

# AFRICAN FEMINISMS IN AYESHA HARRUNA ATTAH'S NOVELS

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## ABSTRACT

It is our contention to analyse the women characters in the novels written by the Ghanaian Ayesha Harrunah Attah, *Harmattan Rain*, *Saturday's Shadows* and *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* framing our study within African feminism theories as we look for the connections between the history of Ghana and the experiences lived by the main characters. We will develop the different manifestations of feminism in Africa, starting from a common concern to African feminisms, to seek female agency and autonomy. African Feminisms emerge as activist movements and share the necessity of a positive change in society where women are full citizens. We will trace African Feminism from Filomina Steady, Buchi Emecheta's activism, Molar Ogundipe Leslie's Stiwanim, Obioma Nnameka's Nego-Feminism to Ecofeminism.

KEYWORDS: African Feminisms, Nego-feminism, Womanism, *stiwanim*.

## FEMINISMOS AFRICANOS EN LAS NOVELAS DE AYESHA HARRUNA ATTAH

## RESUMEN

Nuestro interés en este artículo es analizar los personajes femeninos en las novelas de la autora ghanesa Ayesha Attah, *Harmattan Rain*, *Saturday's Shadows* y *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*. Lo haremos enmarcando nuestro estudio en las teorías del feminismo africano para ver la conexión entre la historia oficial de Ghana y la historia vivida por las protagonistas. Analizaremos las distintas manifestaciones del feminismo en África, partiendo de la preocupación común a esos movimientos, la de buscar la autonomía y la agencia de la mujer. Todos los feminismos africanos emergen de movimientos activistas y comparten la necesidad de un cambio positivo en la sociedad donde las mujeres sean tenidas en cuenta como ciudadanos plenos. Empezaremos hablando del feminismo de Filomina Steady para continuar con el activismo de Buchi Emecheta, el Stiwanim de Molar Ogundipe, el Nego-Feminismo de Obioma Nnameka, para llegar al ecofeminismo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: feminismos africanos, feminismo de negociación, mujerismo, *stiwanim*.





It is our contention to analyse the novels written by the Ghanaian Ayesha Harrunah Attah, *Harmattan Rain*, *Saturday's Shadows* and *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* framing our study within African feminism theories as we look for the connections between the official history of Ghana and the stories narrated by the main characters. Attah is concerned with place and the people who occupy these spaces. That is the reason why her novels are rooted in the history of her country and the way her characters occupy spaces no matter if they are allowed to or not. By place we mean physical and social space occupied by both men and women from all walks of life; market women, professionals, students, artists, teachers, househelp, queens, slaves, mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, grandmothers, aunts, nieces, friends, occupying either or both public and private places.

It is through the lense of feminism that we would like to highlight the relevance of these women. It is interesting to notice the way Attah's female characters think about cooperation, negotiation and unity; something which is common to African feminisms and even to women writers who do not adscribe themselves to any feminist movement or refuse to name themselves feminists. Attah's women are really aware of the place they occupy and the part it plays in their private and public lives. Most of the times they accept situations that they know they should not, although they do it for the sake of their family. In the end, the different generations of women that Attah portrays all envision a better future, they all understand what refusal means, what to pursue one's dreams means, what the best for their society is, and when they have to step back and when forward.

Ayesha Harruna Attah was born in Accra, Ghana's capital city in the 1980s under a military dictatorship. She studied Biochemistry at Columbia University (USA). She wrote and published her first novel, *Harmattan Rain (HR)*, with a fellowship from Per Ankh Publishers and Trust Africa. *Harmattan Rain* was shortlisted for the 2010 Commonwealth Writers' Prize, Africa Region. Ayesha was educated at Mount Holyoke College and Columbia University and received a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing from New York University in 2011. *Saturday's Shadows (S's S)* was published in 2015 and it had been shortlisted for the Kwani Manuscript Project in 2013. It was published in English and Dutch. She won the Miles Morland Scholarship 2016 for her nonfiction proposal, *Kola! From Caravans to Coca Cola* where she would outline the history of the kola nut from its West African origins. Her last novel *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* was published in 2018. None of the three novels have been translated into Spanish. Apart from these novels, she has also written non-fiction, articles and essays published in several magazines such as *New York Magazine*, *Imagine Africa*, *African Magazine*, *Asymptote Magazine* *Accra Daily Mail*, *801 Magazine* and *Yachting Magazine*. She has also written short stories and she has had "Ekow" published in the *Caine Prize Writers' Anthology 2010 Work in Progress and Other Stories* also included in the Spanish anthology *Ellas también cuentan*.

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In order to analyse Attah's female characters in her novels, we will briefly develop the different manifestations of feminism in Africa, paying attention to the fluid character of these movements. We will depart from a common concern to African feminisms, to seek female agency and autonomy. In "Theorizing African Feminisms", Pinkie Mekgwe finds common to African Feminisms the fact that they emerge as activist movements and share the necessity of a positive change in society where women are full citizens. As a method, we will trace African Feminism from, to name a few, Filomina Chioma Steady who in 1981 addressed female autonomy and co-operation; Buchi Emecheta who wrote about the importance of activism for African women; Molaria Ogundipe Leslie's *STIWANISM*, Obioma Nnameka's *Nego-Feminism* which is based on negotiation and cooperation, to Ecofeminism connected to Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement which advocates for women in rural communities putting forward their genuine voice speaking out for their human, environmental, civil and political rights. From this starting point, we will discuss central issues in African Feminisms which will be exemplified in Ayesha Harruna Attah's novels to show the way different generations of women get together in action to change the fixed structures which do not allow them to rule their lives.

