible to Oko

and even though he would like another child with Esi, she continues to refuse (Aidoo 11). Oko is well aware of the fact that Esi is anything but traditional considering that she “[complains] endlessly any time she [has] to enter the kitchen” and even has a housekeeper (Aidoo 12). Moreover, Esi is very passionate about her work and would never take the risk of running late or not going to work. Another fact that differentiates her from traditional African women is that she drinks alcohol, owns a car and travels several times a year (Aidoo 3, 12). Sometimes Oko wonders whether Esi, too, “is an African woman”, and concludes that she is not the only one who leads such an independent life, but “there are plenty [of her kind] these days” (Aidoo 12). This illustrates that Esi and Oko find themselves in a period of change in which women try to break from traditions and orientate themselves more towards Western culture.

Esi feels that Oko would like her to behave differently, stay at home more often and spend more time with him. She thus develops a sentiment of constriction and oppression. Their expectations of a marriage differ greatly from one another and one day Oko points out that he is made fun of by his friends because of her way of life, which makes him look ridiculous and powerless (Aidoo 11). The reader gets the feeling that the statement does not surprise Esi but rather annoy her. She explains to her husband that what his friends think of them is not of relevance to her, whereupon the presumably most crucial incident of the entire novel takes place. Against Esi’s will and despite her protests, Oko forces her to sleep with him. It is only later that Esi realizes that she has been raped by her own husband. “Marital rape” is the English expression that enters her mind (Aidoo 15). When she tries to translate it into her native language and fails, she realizes that there simply are no words for a similar situation in that language. The overall conception in her culture is that a husband cannot possibly “rape” his wife since it is expected from her to sleep with him at any time. After this violation, Esi is lost in a state of helplessness and weakness. In that moment she does not feel “academic [and] intellectual” as usual but only “angry, and sore [and] dirty” (Aidoo, 17). Having recovered from the shock, she chooses to divorce Oko.

In order to illustrate the discrepancy between traditionalist and modern views about marriage, the author creates situations and dialogues in which this matter is particularly perceptible. The fact that Oko is the one who moves out already shows a break from tradition since it is usually the woman who leaves after a separation or divorce. Conversations with her best friend Opokuya and her grandmother Nana show how different Esi is from the majority of women

surrounding her. When Esi tells Opokuya about her decision to divorce her husband, she was hoping for understanding but it seems that Opokuya is so startled by Esi's news that they rapidly change the subject. Opokuya and Esi have known each other for a long time and despite their different family constellations and attitudes towards marriage and education, they are connected by strong ties of friendship. In contrast to Esi, Opokuya has four children and works as a nurse. Her husband, Kubi, is a good man. However, Aidoo clearly shows that he is still in a superior position than his wife when they discuss who should be in possession of their car (see Aidoo 25-26). Although Kubi knows that Opokuya is in greater need of the car due to her daily rides for groceries or other purchases for the family, he eventually "wins" the argument and Opokuya silently but furiously gives in. In a conversation with Esi, Opokuya admits that her chores as mother and wife are too tiring for her sometimes but leaving her husband has never crossed her mind. In fact, she believes that since she is a woman, it is her "predesigned destiny" to endure whatever difficulties may come between her husband and herself (Mamacos 40). Nonetheless, Opokuya admires Esi for her "freedom of movement" (Aidoo 67).

Esi's mother and grandmother Nana cannot understand why Esi wants to leave her husband. When she explains to them that Oko asks too much of her time, they argue that in fact, it is something desirable if a man wants to be near his wife as often as possible. Moreover, Esi's grandmother holds very traditionalist views about marriage. In their discussion about Esi and Oko, her grandmother points out that "feeling grateful to a man [is] enough reason to marry him" and that nowadays, young people do not see the sense in getting married anymore (Aidoo 50). According to Nana, marriage is essential for children considering that they need to be raised by a mother and a father. Esi's attitude towards marriage is a completely different one since she is convinced that a single person can raise a child as well and that two people should only get married if they truly love each other. Nana's conception of love is the following:

Love? ... Love? ... Love is not safe, my lady Silk, love is dangerous. It is deceitfully sweet like the wine from a fresh palm tree at dawn. Love is fine for singing about and love songs are good to listen to, sometimes even dance to. But when we need to count on human strength, and when we have to count pennies for food for our stomachs and clothes for our backs, love is nothing. Ah my lady, the last man any woman should think of marrying is the man she loves (Aidoo 51).

Esi's ideas about marriage clashes greatly with her grandmother's, and when she realizes that what she and Oko have is a marriage without love, she can only leave him because staying in

an unhappy marriage is not an option for her. Esi thus chooses to be single even though Opokuya warns her that there simply is “no place for single women” in Ghanaian society (Curry 180). She also tells her friend that a woman is actually not supposed to live without a husband and in the past, it was even considered “an insult to the glorious manhood” if a woman chose to be single (Aidoo 57). The fact that women are expected to marry a man they might not even love, seems unfair and simply senseless to Esi. Apart from the lack of love that makes Esi want to divorce Oko, she is not willing to give up her profession for a man who tries to control her. The conversation between Opokuya and Esi illustrates this matter:

‘Why is life so hard on the professional African woman?’

‘Why is life so hard on the non-professional African woman? Eh? Esi, isn’t life even harder for the poor rural and urban African woman?’

‘I think life is just hard on women.’ (Aidoo 61)

Cutrufelli (1983: 69) also argues that even today women in Ghana are expected to get married in order to assure procreation. Single women are “social failures” and an unhappy marriage is still considered more advantageous than no marriage at all (Cutrufelli 69). However, there are more and more women who ignore marriage and concentrate on their career. Aidoo’s protagonist is one of them.

Esi’s new life as single woman is free from constraints and obligations. Her ex-husband’s mother takes care of her daughter while Esi takes time for herself. When she meets Ali Kondey, the Director of a travel and tourist agency, she falls in love again and even experiences sexual pleasure, which was not always the case with Oko. Although Ali’s feelings for Esi are very strong and sincere, she only comes second given that he is already married to Fusena, a woman, he went to school with. When Esi accepts to become Ali’s second wife, she gives up her single life even though this was the only time of her life during which she could be herself and happy. Despite her feelings for Ali, she only realizes later what it means to be in a polygamous relationship and finds herself lonely and neglected. Already in their wedding night, she is alone and notices that being married to Ali is different from what she expected.

Ali does not spend much time with her since he lives with his family and has a demanding job. Esi is frustrated, and cannot understand how the relationship could change that drastically, for it was Ali, who insisted on marrying her and giving her a ring. He even had to talk her into the whole idea because Esi was not convinced at first. Esi feels abandoned and comprehends that no matter what path she chooses, she will not be fulfilled because there

simply is no way she could feel comfortable in the society she lives in. Her ideas about relationships and life in general have developed differently from what Ghana has to offer her.

Aidoo presents her protagonist in both, a monogamous and polygamous relationship and eventually argues that she suffers in both relationships. While Oko has no understanding for Esi's urge to work and demands too much of her time, Ali respects and appreciates Esi's intellectuality but cannot offer her the love and time she needs. Curry (1983: 187) states that this might have to do with the fact that Ali is a Muslim man who has been raised in a strict Muslim family in Mali where polygamy is part of the culture. One day Esi accompanies Ali to Bamako, the capital of Mali, where she is introduced to his family. At first, they are not really fond of her given that they have become used to Fusena, Ali's first wife. Later, however, they get along well and Esi enjoys the time with Ali's family. Nevertheless, she sees the differences due to their religions and notices that his parents are very fond of Fusena because she is Muslim, too.

Ali feels guilty and is torn between the two women. In fact, not knowing "to which woman he would be making love to on [...] New Year's Eve" worries him to the extent that he nearly hits a pedestrian with his car (Aidoo 144). His affection for both women brings him into a difficult situation that he is not familiar with. Fusena and Ali are connected through all their shared rituals that derive from their common religion. Besides, he has known Fusena for almost a lifetime, which is why his home is where Fusena and his children are and not Esi's bungalow. The most striking thing that Ali and Esi have in common is the Western education they were both exposed to. They understand each other and Ali is attracted to Esi's strength and self-confidence; when he learns that she did not just leave her husband but even got a divorce, he describes her as "nicely mad" (Aidoo 88). Moreover, Esi and Ali have a similar daily routine given that they both work. The time they spend together in Esi's bed making love after a long work day brings them even closer to each other. It is during this time that Ali remarks something else about Esi that he has never experienced with other women: Esi feels comfortable in her own body and it is not reticent about walking around naked after their love-making. "The women from his part of the world" all seem to be ashamed for their bodies, either because of "traditional shyness and contempt for the biology of women; Islamic suppressive ideas about women; [or] English Victorian prudery and French hypocrisy imported by the colonizers [...]" (Aidoo 90). Esi exudes a pleasant sense of freedom and calm for Ali who finds his time with Esi similar to a vacation.

When Fusena first learns about Ali's new wife, she is deeply disappointed. Not only because Esi is a Christian woman, but even more because she is educated, while Fusena herself had to relinquish her education when she agreed to become Ali's wife and the mother of their children. She followed Ali to England, where he concluded his education. Like Esi, Fusena is an intelligent woman, but she gave up her job as a teacher when she married Ali. In fact, the first thing Fusena wants to know about Esi is, whether she has a university degree and leaves furiously after Ali's answer:

Every other wife in their circle of friends envied Fusena. Yet here she was feeling so sorry for herself, she could quite literally die. She had allowed Ali to talk her out of teaching, hadn't she? And now the monster [...] had arrived. Her husband had brought into their marriage a woman who had more education than she did (Aidoo 119).