In *Harmattan Rain*, she tells about the life of three generations of women in the same family alongside the history of Ghana since 1957 up to 1990s. In an interview for *Circumspectre*, Attah said that she had got inspiration from her grandmother and mother's times and experiences and had tied them together with hers. The lives of these women run parallel to Ghana's history. Lizzie's enthusiastic point of view about Ghana's independence, together with the role played by Nkrumah and his praise to the work done by women to achieve independence from British rule, is the spirit which underlies the novel. In *Harmattan Rain*, Attah highlights those facts of Ghana's history which influence the lives of the characters. Angela Thompsell summarizes Ghana's history after independence. Ghana's first President, Kwame Nkrumah, was ousted nine years after independence, and for the next twenty-five years, Ghana was typically governed by military rulers, with varying economic impacts. In 1964, Nkrumah pushed a constitutional amendment that made Ghana a one-party state, and himself the life president. On 24 February 1966, a group of officers led a coup, overthrowing Nkrumah. The military-police National Liberation Council drafted constitution for the Second Republic. Elections were held in 1969 and the Progress Party, headed by Kofi Abrefa Busia, won them. Busia became the Prime Minister, and a Chief Justice, Edward Akufo-Addo became the President. Busia implemented austerity measures which were deeply unpopular. On 13 January 1972, Lieutenant Colonel Ignatius Kutu Acheampong successfully overthrew the government after a period of unrest and the agreement to have a civilian and military government. As the country prepared for elections in 1979, Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings and several other junior officers launched a coup. They weren't successful at first, but another group of officers broke them out of jail. Rawlings made a second, successful coup attempt and overthrew the government. They executed several members of the military government, including the former leader, General Acheampong. They also purged the higher ranks of the military. After the elections, the new president, Dr. Hilla Limann, forced Rawlings and his



co-officers into retirement, but when the government was unable to fix the economy and corruption continued, Rawlings launched a second coup. On December 31, 1981, he, several other officers, and some civilians seized power again. Rawlings remained Ghana's head of state for the next twenty years (1981-2001). In the late 1980s, the Popular National Defence Council, facing international and internal pressures, began exploring a shift toward democracy. In 1992, a referendum for returning to democracy passed, and political parties were permitted again in Ghana. In late 1992, elections were held. Rawlings ran for the National Democratic Congress party and won the elections. He was thus the first President of Ghana's Fourth Republic. The 1996 elections that followed, were won by Rawlings as well.

*Harmattan Rain* begins a few years before Ghana's independence when Lizzie Adichia's lover disappears from her village. Tired of being beaten by her father who wants her to get married to any wealthy old man to save his farm, she runs away in search of him.

"You little witch," Papa Yaw went on. "Do you want us to all die from hunger? Eh?" He pointed in the direction of his cocoa farm. "If you married Agya Kwaku, he would give me seeds for free, I would plant them, then after the rains, I would yield a healthy harvest to feed all your greedy mouths. But you ... you think only of yourself!" (Kindle position 169-171).

"Yes, she thought, it was now or never. Run now or be stuck. Stuck in some village, making babies for some old cocoa farmer. Cooking, cleaning and making babies. Surely, a woman had to be worth more than that." (Kindle position 244-245).

Akua Afriyie's story develops parallel to Ghana's political history and the succession of violent coup d'états. She is Lizzie's daughter who in secondary school gets pregnant by a married man who abandons her. Akua Afriyie decides to give birth to her daughter, Sugri, who is brought up over-protected. It is not until Sugri moves to New York to study at university that she learns to manage her freedom. In the end, most secrets concealed throughout the novel are unveiled, those which have determined their lives and their most important decisions in life.

In *Saturday's Shadows*, a former affluent family is nowadays badly treated by an economic crisis after the political transition from dictatorship to democracy. The Avokas are a middle class family. Theo Avoka is a civil servant under Doctor Saturday's military dictatorship; he has got a university degree as well as Zahra his wife. Zahra Avoka, the main character in *Saturday's Shadows*, works for Duell and Company which provides women farmers with training, capital and equipment and it helps them to find markets with a commission of the earnings. They have got an adolescent son attending a private school whose fees are causing them troubles. Atsu, the housemaid plays a vital role together with Zahra's mother and Auntie Adisa, a farmer whom Zahra ends up working for. The struggles that Zahra and Atsu undergo in a violent run down city throughout the novel contrasts with "paradise", as Zahra describes Auntie Adisa's farm, a cooperative of literate women who have chosen to work the soil being respectful to nature.



*Saturday's Shadows*, Attah's second novel, is written as the compilation of the diaries written or thought (since Atsu is illiterate) by the main characters while the readers are driven by the lives, chores and deeds of these unsophisticated heroes and heroines. The characters' lives are really delimited by the running history of the country, a country in West Africa in the 1990s. Although Ghana is not mentioned, by the events depicted, one may presume it is. As Zahra declares, "Doctor Karamoh Saturday had given up his military regime and was now president of our fledging democratic country, but everyone knows a zebra never changes its stripes" (S'S S 9). In the 1990s, a housecleaning exercise was conducted in Ghana. Its aim was, according to the editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, to purge Ghanaian society of all the corruption and social injustices that they perceived to be at the root of their coup d'état. Besides the killings of the Supreme Court justices, military officers and the killings and disappearance of over 300 other Ghanaians occurred. These killings were also relevant in Attah's first novel, *Harmattan Rain*. As we have said before, she is interested in the effects of history in her characters. Edward Brenya et al address the violence exerted by the military government at the time.

In the midst of this confrontation between populist forces and the legal establishment, the country was shocked by the news of the kidnap and murder of three high court judges and a retired army officer. On the night of June 30, 1982, gunmen abducted Mrs. Justice Cecilia Koranteng-Addow, Mr. Justice Sarkodee, Mr. Justice Agyepong, and Major Sam Acquah from their Accra homes. While no clear cut evidence linked the murders to the PNDC, it could be seen by Gyimah-Boadi and Rothchild as a result of the general lawlessness that has come to prevail in Ghana since the December 1982 coup and the patent antagonism that supporters of the Rawlings regime have directed toward the professional and managerial classes, and in particular toward the legal profession. Semblance of this anarchy is rife among the lower ranks of Rawlings.' (5)

They also deal with the violence that people suffered at the hands of soldiers.<sup>1</sup> "NDC in contemporary times as the so-called 'foot soldiers' of the party resort to violence and sometimes destructive behaviour in matters for which consensus becomes difficult to reach." (5)

At a time when violence was sadly common and a series of women's murders attributed to the military state were taking place, there was social unrest which permeated the existence of the citizens. Women had to face fear as they carried out with their daily tasks. Zahra Avoka's housemaid embodies women's fear. She is illiterate but she can see from the news on television that another woman has been assassinated in a spot quite familiar to her as she walks this road back home every day. She gets acquainted with a young man who was once a "Saturday boy", "trained to punish greed and it didn't matter if you were man, woman or child." (277)

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<sup>1</sup> In *Saturday's Shadows*, Ayesha Attah introduces Nasar, one of those soldiers, a 'Saturday boy' to recount what their actions were.



She experiences contradictory feelings as she has learnt that the man she is in love with has a violent past, so that she is not sure about their relationship any longer. Attah returns to that experience in *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* in which Aminah who has been taken away from her family in a slave's raid, falls in love with a slave raider. "Her thoughts drifted back to Moro. If he was as kind as he seemed to be –constantly offering to help– why did he raid villages, split up families, sell people? These questions scratched at her insides and prevented her from even trying to be friends with him" (188).

Later in the novel,

"I wish you didn't kidnap and sell people," said Aminah, before she could stop herself. Saying those words made her bolder. "Why did you want to buy me? To make me your slave?" "No. Not to make you my slave. [...] I felt like I'd been searching for you without knowing I'd been searching. It felt as if every horrible thing I'd done in my past was so I could find you." He paused, then said, "I'm sorry for everything you have suffered." In Botu, Eeyah (Aminah's grandmother) often talked about "licabili." Aminah had never given it much thought. It was the belief that whatever path you took in life, it would take you where it was supposed to take you. [...] Maybe things occurred just because and there was no why (190).

In this novel, Attah places the story in pre-colonial Ghana, where in spite of the legal abolition of slavery, slave commerce was still a thriving business. The story focuses on the period right before the war in Salaga in 1892 until the downfall of Salaga to German forces in 1897. The lives of the characters are affected by the scramble for Africa which took place between 1881 and 1914. Attah deals with internal fights for power within African chieftaincies as well as European intervention to take away native power. She also deals with internal slave trade, the role of women in Muslim societies and the encounter of native religions and those brought by the caravan trades from the North, together with the European influence. Wurche is a princess and Aminah is a slave girl and both run different lives until their destinies meet in Salaga. Young Aminah lives peacefully in Botu until she is brutally taken away in a slave's raid. All this experience turns her into a resilient woman. Wurche is the daughter of a chief desperate to take an active part in her father's court. Against her will, she has to get married to please her father's lust for power: "You're doing me [...] not just me, but to our entire Kanyase line, a favor. [...] we have to deal with hard realities, Wurche", Etuto continued. "War is coming" (46-7).

Salaga was a Muslim trading town designated by Asante in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Professor Akyeampong in "Northern factors in Asante History" mentions Salaga as the most prominent market in precolonial Ghana for kola and slaves. In *Salaga: The Struggle for Power*, Braimah and Goody go back to different written resources about the relevance of the city at the time Ayesha Attah sets her novel. Salaga's strategic relevance in the commerce both of goods and people. One of them is Heinrich Klose's description of the people at Salaga. "Because of the many slaves who converge upon Salaga from many different parts of the continent, a mixing of races has taken place. [...] It is only thanks to the slave trade that Salaga became so famous. Its geographical position is even better than that of Kete" (170). Later on, he



explains the provenance of the slaves, “It was mostly the Dagomba who kidnapped people from Grunshi and other neighbouring districts and sold them as slaves. [...] Some Muslim colonies, situated on the borders of the pagan areas, also took part in the slave raids. [...] there is another kind of slavery which originates in native law and which is nothing but a lawful punishment for a criminal.” (171).