Fusena gave up her own ambitions in order to fulfill her duties as wife and mother but she did not expect Ali to marry another, more educated woman. Azodo (1999: 287) argues that Fusena is "the most stifled of these three modern African women". First, her husband hinders her in pursuing another degree and "[forces] her to construct her identity and womanhood through motherhood and in the shadow of his manhood, wealth and power" (Azodo 287). Moreover, she is caught in "a man's world" which means that even though her husband's mothers and sisters understand her pain, they cannot help her and tell her to accept her role as the victim in this situation (Azodo 287). Like Tambudzai in *Nervous Conditions*, women in *Changes* are told to learn how "to carry the burdens [that are imposed on them] with strength" (Azodo 287).

Cutrufelli (1983: 53) argues that polygamy is a widespread concept in almost every African country. However, there has been a decrease of polygamy during the last decades which can be attributed to girls' education. Educated women are less likely to accept co-wives than non-educated ones whereas men still tend to practice polygamy as it was done by the elder generations (Cutrufelli 55).

Tradition and modernity are recurring themes in *Changes*. Especially the discussions with Nana and Esi's mother reveal traditionalist views about gender and marital life and how those issues influence the daily lives of women like Esi, Fusena or Opokuya. At the beginning of Ali's and Esi's affair, one can also find an aspect on tradition and modernity emphasized by the author when she describes the development of the relationship:

The relationship between them soon became what could have been described as steady. If it had been in the village and within a strictly traditional setting, this was the point where some of her father would have marched on Ali to ask him what his intentions were. In the city, it only meant that Ali could take her out: to dinners and such. (Aidoo 88).

The relationship gradually changes, though, and Esi soon gets tired of constantly waiting for and missing a man. She does not recognize herself anymore because she is not the kind of woman who spends her thoughts on a man all the time. However, Esi cannot overcome her loneliness and eventually takes sleeping pills even though she always found that those tranquilizers were “a sign of weakness” (Aidoo 173). Ali tries to make up for his absences by buying her a car and many other material things, but the relationship is falling apart anyway: “That relationship stopped being a marriage. They became just good friends who found it convenient once in a while to fall into bed and make love” (Aidoo 197). Esi and Ali stay married but they cannot be considered a couple anymore. Even though Ali continues to declare his love to Esi, she concludes that “his fashion of loving had proved quite inadequate for her” (Aidoo 198). While Ali has numerous love affairs, Esi is having difficulties in getting used to not waiting for him anymore and ends up asking herself what it is that she expects from love: “So what fashion of love is she ever going to consider adequate? She comforted herself that maybe her bone-blood-flesh self, not her unseen soul, would get answers to some of the big questions she was asking of life” (Aidoo 198).

The outcome of Esi’s relationships with Oko and Ali illustrates that women in both, a monogamous and a polygamous relationship are in a difficult position, and it is always the man who has more control than the woman. In the representation of the three women Esi, Opokuya, and Fusena one can see that Western education does indeed put them on a higher level socially and class position. However, they cannot avoid being ascribed certain gender roles by society.

7. ZOE WICOMB – *YOU CAN'T GET LOST IN CAPE TOWN*

You can't get lost in Cape Town “is the first book-length work of fiction set in South Africa by a colored woman writer” (Sicherman 119). It is a novel consisting of ten separate stories which are connected by the experiences and development of the colored protagonist Frieda Shenton. Like Zoë Wicomb, Frieda was born in 1947 in rural Cape Province, South Africa. As a young girl Frieda and her brothers are encouraged by her Afrikaans speaking parents to learn proper English because they know that it has an important value in South Africa if one was able to communicate in English. One day, however, Frieda decides to leave South Africa and move to England, where she discovers her passion for writing. Race and social class are omnipresent issues in her stories which she experienced not only in South Africa but also in Europe. There are various similarities between Wicomb's and her protagonist's life even though *You can't get lost in Cape Town* is not an autobiography. Just like Frieda, Wicomb had to find her way and learn how to develop a proper identity that allowed her to live in a divided society.

7.1. Women under apartheid

South Africa has always been a country of interest for industrialized countries due to its great mineral wealth. South African mines produce diamonds and gold but also platinum and uranium. In the seventeenth century South Africa was colonized by the English and Dutch, who were referred to as Boers or Afrikaners. When the English turned out to be the more dominant group of the two, the Dutch established the colonies of Transvaal and Orange Free State. Around 1900 diamonds were discovered in the region which led to the Boer War and Independence from England. As a result, there was an “uneasy power sharing between the two groups” until the Afrikaner National party, mainly whites of Dutch descendants, gained majority in the 1940s (see African National Congress website). From then on, the main aim was to continue white domination in the country and control black citizens as much as possible. The entire political, legal and economic structure of this system was based on racial discrimination and the laws that were established led to considerable inequality among the black and white population in South Africa. In the 1960 the “Grand apartheid” was introduced which included “territorial separation and police repression” (see The History of Apartheid in South Africa website).

Kallaway (2002: 1) states that

Apartheid was characterized by the promotion of Afrikaner culture, language, and economic interests, the emergence of a powerful structure of state power designed to defend the privileges of the minority, the restriction of the political, social, and economic rights of the majority, strong curbs on the liberty of citizens, an increasing erosion of human rights, a high degree of coercion and control in the public sphere, racial inequality, and an attempt to enforce ideological control through the promotion of Afrikaner nationalist ideology.

The laws that were adopted affected every aspect of social life, going as far as forbidding black people to marry a white person. According to Wolpe (1995: 60) apartheid can be seen as further development of segregation and as “considerable increase in White domination through the extension of the repressive powers of the state”. From 1950 onwards every South African citizen was assigned to one of three categories: black, colored or white. The black group consisted only of Africans while the colored group included people with mixed heritage and numerous subgroups of Asians and Indians. This Population Registration Act required all black people to carry a pass book with them that registered their fingerprints, photo and information about whether they were allowed to enter a white area or not. The situation for Africans in the country became worse when in 1951 the Bantu Authorities Act was passed. The word “Bantu” derives from over four hundred ethnic groups ranging from Cameroon to South Africa. During apartheid in the twentieth century, however, the word was used in an insulting manner for Black South Africans. Reserves or so-called “homelands” were created for Africans and their families. These were proper states to which Africans were assigned by the government because they were no longer desired citizens of South Africa. Biko (1975: 86), who was the leader of an important liberation movement states: “These tribal cocoons called ‘homelands’ are nothing else but sophisticated concentration camps where black people are allowed to ‘suffer peacefully’”. According to the website “The History of Apartheid in South Africa”, nine million black South Africans lost their nationality in the 1950s and needed a passport when they wanted to enter South Africa. Black South Africans were only allowed to live in white areas as long as they had labor to sell. Once they were no longer “economically productive” they had to return to their homelands (see The History of Apartheid in South Africa website). The problem was that this land was barely arable and many black men had no other choice but to look for work in urban areas. There were only a few who were permitted permanent residence, though.

Stephen Bantu Biko, a young South-African man and a member of the Black Consciousness Movement during the 1960s, was well-known for his political attitudes and efforts. In one of his writings about apartheid he remarks: “This whole idea is made to appear as if for us, while working against our very existence” (Stubbs 82). This statement becomes even more credible when considering the following fact: The total population of South Africa in 1977 was 26,946,000, of which 19,369,500 were Africans and only 4,379,000 were Whites. The rest comprised Colored and Asian people. Even though there were far more black than white citizens, the Whites owned 86,5% of the land while Africans had 13,5% for themselves on the homelands (Stubbs, 82). Biko (1975: 82) points out:

[...] to make this situation even more ridiculous, not one of the so-called “Bantustan nations” have an intact piece of land. All of them are scattered little bits of the most unyielding soil. In each area the more productive bits are white-controlled islands on which white farms or other types of industry are situated.

Moreover, the education system of Africans did not compare to that of the Whites, given that their syllabus was much weaker and less intense. The teacher-pupil ratio was very divergent, too. While 20 white children had one teacher, there was only one for 50 African students. Besides, African teachers’ teaching skills were poorer than white teachers’ because they were not given proper training. Furthermore, the living conditions for the white citizens were much better considering that Africans often had no running water or food which led to malnutrition and diseases. Wolpe (1995: 62) argues that the main aim of all this was to ensure “cheap African labour in the era of industrial manufacturing capital”.

There were, however, black Africans, who protested and fought for their rights. This is why in 1952 the Public Safety Act and Criminal Law Amendment Act were passed. In this way, penalties for protestors against the law were increased. Everybody who did not follow the law, was imprisoned, whipped or had to pay a fine. In 1960 a group of black people in Sharpeville triggered a state of emergency when they left their homes without the pass books they were supposed to carry at all times. The incident resulted in 69 people killed and 187 left injured. Even after this dramatic event that should have made white people aware of their cruel and unjust treatment of blacks, the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act were not abolished.

Even though apartheid deeply affected all black South Africans, women suffered even more (Nolde 1991). As already discussed in previous chapters of this thesis, African women were

already inferior to their male counterparts and dependent on their economic support. Under apartheid their position in society was equally disadvantaged and they were not only discriminated for being female but also for being black. Considering that their husbands often had to leave the reserves and move to the cities for work, they had to cope with the household and the children by themselves. Their husbands were migrant laborers and not paid enough because it was expected and presumed by their employers that their wives, who worked on the fields in the reserves, secured their subsistence at any rate. Women's workload in rural areas thus increased under apartheid. Another problem was that they were emotionally exhausted from raising the children on their own and not knowing when their husbands, who often started new independent lives in the urban centers, would return. So in addition to the already traumatizing effect apartheid had on black South Africans, it led to family disruption.