Professor Emmanuel Akyeampong in an Interview with Salagawura, Chief of Salaga, Alhaji Kanyiti Osman Fusheini, also collects the key role of Salaga at the time as a slave market: “(Chief): Salaga has been established for a long time. As our grandfathers told us, here started as a market. People started coming and it expanded. [...] Salaga was strategically placed and it was spreading and where we have a market that is where people came.” (1) In another interview with Kpembewura, Chief of Kpembe, Alhaji Ibrahim Haruna, they explain the origin of slavery in the area:

P.A.: Can you tell me how the whole slave trade was organized? The whole set up. Is it the same Hausa traders who bring them?

K.P.W.: It was not only the Hausas; we have the Zambarama and the Mossi they also came in and they all brought slaves. Some Gonjas also raided, they went further north.

P.A.: So when Gonjas raided did they do that to pay tribute to Asante or to sell or both?

K.P.W.: No, they raided because within ourselves we also pay tribute. Others pay tribute to us so all the three gates (or families) also had the areas that they raided. ... So these gates paid tributes to the Kpembewura (2).

Taking into account the relevance of Salaga and its slave market activity at the time, Attah represents Atsu and Aminah in *HWS*, examining the way history has treated them. They both find love with men who have enslaved, brutalized and even killed both women and men alike. Is it that destiny is a cruel joke? Attah’s women are strong and resilient as they are pushed to take personal choices forgetting everything about their family or their fellow women.

Her life [Aminah’s] had been treated as if she were no different from cattle or kola nuts. Stripped of control... This was a new start. She started dreaming of a shoe workroom, one that she and Moro would build, that she would decorate to remind herself of Botu [her village]. She would make shoes to sell, while Moro worked the earth, and their children would grow up learning to create and live with the land. And then, one day, her father would come by on his albino donkey and say he lost his way home (231).

Achille Mbembe talks about a quota of forgetting to carry on living. This is from our point of view what makes a difference in the literary production of African women writers; they envision a better future. In her diary, Zahra writes: “Either the madness seeped in from the outside, or it was a latent virus lurking in each of us ...I know exactly when it hit me. In the crash, the crowd gathers to know what will





happen. Now it is time for the collective anger to erupt after 17 years of fear to be caned by the Saturday boys or to disappear” (9-10).

We aim to analyze the female characters in these novels as the paradigm for the differences between African women depending on their class, religion and social position. For that reason, we will frame our analysis within African Feminist theories to show that in a way or another all these women share those thoughts. We will be faced with illness embodied in Zahra's suffering and whose spiritual healing will reside in the hands of older women who stress and stand for the importance of the community and the connection to nature to achieve their goals, contrary to the individualistic Zahra whose behavior both public and private is distant from her African past. In fact, she boasts of her British accent the reason why people treat her in a more respectful way and with some kind of admiration. By the end of the novel and once she has been fired from work, dismissed by her lover and badly treated by her illness, Zahra goes back to her proper heritage. She remembers her father and everything she learnt from him, the way her parents loved each other and herself, and her connection with the land as well as the importance of both community and negotiation.

Zahra Avoka praises the role of their mothers and grandmothers fighting for the chance for the younger generations to take advantage of education. On their part, the older women agree on the way Zahra envisions the future, who in the middle of personal turmoil, realizes that she has to go ahead to continue her mother's struggle. She is aware of the sacrifices older women had made for younger generations to live a better life. She has also learnt how important is the personal, spiritual connection among women to build a project for the betterment of society, both men and women but mostly for women. Zahra stands for “a return to the local, evidenced in the spread of “autochthony”, which is the embracing of a sense of self derived from “being born from the soil [...] a return to the most authentic form of belonging, that is, the experience of being rooted, by blood, within a place” (BAKER 24). Zahra, Wurche, Aminah, and Akua Afriyie stand for the second generation of literate women who keep their country moving and prospering and who choose to remain in the land.

As it has been stated, our frame of analysis is African Feminism which took shape when Feminism in the third wave experienced a split in the 1980s. Women who did not belong to the First World, women who dwelled (lived in a place and in a particular way) outside the centre, that is from the periphery, started questioning their position within a movement led by white Western women who had never taken into account those different from them. From this point of view, the West positions itself in a privileged centre keeping the east in the economic, political and cultural border. As Ziri6n and Idarraga claim, it produces knowledge as well as subjects and identities since it speaks for the ‘Other’ dominating and /or silencing those other voices.

Refusing to accept other realities, other women, feminism in the centre is one more manifestation of neocolonialism. Chandra Tapalde Mohanty in her seminal essay “Under Western Eyes” (1988), criticizes the monolithic vision of Third World women, as a group deprived of power, living in poverty and scarcity, uneducated and constrained by cultural and traditional practices. Mohanty advocates for the





deconstruction of feminist hegemonic knowledge while reconstructing autonomous knowledge and strategies situated in history, geographies and cultures in the Third World.

For Peres Díaz, “el valor del feminismo debe cifrarse en la no universalización del modelo de resistencia de las mujeres ante la opresión que sufren, pues en los diferentes lugares donde existe dicha opresión las respuestas van a variar en función del contexto” (158).

Apart from being oppressed under patriarchal modes they were also subjected to their race, class or religion. “Frente a esta visión universalista conviene revitalizar un enfoque interseccional, que aborde la conexión entre los conceptos de raza, clase, género y sexualidad [...] [y] que surge como consecuencia de la superposición de exclusiones de matriz colonial” (LUGONES 164).

Within this frame of knowledge, we tackle the specificity of African feminisms. Women social movements sprung from the fight for independence side by side with their male counterparts. This fight for freedom saw that once in power, men forgot about equality in rights and representation. African feminisms are diverse but at the same time they share some common features, namely intersectional analysis, the need to name themselves and to define their own agenda as well as the vindication of equality within the community. We will outline the development of African feminist theory besides grassroots women’s movements in Africa.

Because of its broad scope, we will be dealing with African feminisms both as an activist movement and as a body of ideas that underline the need for a positive transformation of society such that women are not marginalized but are treated as full citizens in all spheres of life.

In 1981, Filomina Chioma Steady in *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally* defined African feminisms as “emphasizing female autonomy and co-operation; nature over culture; the centrality of children, multiple mothering and kinship.” (28). Steady also considers paramount the involvement of men which underlies every African theorization of feminism: the need for cooperation. As Steady does, Carole Boyce-Davies and Ann Graves in *Ngambika* recognize the common struggle of African men and women, challenging men to be aware of those aspects of women subjugation which are not common to the generalized oppression of all African people (8).

The Nigerian Buchi Emecheta has highlighted in her novels, such as *The Joys of Motherhood*, the importance of activism for the African woman trying to address the problems derived from social inequality. She has also addressed the difficulty of naming faced by feminists in Africa (BRYCE 1983). Similarly, Molaria Ogundipe Leslie in 1987 defines herself as “a woman, an African and a third world ppero” (10). She argued for an African-centred feminism which she termed STIWANISM or Social Transformation Including Women in Africa in her book *Re-Creating Ourselves*. Stiwanism advocates for resisting Western feminism giving specific attention to African women and bringing to the forefront indigenous feminism together with the inclusion and participation in the socio-political transformation of the African continent.

Womanism is the term that the African American Alice Walker had created which describes a womanist as “someone who appreciates and prefers women’s



culture [...] committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female” (WALKER XI). It was adopted in Africa by Chikwenge Ogunyemi and Mary Modupe Kolawole who evolved in the direction of African Womanism. However, the Nigerian Womanist literary critic Oyeronke Oyewumi does not agree with the concept of “sisterhood” in Africa as from her point of view, it demands theorization and it is alien to African cultures. Instead, she prefers to emphasize motherhood.

The Ghanaian writer, Ama Ata Aidoo in an interview with María Frías, asserts that there are womanists and feminists, but the most important thing is what they are trying to get at. She discusses the validity of the term for African women in terms of clarity. “I learnt my first feminist lessons in Africa,” she says “feminism is not new and I really refuse to be told I’m learning feminism from abroad.”(26)

Ayesha Harruna Attah in the blog “Feminist Book Fortnight” names herself a womanist:

There was a word that reassured me on my journey, one that became a bridge between the way I previously perceived feminism and my embracing of it: womanist. Coined by Alice Walker, in *In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens*, she wrote that “Womanist is to feminist, as purple is to lavender,” and that it is “Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female.” It was the crystallization of what I had felt in college, it explained why I’d been so hesitant to be called feminist. It was because the feminism I saw in college didn’t include me as a black woman, as an African. I loved the term womanist for embracing everyone. (1)

It is in this way that we understand the role assigned by Attah to her male characters as well. All throughout the novels we find no difference in the way they behave and understand life.

Karen Warren in 1987 in “Feminism and Ecology: Making connections” she argued “for a basic ecofeminist position: that feminist ought to pay attention to environmental issues and ecological interdependencies” (CUOMO 1). Ecofeminism grows from the idea that a woman’s ethics are closer to nature than a man’s and it revalues feminine traits. It aims to connect politics with spiritualism. The control over and exploitation of nature is linked to control over and exploitation of human beings. The grassroots environmental movement is fueled by persistence, resistance, stubbornness, passion and outrage. In the South women were experiencing particular hardship, since commercial farming invaded their traditional way of life as they were drawn into highly exploitative and health threatening forms of production. Common to women’s campaigns are their vulnerability to environmental problems and their lack of access to the centres of decision making which cause them. Ecofeminist practices in Africa can be seen in Kenya with the Green Belt Movement led by Wangari Mathai who advocates for women in rural communities by putting forward their genuine voice speaking out for their human, environmental, civil and political rights.

The idea of putting forward Africans’ genuine voice, that Africans should find African solutions to African problems, is also shared by Ayesha Attah who in an interview in Africa Book Club when asked about her projects, mentioned “I am working with a group that translates ancient African documents. [...] The



project's aim is to give Africans access to the ways in which our ancestors lived their philosophies, values and worldviews--so that we can find African solutions to African problems" (3).

Obioma Nnaemeka coined the term nego- feminism in 2004. Nego-feminism is the feminism of negotiation.