One of the most striking facts about apartheid and how it affected women can be seen in the matter of employment. The number of employed female workers in 1970 was 1,508,080, of which the majorities were either agricultural workers or domestic servants. The government always tried to exclude them from the labor market. However, there were more and more women who worked illegally as domestic servants or farm workers in white areas. Only a few skilled and professional women became teachers or nurses. Until 1973 there were "no African women lawyers, judges, magistrates, engineers, architects, chemists, pharmacists or veterinary surgeons" (see African National Congress website). Even those women, who were educated, and skilled, earned much less than black males and only eight percent of white males' income. The fact that there were more women working as domestic servants in white families' homes than men can be explained with the lack of female education. Men often looked for a different kind of work but women did not really have any other option as they did not have the required skills.

7.2. The Bantu education act

The Bantu education act was passed in 1953 and was one of the worst and most racist laws during apartheid. Black and white education has always been separated but Africans schools were run by missionaries and had some state aid. Missionaries always ensured the same quality of indigenous' and colonists' schools in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (Kallaway 9). Later, however, the schools were in the government's hands and the New Department of Bantu education designed a completely new curriculum that had to be accepted

by the schools if they wanted to continue receiving funds. The problem was that the curriculum required a racial discrimination which most of the schools were not willing to accept and therefore closed. Instead of one single public schooling system, black education was now entirely different from white's and only supposed to be teaching skills that were of use to the white population such as "hewing wood and drawing water" (see African National Congress website). Bantu education was designed in a way that neglected a black person's talents or aspirations and only focused on his or her future as servant of white citizens. Dr. Hendrik F. Verwoerd, who was the minister of Native affairs and the author of the new legislation, explained:

There is no space for him [the "Native"] in the European Community above certain forms of labor. For this reason it is of no avail for him to receive training which has its aim in the absorption of the European Community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his community and misled him by showing him the greener pastures of European Society where he is not allowed to graze (see African National Congress website).

This quote shows that Africans were not regarded as intellectuals who were able to reach the same goals as white people and therefore used as "tools" for white society and economy. As a consequence, separate schools for Whites, Blacks, Coloreds and Indians were built. The curricula of black schools was especially racist and clearly presented blacks as inferior to and dependent on Whites in textbooks that were used in schools. It was particularly important that blacks did not receive the same education as Whites, for the latter were afraid of the possibility of blacks getting into a "social or economic conflict or competition with whites" (Kallaway, 10). Likewise, black African children were not allowed to use their mother tongues anymore but had to speak the oppressors' language, hence Afrikaans. Former students who underwent Bantu education stated that the matter of language was especially traumatizing given that as a young child you needed to be able to use your native language in order to develop your personality.

Rothstein (2004) points out that the system of Bantu education contained some clear similarities with the Nationalist Socialist (Nazi) Hitlerite Germany. With this new legislature, a hierarchy was established that positioned whites on the top, coloreds and Asians on the intermediate and blacks on the lowest level. Racial classification even found its way into the school curricula which were designed in a way to educate blacks for "menial jobs" (Rothstein 2004). Furthermore, the facilities in schools as well as the quality of the teachers were

extremely questionable. The bad condition of the school buildings and the lack of adequate textbooks made learning difficult for students. In addition to the divergent teacher-pupil ratio, black schools were generally neglected by the government and received little funding if any at all.

In 1955, after years of oppression, first movements and protests against Bantu education such as the African Education Movement were organized by students and teachers who tried to realize “education outside of state control” (Molobi 155). This resistance reached its peak on June 16 in 1976 when, due to too many other problems, such as overcrowded classrooms, poor teacher qualities and the general education system, students started to revolt in the streets and in front of several school buildings of Soweto, an urban area of Johannesburg. People set buildings, which were affected by apartheid, on fire and threw stones on policemen. The rioting spread to other towns such as Witwatersrand, Pretoria and Cape Town and turned out to be one of South Africa’s largest outbursts of violence ever.

In addition to the problems of teacher quality and the Bantu education system, people were influenced by the successful liberation struggles in Mozambique and Angola, which had taken place shortly before, and more importantly by the introduction of Afrikaans as language of instruction in schools (Molobi 155). On that particular day, over 500 people lost their lives, including young teenagers. Afterwards, numerous organizations that fought for a better education system were dissolved. Afrikaans was abolished as language of instruction, but students understood that Bantu Education was “a system training them to become slaves” and formed Student Representative Councils (SRCs) and other organizations again (Molobi, 156). One of the most important student organizations was the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) as they demanded “the recognition of SRCs, the recognition of popularly-drafted student constitutions, the cessation of corporal punishment [and] the scrapping of Bantu Education” (Molobi 156). In 1985, however, COSAS was banned by the government which led to even more rioting among students and parents until a “state of emergency” was reached (Molobi 157). Schools in South African towns such as Soweto or Mamelodi were controlled even more strictly and every pupil was obliged to carry a document that revealed their identity with him or her; otherwise they were imprisoned. More and more schools were closed by the regime, and those who were still in operation did not pay attention to students’ achievement or advancement to higher levels. The crises that South African schools found themselves in during those years, was clearly linked to the entire apartheid system in general and the injustice that it carried along can still be felt amongst South Africans today.

7.3. Censorship during apartheid

Banning all kinds of opposition was an efficient tool in sustaining apartheid. Various aspects of social, cultural, educational, and intellectual life in South Africa were affected. Especially music and literature that supported political opposition were prohibited. Liberation movements such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAN) were banned for fighting against apartheid. Censorship, in particular, was imposed on black South African writers, authors and publishers. Books or articles that dealt with South Africa's history and "infringed" South African legislature by questioning political leaders' statements or African Nationalism in general were banned. Davis (1990: 53) argues that

[...] the traces of the censor's passage were everywhere apparent: pages ripped out, black hands obliterating the 'undesirable verse of banned poets, writers silenced even into the obscurities of footnote reference to their work, notes to the effect that 'permission has been refused by the Minister of Justice [...].

In 1974 the Publications Control Act, which controlled the publications of books and films, was passed. Even before that censorship measures had been taken by introducing the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950 and the Publications and Entertainment Act of 1963. These regulations ensured apartheid's sustenance by taking away writers' "freedom of expression" and the result was that "a whole generation was silenced", so that new writers were deprived of their own country's history (Davis 54). When the Publications Control Act was adopted, the Directorate examined works and publications before passing them on to a committee which then decided whether they were "desirable" or "undesirable" (Davis 55). The Directorate then communicated the decision to publishers and film-producers. This is how so many of the Black African writers landed in exile, not being able to make their works available for the public. Davis (1990: 55) mentions that two prominent black newspapers *The World* and *Weekend World* were banned as well under this act. Speeches which were held by leaders' of organizations such as the Black Consciousness Movement, the ANC and the PAC could not be published or quoted in South Africa and those writers who dared, faced lawsuits (Davis 55- 56).

These laws naturally had an impact on the cultural and intellectual life in the country. During the Soweto revolution over a thousand publications, including films of the year 1944, were found to be "undesirable" whereas only 726 were "not undesirable". In the field of literature censorship soon affected Afrikaans writers, too. In 1974 André Brink's "Kennis van die

Aand” was the first Afrikaans novel to be banned followed by other Afrikaans writers like Etienne Leroux. Nonetheless, it was mainly black writers who were hit by censorship. Some of the reasons for the Directorate to forbid their writings were

- Contrasting the wealth and comfort of whites with the poverty and oppression of blacks;
- Comparisons of the conditions of black mineworkers with the slave trade;
- An allegation that the land belongs to blacks and that whites seized it and
- A generalisation that the whites like their dogs and cats better than they like blacks (The Arugs, 25/9 1979 quoted by Davis 57).

Between the 1950s and 1990s more than 2000 people were banned in South Africa for either being “a communist or terrorist, or otherwise a threat to security and public order” (see Jacobsen 1996). A banned person was restricted to stay at home without meeting more than one person at a time, with the exception of family members. Furthermore he or she was not allowed “to hold any offices in any organization, speaking publicly or writing for any publication” (Jacobsen 1996). The banned person was forbidden to enter certain buildings such as schools, newspaper offices and law courts.

Despite these laws and the strict regime of suppression, resistance persisted and numerous organizations, sometimes even with the support of whites, arranged demonstrations and protest movements. As already mentioned above, the Soweto uprising of 1976 was one of the cruelest events in South African history. It was “a just struggle that shook the world into reaction against the brutal apartheid system” inducing even white politicians to call for racial equality (Jacobsen 1996). It was only in 1990 and 1991, though, that the government abolished the basic apartheid laws such as the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act. Many people that were banned to exile were to return and political prisoners like the ANC leader Nelson Mandela were liberated.

It was not easy to find its place in a divided society for millions of South African citizens, Zoë Wicomb being one of them. She found a way to cope with her country’s history by writing about it and creating a character, which, like herself, tries to find its way in a nation divided by color.

7.4. Frieda's search for identity

Frieda Shenton, Zoë Wicomb's protagonist in *You can't Get Lost in Cape Town* is a colored girl born in Little Namaqualand, a remote area in the north of Cape Town. Frieda is, just like her creator, born in 1948 while apartheid rules the country. She becomes aware of the political issues such as color, racism and class very early. These are recurring topics in her community as well as in her family who values education and the mastery of the English language highly, partly because their family name derives from an English ancestor. The Shentons are the only English speaking family in their community and even though English is the language of the colonizer, it is seen as escaping oppression by the family. Frieda's father is a primary school teacher and "recognized as a local notable" while her mother has a Griqua identity. Mrs. Shenton, a very conservative woman, constantly reminds her daughter of correct behavior which means following the stereotypes among the narrow-minded colored bourgeoisie (Wright 8).