In the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are the principles of negotiation, give and take, compromise and balance. African feminisms challenge through negotiation and compromise. African women do feminism; feminism is what they do for themselves and for others (377-8).

Among the drawbacks that Nnaemeka still finds in neocolonial Africa, it is noteworthy the fact exposed about the double moral of NGOs working in the continent. It is the way they discredit the work done by their African counterparts. From time to time they carry out an audit exercise on their "employees", a situation which is widely exposed by Attah in *Saturday's Shadows*:

In six years of working at Duell and Co. I had never received a bad review. I had even stopped getting reviewed [...] This year I knew it would be different, especially because one of the bosses from our London office had flown in and was sitting in on employee reviews. [...] "Explain exactly what happened with our biggest palm-oil producer, Mrs. Avoka," [...] "They were in breach of contract," I said. [...] "but did you consider just checking in with Mr. and Ms. Thomas before making such a drastic move?" [...] "Well, in my role as public-relations officer [...] I've been, on several occasions, given responsibilities and the clout to make executive decisions [...] 'I didn't ask them', I said [...]. Somebody needed to pay for the company's loss and it had to be me" (216-7).

According to Nnaemeka, for the true development of human beings, there must be a sense of empowerment and inner fulfillment. She mentions a third space of engagement "which allows for the coexistence, interconnection, and interaction of thought, dialogue, planning, and action and constitutes the arena where I have witnessed the unfolding of feminisms in Africa," (377) following Sartre's definition of engagement, that is, the process of accepting responsibility for the political consequences of one's action.

Wurche, Attah's princess in *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, advocates for unity, for engagement. She has been resisting the strictures of her society; being herself a royal and having a brother, her position was clear to everyone; she had to marry to forge alliances to make her father Kpembewura strong. Even though she was intelligent and she had everything a man needed to be a good ruler, she was a woman.

The old ladies of Kpembe said Wurche should have been born a boy, that all she lacked was a lump dangling between her legs. They said she had pebbles for breasts and a platter for buttocks. Etuto said Wurche's slender body made her a natural racer, but he never let her take part in the Friday races. It just isn't done, he said.



The old women of Kpembe also said she was her father's favourite, but she didn't agree with that. He was selective with the things he let her do (20).

Even her insistence on unity and peace against the foreigners was unheard.

The infight among our people, this struggle between us and the Europeans. It's all about finding power, exercising power, holding on it at all costs. The Europeans are a force bigger than our tiny lines. The only way we will mean anything is if we unite. I've been preaching unity for a long time, but I haven't tried to work with anyone. I'm ready to start talking to the women of Salaga. We'll rebuild together. [to her grandmother] Tell the elders. They'll listen to you. Enough people have died. It's time to work together (227-8).

As other feminists dealing with theory and engagement do in the academia, Nnaemeka speaks of both positionality from the social and personal to the intellectual and political, and intersectionality of race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, culture and national origin. For her, it is necessary that for true global feminism we go across borders, which entails learning about the "other", but more importantly, it should also entail learning from the other as the other teaches community, alliance and connectedness. Learning requires humble listeners. Zahra in *Saturday's Shadows* turns into a humble listener when she realizes about community, alliance and connectedness. "I had been humbled down completely, not just by the state of my health, but by everything" (315).

I couldn't protest but I didn't like the feeling of being rejected, which was what had just happened [...] What would they say about me? Had they looked at me and seen, deep in my soul, that I was dishonest, unfaithful and rotten? Could they see the disease eating at me? And even though that was hardly to blame for my actions of the past year, would they forgive me on account of that? (263).

Related to Nego-feminism Nnaemeka developed the phrase "building on the indigenous" after Claude Ake. The indigenous is whatever the people consider important to their lives, whatever they regard as an authentic expression of themselves.

Building on the indigenous by making it determine the form and content of development strategy, by ensuring that developmental change accommodates itself to these things, be they values, interest, aspirations and social institutions which are important in the life of the people. Traditional is not indigenous. It is a dynamic, evolving hybrid of different histories and geographies (376-7).

Attah is more concerned with those different histories and geographies. In the interview published in *Literandra*, Ayesha Attah when asked about inspiration, she answers "It was from reading writers who wrote deeply about place and the people who occupied those spaces"(1). Kelly Baker in her essay on "Identity, Memory and Place", says "Lefebvre's work engenders the notion of place, which, representing a



distinctive type of space is defined by the lived experiences and identifications of people” (24).

We come across examples of people building in the indigenous which in *Saturday's Shadows* are Auntie Adisa and her collective of women.

Welcome, Zahra, we usually start with an introduction of ourselves and what our mission is, and then let you tell us how we can work together. [...] We're a cooperative of women that started in 1980 [...] We're from different walks of life. I was once a school teacher. Some of us are nurses, housewives. We even have a bus driver. She explained how each of them focused on one crop to cultivate, how they were learning to process their raw materials, but wanted me to know that they weren't isolating themselves. Some women held other jobs in the cities or went to trade there, some were married and lived with their husbands and children, and others lived on their own and it was fine. We're just trying to live peacefully and productively. (261)

We have already mentioned the importance of social and grassroots activism. There are two documents produced in Ghana, the Women's Manifesto and the Charter of Feminism that Attah considers relevant when talking about African feminisms she portrays its actions in her novels.