There are several prevalent identities in Little Namaqualand, Frieda's hometown. According to Wright (1999: 8) "individuals carry or are assigned identities that may be fragments of their ancestry but bespeak stereotypical behaviors or features". Wicomb depicts this notion of individuality in her work by creating characters that belong to certain indigenous or settler groups. The Namaqua, the colored Griqua, the white Boers, which were later called Afrikaners and the British are some of the identities in YCGLICT. The Namaqua of Namaqualand were first encountered by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. They were originally part of the Khoikhoi, the indigenous African pastoralists, who were often condescendingly referred to as *Hottentotten* in historic colonial literature. Two centuries later they became absorbed by the incoming Basters, "mixed-race groups of frontierspeople" (Wright 8). In YCGLICT Skitterboud, the man who tells Frieda his story is a Namaqua character. In the nineteenth century, the Griqua were another mixed-raced frontierspeople and one of the most prominent ethnicities in South Africa. However, they were not a legally recognized cultural identity (Wright, 1999; Helmberger, 2014). Frieda's mother is of Griqua heritage. Finally, the Boers, later called Afrikaners, were regarded as "privileged group" even if they were poor whites (Wright, 10). In Mrs. Shenton's opinion, though, the Boers cannot compare to the more civilized British. As already mentioned above, during the apartheid regime these different identities were categorized hierarchically with the British on top, followed by Indian and Colored groups, and positioning Africans on the lowest level.

Frieda's experiences are narrated in a way that the reader can be part of her personal growth and observe not only Frieda's development but also how identities that surround her can change during apartheid. After 1948, Frieda's year of birth, the National Party comes to power and demands total segregation in the entire country. Although colored people were, unlike Blacks and Indians, at first not obliged to carry identity passes with them, they underwent a "similar administrative overrule, that of the Coloured Affairs Department, a parallel to the Bantu Affairs Department" (Wright 13). This rule limited their access to property in their own region. Later on, mixed racial areas were transformed into homogenous townships which is also depicted in one of the stories in the novel. *YCGLICT* is not simply about apartheid, though, but about the colored people's search for identity in a hierarchical society.

When the reader first meets Frieda, she is a small child, who, although not yet fully aware of her country's oppressive history, and is able to grasp the importance of class and color in her environment. When the white man, Mr. Weedon, comes to visit the Shenton family, Frieda's mother describes him as "a gentleman, a true Englishman" (Wicomb 2). The fact that he speaks English and not Afrikaans like the white Boers makes Mr. Weedon admirable and respectable for the Shentons who also have an English ancestor and view the Boers as the enemy.

In "When the train comes" Frieda is waiting for the train to her new school with her father. She is the first colored girl who is allowed to go to an all-white Anglican school. Frieda's father encourages her to go to St. Mary's school even if that means that she has to leave home: "You must, Friedatjie, you must. There is no high school for us here and you don't want to be a servant" (Wicomb 24). She is grateful for her education and the idea of driving a white car one day gives her motivation. Frieda is fifteen years old at that time and "not the kind of girl whom boys look at" (Wicomb 21). It is her father who plays a crucial role for young Frieda as he wants his daughter to commit to certain ideals such as having "shiny" cheekbones to show that their family does not starve, or the hair strictly pulled back as it is a "mark of honesty" when "forehead and ears [are] exposed" according to him (Wicomb 26). Frieda even compares her father to God in one of the stories: "God is not a good listener. Like Father, he expects obedience and withdraws peevishly if his demands are not met" (Wicomb 75). Frieda's identity problem can be compared to Nyasha's from *Nervous Conditions*. Both

women try to understand their roots but are influenced by English values. Babamukuru and Mr. Shenton are patriarchs who embrace Western culture and traditions without realizing that they confuse their daughters by doing so.

Frieda's personal development and change of identity is perceptible in various situations. When she starts at the University in Cape Town, she meets Tamieta, a girl from her hometown and now a canteen worker at the University. Although both girls come from the country and are colored, the difference in class separates them and Frieda barely notices Tamieta, who is well aware of Frieda Shenton: "She too is from the country. Tamieta knows of her father who drives a motor car in the very next village, for who in Little Namaqualand does not know of Shenton?" (Wicomb 46). Frieda still lacks sympathy at that age and it is not until later on that she develops a more social consciousness. Through University and writing, Frieda begins to view the world differently and her life changes drastically. Her white boyfriend, Michael, impregnates her whereupon Frieda chooses abortion given that relations between different races is strictly forbidden under apartheid. The bus ride to the doctor's appointment is narrated in the story "You can't get lost in Cape Town", in which the title of the novel is revealed. Michael explains to Frieda which bus she has to take and where she has to get off before he finally states: "You can't get lost in Cape Town". The meaning of the title has been interpreted by Sicherman (1999: 192) who argues that "although Frieda is not literally lost, for she does get off the bus at the prearranged spot, she remains lost in a world without clear psychic navigational guides, left to form her own sense of direction by seeking – and questioning – truths". The entire novel is about Frieda's search for identity and even the reader has the feeling of being lost at times for in the second story "Jan Klinkies" Frieda's mother appears dead but in a later story, she has discussions with her then grown up daughter.

Michael is an important figure in *YCGLICT*, not only because Frieda is in love with him for two years but also because it is he who encourages her to write. Despite her love for Michael she knows that a future with him is impossible. Hoping to finally escape the oppression she suffers from in South Africa, Frieda emigrates to England and becomes a writer. Her change of identity is especially visible when she returns to South Africa after twelve years abroad. People from her hometown welcome her and encourage her to stay as "it can't be very nice roaming across the cold water where [she doesn't] belong" (Wicomb 94). At first, she is convinced that she will never move back to South Africa again but as she sees the familiar

environment, childhood memories rise within her and she can identify with South Africa more than ever.

Many things have changed during her absence. The Black Consciousness Movement has come into existence and opposition against apartheid is much more visible than before Frieda's departure for Europe. Nonetheless, there are still some things that remained the same as is shown by Wicomb in "Behind the Bougainvillea". At the doctor's, black people still have to wait outside in the dust and heat whereas colored citizens are now allowed to wait in a seating area inside the building (Wicomb 107). Frieda is now more aware of her environment and realizes that one of the reasons for her to leave South Africa was her family's acceptance of South Africa's history and the oppression they were exposed to. It is only at her return, though, that she is ready to speak about it. In "A Fair exchange" Frieda meets the old Namaqua shepherd, Skitterboud and interviews him.

Frieda has a different perspective on many things after her return in 1984. The relationship to her mother is especially affected and her mother is not even thankful when Frieda brings her "a bunch of proteas, the official South African flower" (Sicherman 1999). Mrs. Shenton has always encouraged Frieda and her brothers to learn the English language. It was of great importance for her that her children were able to communicate in English. Later, however, she is disappointed and offended when she finds out that Frieda has become a writer and included "real" elements of her life such as places and people in her stories. Finally, the fact that Frieda even invented her own mother's death in one of her stories makes her furious:

[...] why don't you have the courage to tell the whole truth? Ask me for stories with neat endings and you won't have to invent my death. What do you know about things, about people, this place where you were born? About your ancestors who roamed these hills? You left. Remember? (Wicomb 172).

The fact that Frieda left South Africa and her family behind still hurts her mother. The latter reproaches her daughter to have abandoned them just to "gossip" about their life in her stories (Wicomb 171). She does not see that the reasons Frieda left were partly because of them accepting the system of apartheid and her trying to find her own way out of it. Even though her family is superior to blacks and other coloreds who do not speak the colonizers' language, they are still inferior to Whites in segregated South Africa. This creates a feeling of confusion and unease in Frieda. In a discussion with her old friend Moira, another colored woman, it becomes clear that Frieda is only one of several women with the same identity problem:

Just think, in our teens we wanted to be white, now we want to be full-blooded Africans. We've never wanted to be ourselves and that's why we stray... across the continent, across the oceans and even here, right into the Tricameral Parliament, playing into our hands (Wicomb 156).

This passage shows that the women are “straying” in their society and do not know where they belong. By leaving South Africa, Frieda frees herself from her controlling father and hopes to finally construct a sense of cultural belonging. However, the years in England are not mentioned in *YCGLICT* and one can only assume that Frieda did not manage to escape her problems abroad. Frieda describes England's cold winters as uncomfortable and the fact that so little is mentioned about her time abroad leads the reader to assume that she might have been confronted with racism, like Wicomb, during her time in Europe.

The older Frieda grows the more she becomes aware of politics and makes reference to numerous organizations such as the Immorality Act of 1949 which affected her relationship with Michael and the United Democratic Front (UDF) of which her friend Moira is a member. Frieda realizes that she must detach herself from her father and make up her own mind about South Africa's history and political system. She realizes that her father has no in-depth knowledge about the political issues the country is confronted with when he asks the naïve question: “What would the government need spies for?” (Wicomb 124). Frieda tries to find a place in Cape Town as colored woman and as a writer.

At the end of the novel, she is finally able to “combine activism and writing” (Sicherman 119). In the last story “A trip to Gifberge” Frieda's mother makes her understand that she can only find out where she belongs if she is aware of her roots and accepts them. Similar to Nyasha and Tambu in *Nervous Conditions* Frieda has to learn what it means to be a woman and moreover, what it means to be a colored woman.

8. CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE – *HALF OF A YELLOW SUN*

The last novel analysed in this thesis is *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. It is another narration told from a female perspective, and dealing with women's marginalization in a society which is marked by patriarchal structures. The protagonists of the previous novels, Tambu, Esi and Frieda, all have one thing in common: their struggles against deep-rooted oppression and the desire for education. The endings of their struggles, however, are not effective as they end up without exactly knowing where they belong and how they can achieve complete independence. Adichie's main characters, though, are presented in a more positive way with Olanna being a true role-model and heroine for the African woman. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is a historical novel set in Nigeria which is ravaged by the Nigeria-Biafra War in 1967-1970.

8.1. Historical background

Nigeria has always been a country of great diversity due to the different tribes and ethnicities. Until 1900 Nigeria was "a collection of independent Native states" of which each had its unique traditions, languages, and cultures (Atoforati 1992). The British government took control over Nigeria in 1900 with the intention to "[establish] a unified administration for the whole territory" (Larreguy Arbesu 7). At that time, "the territory" was divided into three regions: The Colony and Protectorate of Lagos, the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. Later, however, the Southern protectorate and the Colony of Lagos were merged under the name of Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria (Atoforati 1992). In 1914 the Northern and Southern protectorates were amalgamated and the country obtained its official name Nigeria. Even though these two areas were part of the same country now, their administration was still separated which led to the existence of "two Nigerias, each with different, social, political, economic, and cultural backgrounds" (Atoforati 1992). Makokha (2014: 112) points out: "[...] the Northern region was associated with the Hausa-Fulani, the Southwest region associated with the Yoruba and the Southeast region associated with the Igbo". This was advantageous for the British colonial government but not for the local people of Nigeria, who were even more torn apart due to the lack of

similar cultures; common citizenship with equal rights and privileges; common laws and a common judicial system; equal rights of all citizens before law; rights to acquire property and make a living anywhere in the country; equal rights to employment anywhere in the country and equal rights to protection of life and poverty (Makokha 112).

Political leaders in Nigeria were always disagreeing, but the common urge was gaining independence from Britain. On October 1st, 1960, Nigeria's independence from Britain was officially declared. At that time Nigeria was a country of 300 different ethnicities and a population of 60 million people.

Instead of acting as one country and profiting from a feeling of nationality after Independence, various riots took place. Nigeria's First Republic was proclaimed with Independence and its president was Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, a Northerner. The situation in the country deteriorated drastically and working conditions were bad. Peoples from the Middlebelt Region in the North rioted from 1962 to 1965 and the general election in 1964 evoked a crisis, for it was said to have been manipulated and unfair (Atoforati 1992). Igbo people from the Eastern region felt particularly humiliated and unsatisfied with the cultural, economic and political situation in Nigeria which was mainly dominated by the Northern government. Additionally, the discovery of oil in the Eastern region played a crucial role for the following events. In 1966 members of the Igbo tribe in the army organized a *coup d'état* in which the president was murdered. A counter coup by the Muslim Northerners, mainly Hausa people, took place shortly after. In 1967 the Igbo people seceded from the rest of the country and formed their own state with the name Republic of Biafra. Consequently, the Nigerian Civil War broke out and lasted for three years. In those years millions of Igbos, in particular women and children, lost their lives, mainly due to famine and diseases like Kwashiorkor. Many women were raped and killed by soldiers. Although Biafra was in an inferior and less fortunate position than their counterparts, they kept fighting in order to prove their independence. Biafra surrendered in 1970 but Nigeria has never been able to solve the problems which led to the war in the first place.

The title *Half of a Yellow Sun* refers to Biafra's flag during that time whose colors referred to the following: "Red was the blood of the siblings massacred in the North, black was for mourning them, green was for prosperity Biafra would have, and...the half of a yellow sun stood for the glorious future" (Adichie 356). The Nigeria – Biafra war was one of the most horrifying wars in African history. Adichie's main character is a young woman who has to

undergo severe struggles in her society, not only because of the war but also her education. It is necessary to look back at the educational history and see how different systems have influenced Nigeria which has always been a country of great diversity.

8.2. Traditional and Islamic education in Nigeria

Before the arrival of the British, education had a very different importance and meaning in Nigeria. Traditional education was the means of humans to transmit their knowledge and can be traced back a long way. The aim of traditional education was to equip young people with the necessary abilities and attitudes which were of importance in their society. “Every responsible member of the community serves as a transmitter-teacher and trainer of the societal norms and skills to the younger generations. They are looked upon as models of good virtues to be emulated by the young ones“ (see History of Education in Nigeria). Each instructor had a responsibility depending on whether he was a fisherman, farmer, warrior, spiritualist or carver and the essential goals were (see History of Education in Nigeria):

1. To develop the child’s latent physical skills.
2. To develop character.
3. To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority.
4. To develop intellectual skills.
5. to acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labor.
6. To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs.
7. To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

These were only the goals of traditional African education. Other cultures such as the Greek or Roman one considered other things such as physical and mental balance or military strength as more important (Sulaiman 86). In the African tradition, creating an honest person who was able to cope with everyday life in a respectful and exemplary manner was in the foreground. Sulaiman (2012: 87) further argues:

Children, according to him, were encouraged to explore their immediate environment, to observe as well as imitate the adults and to discover new grounds and knowledge.

Furthermore, children and adolescents learnt the geography and history of their communities through storytelling and full involvement in the communal activities. They knew their local hills, valleys, rivers and plants. They knew when to expect rain and when to plant, when to hunt, fish and harvest. The elders used proverbs and riddles to develop intellect in the young ones. In all, huge emphasis was placed on complete human development. This was the major reason the traditional education was described as having a functional nature.

African societies expected traditional education to prepare young people for adulthood and this is why it has a “functional nature” (Sulaiman 87).

The other form of education that existed before the arrival of the British colonists was Islamic education, exercised in the north of Nigeria, where most communities were Muslim. Islamic schools were constructed with a clear focus on religion. Teachers, or “mallams”, taught young children the Qurʻan and the Arabic alphabet. This kind of education was going parallel to the indigenous or traditional education but did not provide the needed skills and abilities for the African communities but for the Islamic. The Arabic language was taught and the idea was to spread the Islamic belief system among Northern Nigerians. Islamic poetry, literature and law were main subjects. During colonial times the amount of Islamic school rose drastically so that in 1913 there were 19,073 so-called Qurʻanic schools with 143,312 students attending. Sulaiman (2012: 88) points out that like other educational programs, the Islamic education also has its well-defined aims and objectives such as:

-balancing the growth of total personality of man through the training of his mind, intellect, rational self and bodily senses. Faith is important so that an emotional attachment to Islam is established through the learning of the Qurʻan and the Sunnah;

or

-creating of a good and righteous man who will worship Allah in truth, build up the structure of his earthly life according to sharia law and employing it to serve his faith;

Despite the implementation of Western education during the colonial era, Islamic education is still prominent in today’s Nigeria and West Africa in general. Both, traditional and Islamic educations have some “limitations”, though. Traditional education only focuses on specific geographical regions instead of transmitting knowledge that is universally relevant. Moreover, Islamic education has no proper curriculum and inflicts corporal punishment on students (Sulaiman 89).

8.3. Missionary work

Missionary work was another development that took place in Nigeria with the arrival of Christian missions in 1842. First missionaries such as the Wesleyan Methodist Society and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) arrived in the South of the country and worked in particular among the Yoruba tribe. These two missionary bodies played a crucial role in the implementation of Western and catholic education in Nigeria (Sulaiman 90). In the north, however, there was only one mission station in 1900 as it was much more challenging for missionaries to realize their working plans among the Muslim tribes of Nigeria (Larreguy Arbesu 8). Unlike the South, the Muslim North did not welcome the Christian missionaries, who had even learned Hausa, the language spoken in the North of Nigeria in order to convince the natives peoples of their education. As a result, the missionaries left and only worked in the South again where their safety was guaranteed.

The Wesleyan Methodist Society and the CMS constructed schools in Lagos, Ijaye and other cities. According to Adeyinka (1992: 4), these missionaries focused in particular on teaching writing, reading, religion, and arithmetic. Later, the Presbyterian mission, the Southern Baptist Convention as well as the Nigre mission established schools in the nineteenth century in the spirit of evangelism and education. Their presence expanded with the construction of more schools and churches in Nigeria which all had the primary goal of “building churches and establishing schools which were mainly for the production of preachers, catechists, teachers and clerks for spreading evangelical work” (Sulaiman 91).

Nonetheless, it was soon obvious that missionary work alone would not help the country’s and its people’s development. The scope of the subjects taught was too shallow and restricted, and the native people were not appropriately educated according to the British colonial administration. Therefore they introduced a new form of education which would ensure a better education quality. Sulaiman (2012: 91) argues: “[...] hence the need for the colonial government to intervene in the education of the people, by establishing ordinances and education laws, to control the activities of proprietors of schools either government owned or missionary“.

8.4. Colonial education (1882-1926)

Like most other African countries, Nigeria was colonized by Europe in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, where various changes took place. “[...] the most important sources of change, apart from European military and technological superiority, were the influence of European commerce, religion, education, and government” (Nduka 91). The first Christian missionary schools were constructed in the 1840s and attempted to break away from traditional education, which mainly dealt with “circumstances of village life, such as the life of the family, the market-place, the playground, and participation in the marriage, burial, and other ceremonies of the community” (Nduka 91). A new form of education, which led young children towards Western ways of thinking, was initiated. Gradually, the British also gained political control over Nigeria and soon they were respected and admired by the Nigerian peoples even if they did not accept them taking over control at the beginning. Their superior position and culture enabled them to apply Western education in Nigeria and gain the natives’ confidence and praise. People acquired reading and writing skills in English and obtained professions in various fields. However, there was an enormous discrepancy between the northern and southern states of Nigeria. In the 1970s the percentage of children who were enrolled in northern primary schools was much lower than the one in the southern states. In Lagos, which is a city situated in the South, the percentage was 87,2% whereas in Kwara, which is a northern city, the percentage was 28,2% (Nduka 93). The reasons for this discrepancy were the different educational and administrative policies of the British colonial administration in the Colony and Protectorate of Southern [and Northern] Nigeria” (Nduka 94).