About the general election in 2000, and bill on domestic violence, women in Ghana gathered to oppose the creation of a Ministry for Women's affairs, triggered by the new political situation and the women's murders which took place in Accra, Ghana's capital city. Ayesha Attah explains the situation in Atsu's words: "The serial killer has murdered six women so far [...] One more woman killed in the ritual killings plaguing the nation's capital; opposition says they've found evidence that killings<sup>2</sup> are being orchestrated by President of the Republic, Dr. Karamoh Saturday" (*S's S* 24-5).

The mobilization was supported by ABUNTU for Development and The Network for Women's Rights (NETRIGHT), refusing the sponsorship of patrons who could bias their petitions. The manifesto was the result of consensus among women from the 110 districts in Ghana, each of them with different problems and necessities. It was released at Accra conference in 2004. It sought for equality and higher participation of women in governance, better access to resources to make a living, women's health, women's poverty, harmful and discriminatory social practices justified in the name of culture, violence against women, the disabled, widowed, aged women and single mothers. Their commitment to collective action was important, so as to make a difference to the situation of men, women and children and achieve gender equality.

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<sup>2</sup> We can read the newspaper headline which proves Attah's concern for history in her novels: "Fear grips Ghana as ritual killer claims 34th victim» Anthony Browne Accra. *The Guardian*. Sun 26 Nov 2000.



It is worth mentioning the important role played by women assemblies, among them market women in Ghana. According to Usman, “women’s political and voluntary groups and associations sprang up in post independent Ghana, such as the Ghana Women’s League and the 31<sup>st</sup> of December movement” (154-5), being this last one a branch of the party in the government led by the first lady, Madam Rawlings. However those women were victims of military attacks in the 1970s and 80s. There was an economic recession and market women were accused of it. They were punished in their trade. Emmanuel Akyeampong also addresses the violence inflicted by junior officers on market women. Under Rawlings military rule, he contends, some major markets were destroyed in Accra, Sekondi, Koforidua and Kumasi in 1979. He explains that soldiers even caned nude women in public. (222) Similarly, Abena Ampofoa Asare based on the documents which keep the testimonies of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) in Ghana, which started work in September 2002, examines the position of market women in the country. Since colonial times, market women were seen as a menace to the country’s economy. Despite the fact that they fought in anti-colonial movements, they were under government scrutiny for corruption. Accused of violating price control, they were beaten, their goods were seized and some were even imprisoned. Some of the testimonies in the NRC report the situations described by Ayesha Attah in her both *HR* and *S’s S* as for instance the testimony of a woman “[who] was three months pregnant and one of the soldiers pressed down her swelling midsection.” (ASARE 77)

In *Harmattan Rain*, Attah narrates the violent episodes where the soldiers destroyed the women’s stalls and shops in the market:

[...] two men in green army fatigues ran in, AK - 47s slung around their shoulders [...] “Get rid of all these things you’ve hoarded!” the soldier shouted and swiped Asantewa’s cheek . Akua Afriyie heard the slap. It was quick and clean. “You market women have been hoarding all these goods. Look at the number of boxes in here. Throw everything outside! Throw them out!” [...] “Shut up,” the other soldier sputtered in her face. “If you don’t want trouble, you will comply with the rules. We’re cleaning up. You market traders have been working with the SMC to destroy our country” (Kindle position 3360-3368).

It was so frequent that most women affiliated to the First Lady’s party to pay for protection. “[...] the Movement I’ve been doing really well. The soldiers have stopped harassing me,” the woman was saying. “And also I get more products to sell” (*HR* Kindle position 3710-3711). With Rawling’s second coming under the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC), measures were even harsher with the following fear and panic in the population, mainly on women’s part. Again Attah in *Saturday’s Shadows* makes Nasar, Atsu’s boyfriend explain:

I used to be a Saturday Boy [...] I did a lot of things. But the one I still get nightmares from is [...] I beat up a pregnant woman. [...] We’d been trained to punish greed, and it didn’t matter if you were man, woman, or child. The woman had stockpiled boxes of provisions, selling them at four times the normal price. Women like her, we believed, were the root of the country’s inflation and economic problems (275-7).



The African Feminist Forum took place in Accra Ghana in 2006, in order that African feminists from all walks of life and different levels of engagement could reflect on a collective basis and chart ways to strengthen and grow the feminist movement on the continent. A key outcome of the forum was the adoption of the Charter of Feminist Principles which celebrates their feminist identity and politics. By naming themselves feminists they politicize the struggle for women's rights, question the legitimacy of the structures that keep women subjugated and develop tools for transformational analysis and action.

Ayesha Harruna Attah introduces politics in her novels since the lives of her characters run parallel to the history of Ghana and Africa at the time. In *Saturday's Shadows*, she wrote the personal diary of each character who comments on the parallel history of the country. In this way, all those aspects related to social women movements and grassroots feminism are developed in the novels. For this reason, we agree with Nnaemeka when talking about engagement, being coexistence, interconnection and interaction of thought where feminism in Africa unfolds.