In the twentieth century, the desire to receive Western education increased. It was especially the younger generation who became more authoritative and less dependent on elders who were originally in charge of economic relations (Nduka 95-96). There was a clear transformation of society because traditionally seen “knowledge, wisdom and authority” were essential whereas with the introduction of Western education it was more important to read and understand books, and experience lost its significance to some extent. Moreover, the young generation acquired other skills from the white men which drove them away from the traditional Nigerian culture. However, colonial administration continued to set up educational policies in Nigeria and although in 1925 a Memorandum was created which assured the

“adaption to mentality, aptitudes and traditions of the various peoples”, it was still colonial education with a clear focus on European values (Nduka 98).

In 1926 a new Education Code, which would ensure the registration of all teachers and the “closure of illegal and inefficient schools”, was declared. Consequently, the government provided more financial aid for education. Another change that took place was concerned with the “shift from the practice of condemning and rejecting African customs and traditions, to that of adapting them, whenever possible, to the Christian way of life, which was believed to be of universal applicability” (Nduka 98). This new education system was supposed to be adjusted to the natives’ abilities and mentality but still produce “literate personnel” (Nduka 99). The Yaba Higher College which was established in 1932 with the intention to provide young Nigerians post-secondary education did not serve its original purpose, given that the education offered was of “sub-university standard” (Nduka 99). All the professions that could be acquired at the College were less qualified than full professionals, including veterinary or engineering assistants, or teachers. This was not the first time that colonial administration took advantage of the native people. Similar phenomena were described in earlier sections of this thesis which dealt with the situation in Zimbabwe, Ghana and South Africa. However, Sulaiman (2012: 999) rightly points out that Western education would have never been able to spread and expand as it did if the Nigerian people did not agree to it to some extent. They were curious and eager to experience a new form of education which was different from the traditional education they had been used to. Nonetheless, this kind of education was still not the one which was needed and appropriate for the citizens of Nigeria at that time.

8.5. Problems concerning education in Nigeria

Nigeria had to face several problems due its rapid development and political issues are closely linked to education. Especially the northern cities of Nigeria are still affected by poor education systems. The discrepancy between North and South has always been one of the country’s biggest issues. In the 1970s Nigeria’s society had a literacy rate of only 20% out of 70 million (Arnold 103). Furthermore, “the drop-out rate [was] very high and, for example, the unemployment rate [was] highest among primary school leavers” (Arnold 103). One of Nigeria’s major problems is the education system, which lacks trained staff, funds and well-

functioning equipment. Besides, there are too many different education systems in Nigeria which makes national uniformity difficult.

The national policy on education from 1973 stated that every citizen should be provided with the same educational quality and that “such a philosophy must have its central base, the physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional and ethical integration of the individual into a complete man” (Arnold 104). This vision was difficult to realize because the amount of qualified teachers was not sufficient. Moreover, the concern about the north’s development and progression in the 1980s was always present which contributed to the political system’s deficiency. The discrepancy of students between the north and the south was described by the Federal Commissioner for Education in 1972,

[...] for every child in a primary school in the Northern States there are four in the Southern States; for every boy or girl in a Secondary school in the North, there are five in the South. And for every student in a post-secondary school in the North, there are six in the South (quoted by Arnold 105).

At Independence, however, the education system in Nigeria was better than in most other African countries and its universities even have a good reputation for joining discussions and making efforts for the intellectual life of its students. According to Arnold (1977: 108) there were about ten universities in the late 1970s and the intention was to increase the students’ population in on all of them. Nevertheless, the essential problem was still the teachers’ qualities, and instead of training Nigerians to become fully capable teachers, expatriates or volunteer teachers were hired for one year although teachers are supposed to stay in one school for several years in order to familiarize themselves with the environment. Later, the problem was not that of insufficient teachers anymore but that of instability concerning school personnel. Given that teaching has a low status in Nigeria, many people become teachers shortly after university only to get more privileged professions afterwards. As a result, teachers come and go which naturally impedes the development of well-run schools.

Another problem concerning education is the existence of multiple education systems (Adeyinka 2). Instead of having one curriculum for the entire country, Nigeria has several different ones, which makes inspection and control of the educational quality much more difficult. Primary school durations, for instance, differ from state to state and there are also “variations in the nature and scope of school leaving examinations for outgoing pupils of primary and junior secondary schools in the various states” (Adeyinka 3). Hence, a better

organization of the curriculum would be needed in order to have a broader overview of the educational processes in the various schools.

Finally, a factor that has already been elaborated on in previous sections of this thesis is that of poor equipment. Especially technological devices would be needed in today's classrooms but given that these tools regularly need services, schools are rarely able to afford them (Adeyinka 6). Overcrowded classrooms with damaged furniture disrupt students' concentration and learning processes. What is more, libraries or science laboratories do not have the necessary resources at their disposal.

8.6. Women and education in Nigeria

Women, whose access to educational institutions has always been more of a challenge in most African countries, also hold subordinate positions in Nigeria. Researches show that women generally earn less money than men, but what is more striking is that even educated women earn less than uneducated men (Aja-Okorie 273). Moreover, the drop-out rate in schools among girls is higher, and two thirds of 15 to 19 year olds are not capable of reading properly (Aja-Okorie 273). Although the Nigerian government has taken numerous initiatives to improve gender equality in the school system during the last 20 years it is still difficult for women to progress in education. The reasons for this are stereotypical attitudes towards girls' abilities and roles which are centered around the home and in the family. In addition, parents prefer investing in their sons' education for they will be given better opportunities on the job market. Another interesting factor which is mentioned by Aja-Okorie (2013: 275) is that Nigerians are afraid or skeptical of education because it implies changes and therefore the "fear to lose the cultural identity, fear of moving towards the unknown or unwanted" establishes itself among parents. Nevertheless, the Nigerian government realized that education for women is of great importance. Women's rights defenders saw it "as a vehicle of liberation and empowerment" (Hollo 248). According to Aja-Okorie (2013: 279) it is important to invest in girls' education because they will "accelerate Nigeria's economy and social development by enhancing human capital, slowing population growth, and alleviating poverty". Educated women are looking for a healthy way of life and economic stability in their families. It is true that there has been an improvement in girls' education in the last 20 years but there are still socio-cultural and economic obstacles for females to progress in higher education. Gender equality in the teaching curricula is therefore the first step towards

equality in education. Furthermore, the Nigerian society needs to become aware of gender issues in order to overcome them. Finally, it would be essential to provide girls with the same vocational training as boys and also give girls who drop out of schools a chance to complete their studies afterwards instead of abandoning them. By encouraging women to study and overcome their inferiority complexes, they could serve as role models for other women and later generations.

Nigerian woman writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie created two female characters in HOAYS who are educated and struggle hard to make use of their education in a patriarchal society. Additionally, the country is at war which makes women even more vulnerable and exposed to men's ascendancy, no matter how educated or well-schooled they might be. Kivai (2007: 53) points out that "women's education is a strong socialization tool used by women in Adichie's novels to fight female subordination and oppression".

8.7. Rape as a way to assert power during war

Half of a Yellow Sun is Adichie's second novel and set during the Biafran War. It documents the tragic happenings during the three years in which Biafra tried to prove their independence from Nigeria. Adichie uses the real names of politicians, military leaders, places and events in order to create authenticity and raise the reader's awareness of the situation at that time.

Rape is a way to claim one's authority. By forcing someone, mainly females, to sexual intercourse, men assert their authority over the helpless victim. Kivai (2007: 87) argues that in Adichie's novels, "rape has a deeper political significance than just men forcing themselves on women sexually". There are several instances in the novel when men attack women and rape them, either alone or in a group. These scenes show that there was a clear power differential between men and women, in which it is especially appealing to those in power to abuse the powerless (Kivai 87). Ugwu, Odenigbo's houseboy, is an example which illustrates this desire of power. He has always felt attracted to the cousin Nnesinachi and plans to use tear gas on her so he can rape her when she passes out.

Another incident of rape occurs in the bar where the bar tender is being raped by a group of soldiers, and among them there is Ugwu. The girl is helpless and cannot defend herself. She is forced to offer them her body and let them exploit it without thinking about the girls' feelings.

The most disgraceful thing about this scene is that the soldiers applaud Ugwu and High-tech when they are “finished” with the young girl.

On the floor, the girl was still. Ugwu pulled his trousers down, surprised at the swiftness of his erection. She was dry and tense when he entered her. He did not look at her face, or at the man pinning her down, or at anything at all as he moved quickly and felt his own climax, the rush of fluids to the tips of himself: a self-loathing release. He zipped up his trousers while some soldiers clapped. Finally he looked at the girl. She stared back at him with a calm hate (Adichie 365).

Kivai (2007: 88) compares this event with the political state of Nigeria by arguing that the citizens were helpless and exploited by political leaders just like the bar-tender was incapable of defending herself. Nigerian soldiers controlled Biafra in a way that was most cruel to the innocent ones: women and children. They were literally “[forcing] people’s wives and daughters to spread their legs for them and cook for them” (Adichie 285).

Anulika, Ugwu’s girlfriend, is another victim of rape in the novel. She tries to defend herself and bites one soldier in retaliation they nearly kill her. Kivai (2007: 89) draws another parallel to Biafra and its “battle for self-determination”.

8.8. Olanna as role model in *Half of a Yellow Sun*

Olanna is one of the main characters of the novel. She and her twin sister Kainene were well educated and received both, a Bachelor’s and a Master’s degree, in the United Kingdom. Despite this fact, women are valued less than men, especially during times of war. Military leaders and politicians are almost exclusively male. By ruling the country, their need for power increases and women are thus an easy target for men. This becomes especially obvious when Olanna’s father, who is an influential business man, tries to convince his daughter Olanna to begin a sexual affair with one of his colleagues so that he can financially profit from it. Another instance in which Olanna is turned into an “object for sale and an agent of sex for commercial purposes” occurs when Chief Okonji, a cabinet minister, is only willing to give Olanna’s father a contract if Olanna agrees to sleep with him (Makokha 114).

Olanna, however, has already fallen in love with Odenigbo, a university lecturer at Nsukka. Her parents do not approve of him because he is too revolutionary but Olanna has made her decision and wants to become Odenigbo’s wife. She resisted her father’s attempts to bring her

together with one of his powerful political leaders who would ensure their financial security, which can be seen as “a sign of forthcoming victory for the Nigerian woman in patriarchal Nigeria” (Makokha 114).

Odenigbo’s mother, who is referred to as “Mama” in the novel, is not satisfied with Odenigbo’s choice of wife. In her view, Olanna, being an educated woman, is not suitable for her son. Mama does not hide her disapproval from Olanna and treats her harshly. Even at the first meeting she calls her a witch and shouts at her, “He will not marry an abnormal woman, unless you kill me first. Only over my dead body!” (Adichie 97). She also curses Olanna’s parents for not being “normal” because Olanna’s mother stopped breastfeeding her shortly after birth and her father stole money from other people. For Mama, Olanna is “the Other” while Biafra is “the Other” for the rest of Nigeria (Makokha 118).

Odenigbo tries to justify his mother’s behavior by claiming that she is a bush woman, and feeling threatened by an educated woman like Olanna is a natural reaction. Olanna, being a strong, self-confident woman, grows even angrier for Odenigbo’s attempts to defend his mother’s unacceptable behavior: “She would not let him make her feel that there was something wrong with *her*. It was her right to be upset, her right to choose not to brush her humiliation aside in the name of an overexalted intellectualism, and she would claim that right” (Adichie 102). Mama and Olanna come from different families and their cultures are different, too. While Mama is a traditional woman who suffered from the white colonists’ attempts to impose their education on them, Olanna is a woman, who made use of that education and exploited it for her own advantage. Mama cannot or does not want to see the advantage and for her, Olanna holds a superior position, almost like a man, because of her education:

[...] And on top of it, her parents sent her to university. Why? Too much schooling ruins a woman; everyone knows that. It gives a woman a big head and she will start to insult her husband. What kind of wife will that be? [...] These girls that go to university follow men around until their bodies are useless. Nobody knows if she can have children [...] (Adichie 98).

Odenigbo cannot change his mother’s mind about Olanna but their relationship is strong enough to withstand Mama’s evil that lingers over them. The situation changes, though, when Mama lures her son to impregnate Amala, a young, uneducated girl from the village and jeopardizes Olanna’s and Odenigbo’s marriage. Mama uses black magic to reinforce Amala’s conception. When Odenigbo tries to calm Olanna down and begs her to go through this

difficult situation together, she cannot deny the pain she felt because Odenigbo and her made plans to have a baby-girl on their own. “Later, in the bathroom, she stood in front of the mirror and savagely squeezed her belly with both hands. The pain reminded her of how useless she was; reminded her that a child nestled now in a stranger’s body instead of in her’s” (Adichie 232). As a consequence, Olanna sleeps with Richard, a white English man who is in love to her sister Kainene. Eventually, Olanna forgives Odenigbo and is willing to keep fighting for their relationship.

A woman in the Nigerian society is considered more honorable if she is a boy’s mother than a girl’s (Makokha 115). Amala gives birth to a girl whereupon Mama and also Amala’s mother reject the baby. Olanna decides to raise the baby together with Odenigbo which is yet another characteristic that proves Olanna’s strength as a woman and defines her as a role model. Instead of giving up on her relationship with Odenigbo, she decides to stay with him and take care of his daughter, which eventually doubles their love for each other. Her sister Kainene can also be seen as role model since their father hands over his businesses in the East to Kainene. She manages his oil factories very efficiently and surprises her father’s colleagues by doing so. According to Makokha (2014: 115) Adichie created these two female characters with the intention to show that girls do not necessarily mean bad luck for a family but that they can indeed achieve the same goals as boys.

Olanna obtained a Master’s degree in Sociology in the United Kingdom and is very aware of Nigeria’s political situation. She has a strong feeling of justice and is concerned with the poor in her society. Her attitude differs from her mother’s, which becomes clear in one scene of the novel. Her parents’ housekeeper steals a cup of rice from the family whereupon Olanna’s mother shouts at him and does not acknowledge his pleas for forgiveness. Olanna does not understand her mother’s reaction because “[her] father and his politician friends steal money with their contracts, but nobody makes them kneel to beg for forgiveness. And they build houses with their stolen money and rent them out to people like this man and charge inflated rents then make it impossible to buy food” (Adichie 221). Olanna is heavily traumatized by what she sees during the war. Her aunt, uncle and pregnant cousin are killed and found by Olanna, who wants to visit them, with bodies torn apart. At her return, she is incapable of walking and stays in bed for days. Her health and also her daughter’s health deteriorate, mainly due to lack of food. Chiamaka, their daughter develops kwashiorkor, a disease resulting from malnutrition. When Kainene never returns from the Nigerian territory where she wanted to trade, Olanna’s state of wellbeing gets even worse.

Olanna's struggles can be compared to the struggles Biafra is going through in the sixties (Azuike, 90). Both are fighting for their independence and once achieved, the happiness does not last long (Makokha 118). Olanna has finally achieved independence from her father when she marries Odenigbo but their happiness is soon disrupted by Mama who brings Amala between them. Despite her frustration, disappointment and pain she continues to love Odenigbo and is even able to make his mother understand that she is a good wife and mother at the end. When Nigeria achieved Independence in 1960, citizens were grateful and happy as well but it was not long until the Igbo coup, which was the crucial starting point for Nigeria's civil war. As Azuike (2009: 90) rightly points out, "Olanna's traumatic journey through the Nigeria-Biafra War is symbolic of the state of Biafra itself: deeply ravished, abandoned, violated and volatile and in need of healing". The loss of her twin sister is almost unbearable for her because she never finds out whether she was actually killed or not.

Similar to women in South Africa, Biafran women have undergone "double colonization, the first time by the British colonialists, and the second time by the Nigerian man in postcolonial Nigeria" (Makokha 119). Olanna is an example of a young African woman who tries to escape this oppression and patriarchy by attending university. Yet what she experiences is exclusion by other women in her society like Odenigbo's mother. This is just a sign that this elderly woman has been a victim of colonization and is used to men being in superior positions. Makokha (2014: 119) points out the possibility that Adichie used this "construction of the African woman [...]" as an eye-opener for the African woman, whose mindset has been colonized by patriarchy, to decolonize it and embark on supporting the progress of fellow women physically, mentally and academically".

Adichie creates her stories "by looking at the past and projecting her vision of a future she anticipates for the Nigerian nation and Africans" (Kivai 117). Her aim is to raise social consciousness by narrating Nigeria's political story in a way that the reader can relate to the colonial forces that divided the country in the first place. In an interview Adichie explained, "I wanted a device to anchor the reader who may not necessarily know the basics of Nigerian history" of which colonialism is an important part. One way of doing this is the use of the novel "The world was silent when we died" within the novel. Richard, the white English journalist, came to Nigeria with the intention to write a book about ancient Igbo-Ukwu art as he was especially fascinated by roped pots. With the arising political conflicts in Nigeria and Biafra's birth, however, he takes more interest in writing about the war. Even though he identifies with Biafra and even masters Igbo, he realizes that it is not his story to tell and

gives up writing the book. Finally, Ugwu inherits the title and finishes “The world was silent when we died”. The interesting thing about Richard is that he is a white British character and readers have been disappointed by his sometimes weak and helpless appearance. Adichie believes that this reaction has to do with colonialism and that people would have shown less interest if he had been Nigerian (see Interview: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2006). Nevertheless, Richard is an important character of the novel with which Adichie embraces a global audience and shows that even though he was a contemporary witness to the terrible war and very much in hope for Biafra’s victory, he will never be the right person to write a book about it.

9. Conclusion

After analyzing four Anglophone African novels, it has become obvious that the African woman is still fighting hard to achieve the same status and educational opportunities as their male counterparts. The thesis has shown that African women writers try to make their voices heard by often retelling their personal life stories and experiences. By narrating young women's struggles in male dominated societies, the authors present Africa and its deficiencies in a realistic and authentic way. The most important contribution of African women writers is that they create female characters with the aim to finally evoke changes in their societies.

In the first part of the thesis, the situation of women in pre-colonial and colonial times has been elaborated. A transition from women's traditional roles as wives, mothers and field workers to Western oriented lifestyles has taken place. Contemporary Africa has to deal with this contrast of tradition and modernity which is a recurring issue in African literature and central to the question of education for women. After revealing the educational situation in Ghana, South Africa and Nigeria during colonial times, the reasons why so many girls do not attend school or drop out of it very early, are given. Influences of European colonists as well as socio-cultural and economic factors impede girls' education and are the central aspects of the novels analyzed. Another problem in many African women's lives today seems to be the clash of traditional and modern worldviews, which often impedes them in their personal quests for education and independence.

In *Nervous Conditions* Dangarembga describes the personal development of Tambudzai, a Shona girl growing up in colonial Zimbabwe. Driven by the ambition to master the English language and receive education, Tambu leaves the homestead where she lives with her family and moves into the house of her relatives on the mission schoolgrounds. Although Tambu's uncle Babamukuru is highly patriarchal and controlling, she is grateful because it is him who introduces her to this new world of possibilities. Tambu experiences European concepts and values imposed on her in the mission school. She learns to critically evaluate instead of blindly absorbing them though and is, like Dangarembga, always able to remember her Shona culture and tradition. The second female character presented in *Nervous Conditions* is Tambu's cousin Nyasha who suffers from living between two cultures and never knowing which identity to maintain. The longer Tambu lives with her uncle, aunt and Nyasha, the more she finds out who she wants to be and what way to choose. Nyasha's condition, however, deteriorates and she seems to be lost forever in a world Tambu cannot identify with. Interestingly, Dangarembga

tells the story of Tambu by reflecting upon her own childhood and thus portraying this cultural confusion that is a result of colonial forces in Zimbabwe.

The problem of tradition and modernity are especially visible in the second novel of this thesis. *Changes: A Love Story* by Ama Ata Aidoo presents an educated female protagonist, who leads a life as working mother and wife but one day divorces her husband for his attempt to sleep with her against her will. The following incidents in Esi's personal life prove that the African woman is still not free from judgements from the outside and highly influenced by social expectations which restricts her in her actions and decisions. African women writers thus try to make their readers aware of the difficulties females encounter when trying to lead a life according to their ideas. The influence of Western education in Ghana determines young Africans' lives to a great extent. By attempting to apply Western ways of thinking on their relationships and traditional family lives, obstacles and circumstances arise which lead to family disruption as in *Changes: A Love Story* or violent outbreaks as in *Nervous Conditions*.

Another female character whose development can be pursued by the reader is Frieda Shenton, Zoë Wicomb's protagonist in *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*. Having grown up among Griquas, she is exposed to the English culture very early because her parents share the conviction that you can only be successful in South Africa if you adapt to the colonizers' culture. Frieda struggles to find out where she belongs in this patriarchal and segregated society. Apartheid divides the country and restricts colored families in their ways of living. Frieda thus decides to leave South Africa and start a new life in England where she later becomes a writer. Instead of finally finding a sense of belonging, however, she grows even unhappier in England and eventually returns to South Africa. It is her mother who reminds her of her roots and makes her understand that she cannot escape her troubles but has to face them and learn to live with them in order to come to terms with herself and her country's history.

Finally, Dangarembga presents a Nigerian woman's situation during the Nigerian-Biafran war in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Olanna and her twin sister Kainene are both highly educated and independent. They are well aware of their country's problems and try to fight for improvement just as Dangarembga herself who is active in gender equality and women's rights movements. *Half of a Yellow Sun* is amongst other things a love story about two people whose relationship is being challenged during times of war. Olanna is a confident woman who makes her own decisions and can thus be seen as a role model for African women.

The analysis of the four novels has shown how different African women and their lives are. The characters of the novels are just as diverse as their countries' histories, political developments and cultures. In order to understand women's positions, it was thus necessary to take historical and political factors, which influence women's lives tremendously, into account in this thesis. Educational history of Zimbabwe, Ghana, South Africa and Nigeria has shown how the governments privileged boys' schooling over girls' and how difficult it always was for girls to achieve the same goals and recognition as boys. Despite all the differences that were identified in the stories and the characters, there are several points of similarities between the four novels. Tambu and Frieda are both teenagers whose adolescences are coined by confusion and obstructions due to the different cultures that are exposed on them. While trying to find out which way to choose, they distance themselves from their families only to realize at the end that their roots are and will always be in Africa. Both characters understand that they cannot and are not obliged to deny their African identity any longer. Although Tambu and Frieda struggle during their adulthood, they come out as mature, colored and educated women who found their ways in Zimbabwean and South African societies. Esi or Olanna do certainly not correspond to the traditional African woman who bear children and stay at home. By creating such characters the authors depict difficulties and obstacles adult women have to face. Women's lives are challenged by hindrances resulting from traditional and modern views on relationships and marriages or, as in Olanna's case, war.

By closely examining the female characters of the novels it can be assumed that the authors' intentions might have been to raise awareness of the changes African women are longing for. They accentuate the need for these social change by narrating life stories of educated women or young girls, who see education as way out of poverty and oppression.

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11. Appendix

11.1. Abstract

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Fragestellung wie das Leben afrikanischer Mädchen und Frauen in vier englisch-afrikanischen Romanen dargestellt wird und welche Rolle Bildung in ihrer Gesellschaft spielt. Afrikanische Frauen fühlen sich selbst oft stark von westlichen Denkweisen beeinflusst und machen die Kolonialisierung und das Schulsystem, das zu dieser Zeit in Afrika implementiert wurde, verantwortlich dafür. Aus diesem Grund wird zunächst das Bild der afrikanischen Frau vor der Kolonialisierung dargestellt und erläutert, wie sich dieses im Laufe der Zeit verändert hat.

Anschließend werden Faktoren untersucht, die den Zugang zur Bildung für Mädchen erschweren und es wird analysiert, inwiefern vier für dieses Thema ausgewählte afrikanische Autorinnen sich durch Literatur eine Stimme in Afrika verschafft haben. Diese Autorinnen versuchen, die Öffentlichkeit für den Wunsch nach Bildung und Unabhängigkeit von afrikanischen Frauen zu sensibilisieren indem sie zielorientierte und motivierte Protagonistinnen präsentieren, die für Bildung eintreten und kämpfen, um in ihrer Gesellschaft angesehen zu werden. Während feministische Werke in früheren Zeiten abgelehnt wurden, engagieren sich nun immer mehr Frauen für die Gleichberechtigung in afrikanischen Gesellschaften.

In den nächsten Kapiteln wird anhand von vier englisch-afrikanischen Romanen, Tsitsi Dangarembgas *Nervous Conditions*, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*, Zoë Wicomb's *You can't get lost in Cape Town* und Chimamanda Ngozi Adichies *Half of a Yellow Sun* dargestellt, wie junge Frauen versuchen, ihren Platz in Gesellschaften zu finden, die von Patriarchalismus und Kolonialisierung geprägt sind. Die Romane wurden ausschließlich von Frauen verfasst und die Handlungen finden in Zimbabwe, Ghana, Südafrika und Nigeria statt. Die Auswahl der unterschiedlichen Romane soll verdeutlichen, wie vielfältig der afrikanische Kontinent ist und wie wichtig es ist, auf die einzelnen Länder und deren Kultur, Geschichte sowie politischen Kontext einzugehen. Kolonialisierung, Apartheid sowie Kriege hatten Auswirkungen, die von großer Bedeutung für den Status der Frauen waren. Jedes Kapitel beinhaltet daher Erläuterungen zu politischen Hintergründen der jeweiligen Länder sowie die Geschichte der Bildung im kolonialen Afrika, das auch ein immerwiederkehrendes Thema in den Romanen ist.

Die Erzählungen veranschaulichen Charaktere aus verschiedenen Generationen mit ähnlichen Zielen und Schicksalen. Eine Thematik, die sich besonders in *Changes* und *Half of a yellow Sun* widerspiegelt ist die des Zusammenstoßes von traditionellen und modernen Lebenseinstellungen, die die jungen Frauen Esi und Olanna in ihren Liebesbeziehungen sowie auf der Suche nach ihrer Identität stark beeinflussen. Eine langeinhergehende und weitverbreitete Vorstellung ist, dass die afrikanische Frau in erster Linie als Mutter und Ehefrau angesehen wird und fast ausschließlich für die Familie und den Haushalt zuständig sein soll. Aidoo und Adichie, aber auch Dangarembga und Wicomb, stellen diese Ansätze in Frage und erschaffen Protagonistinnen, die andere Perspektiven und Ideen ihrer Lebensgestaltung haben. Dabei ergeben sich jedoch Schwierigkeiten, da die Frauen stets zwischen verjährten, traditionellen Erwartungen von außen eingeschränkt werden und gleichzeitig nach individuellen Bedürfnissen wie Bildung und Freiheit streben.

Die Romane, die stark von den Erlebnissen und Erfahrungen der jeweiligen Autorinnen geprägt sind, spiegeln das Leben vieler junger, afrikanischer Frauen wider, welche Bildung als einzigen Weg zu einer besseren Zukunft sehen. Dieser Bezug zur sozialen Wirklichkeit ermöglicht es den Autorinnen, einem breiten Publikum auf authentische Weise Vorbilder zu liefern, die sie auf ihrem Entwicklungsweg zu mehr Unabhängigkeit unterstützen. Aus diesem Grund ist Literatur von unschätzbarem Wert für afrikanische Frauen, die ihren Ängsten und Unsicherheiten Ausdruck verleihen wollen. Diese Geschichten sollen jungen Frauen in Afrika mehr Selbstbewusstsein verleihen und das Wissen vermitteln, dass ihr Schicksal von vielen anderen Frauen geteilt wird.

11.2. Curriculum Vitae

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Name: Caroline Neusteurer

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Schulbildung

1997-2001: Volksschule Forchtenstein

2001-2009: Gymnasium Mattersburg

Seit 2010: Lehramtsstudium an der Universität Wien (Anglistik, Romanistik)

Studienrelevante Arbeitserfahrung

Seit 2007: Nachhilfe in den Fächern Englisch, Französisch, Deutsch im Lernstudio Mattersburg

Jänner bis August 2010: Au Pair in Kanada (Vancouver)

Februar bis Juni 2013: Auslandssemester im Rahmen des Erasmus Programms an der Université Paris 8 Vincennes - Saint Denis

Oktober 2013 bis Jänner 2014: Fachbezogenes Praktikum für das UF Englisch am BG/BRG/BORG Eisenstadt

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Sonstige Sprachkenntnisse:

Französisch, Portugiesisch