Zahra in *S's S* behaves more like the outsider who does not want to listen to the colonized, and it is in this character in which Attah shows the necessity for African people to go back to the indigenous, "I wasn't usually the kind of woman who needed excuses to do anything. I didn't have patience for indecision [...] Yet since the Christmas party, I found myself hesitating, constantly weighing pros and cons. [...] what to do with the farm cooperative that was taking me for a ride" (112). As Zahra gets closer to a new farm, she is changing her attitude, "I decided to scope out the collective even though I didn't exactly have a plan. [...] It was market day. [...] Here, everybody specialized in their own product. [...] I sat and looked at the peaceful village [...]" (259).

By the end of the novel, Zahra also becomes aware of the sacrifices older women had made for younger generations to live a better life. She has also learnt how important is the personal, spiritual connection among women to build a project for the betterment of society, as well as the importance of community. Zahra, her mother and Auntie Adisa are talking about regrets. Finally, Zahra is able to value her mother:

"[...] the woman whom I'd avoided becoming because I thought her too dogmatic, too behind the times, too servile. And yet she was a woman who'd borne it all with resignation: a headstrong daughter; a husband who barely showed her he appreciated her; her thwarted desire to be surrounded by lots and lots of children she could take care of [her mother] [...] I wished I had gone to school. I should have begged to go to school. No, not begged. I should just have done it. Run away. [Zahra] I wish I'd learned to be a better wife and mother ... less selfish [...] My generation has always been about itself and its pleasure. We weren't so much into making sacrifices, which is what made you both such strong women [...]. It was for our survival. [...] Maybe this generation will figure out the secret formula" I said. "It's their turn to figure out how to get it right" (332-4).

This last part of the novel with Zahra recognizing her mother's generation struggles connects with the final section of *African Women Writing Resistance* where





Maramé Gueye concludes “African women today [...] are engaged in a circle of work and struggle and resistance, and each one of us does whatever we feel we can do to make this thread continue” (294). The past and the present together give our life continuity and coherence, “We are our grandmothers’ dreams” (295). It is necessary to look into the past to envision our future, to imagine or expect that something is a likely or desirable possibility in the future. It also connects with Nnaemeka’s Neco-feminism, “In the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are principles of give and take, compromise and balance” (377). This is what in the end Zahra is able to fulfill. In both her mother and Auntie Adisa, she has seen authenticity, women working with the resources at hand.

This second generation of women, Zahra, Wurche and Aminah as well as Akua Afriyie are doing their best to make this thread continue despite destruction and violence everywhere at their time; pre-colonial wars in *The Hundred Wells*, violence at military regimes, structural violence in democracy inherited from dictatorships in both *Harmattan Rain* and *Saturday’s Shadows*. Power and violence in Attah’s novels go hand in hand coupled with dirtiness in the places her characters move, “Your city is getting uglier by the minute,” Mma said, [...] “Dirtier than before the transition?” I asked” (*S’s S*, 55), “The village feels dirty”, (45) and illness, “As I inched my car forward, a migraine jabbed its way from the left part of my skull to the right. A ball of light had formed in my peripheral vision. Nausea. [...] I closed my eyes to shut out the dizzying images. The next thing I felt was my body jerking away from the steering wheel” (10). She is not afraid to describe this dark side as it also makes her characters more vulnerable to power and violence. This makes frightened characters as social conditions get worse for everyone even for those in power. “Money was tight –Theo didn’t seem to be fighting harder for more respect at the ministry, and at work, I was dealing with crooks who were telling me that, since the transition, palm-oil production had gone down and prices had shot up [...]” (11).

One of the issues at stake in *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, Africans’ complicity with slave trade. Henry Louis Gates Jr addresses the complicity of Africans in the slave trade.

While we are all familiar with the role played by the United States and the European colonial powers [...], there is very little discussion of the role Africans themselves played. And that role, it turns out, was a considerable one, especially for the slave-trading kingdoms of western and central Africa. The historians John Thornton and Linda Heywood of Boston University estimate that 90 percent of those shipped to the New World were enslaved by Africans and then sold to European trade. [...] the conquest and capture of Africans and their sale to Europeans was one of the main sources of foreign exchange for several African kingdoms for a very long time (1).

Similarly, Ferdinand de Jong contends that public debates on the history of the slave trade and the continuity of domestic slaves remain absent in Ghana. Historians have privileged the implication of Europeans in the trade and even government textbooks highlight the glorious times of independence. They have chosen to forget their past, as silencing can be a strategy employed to overcome oppressive conditions.



Ayesha Harruna Attah, in one of the novel's appendix' questions tells about how a lot of African royal families were complicit in the slave trade,

We haven't dealt with how a lot of African royal families were complicit in the slave trade [...]. Bondage is bondage and I want us to talk about the past and deal with it. Not dealing with this past means it rears its ugly head every so often. In 2017, when the world heard that people from countries such as Senegal [...] were being auctioned off in Libya [...] everyone was outraged [...]. But in addition [...] for me there was shame. [...] We have to acknowledge the role we've played in slavery. [...] Only then can we begin to stitch together the threads we need to heal and achieve true progress. (Unnumbered)

Charmaine Pereira summarizes the tasks ahead for women in Africa within community and negotiation:

The present conjuncture is marked by crises of various kinds: deepening existential insecurities arises from intensified capitalist relations of extraction and exploitation that have left devastation in their wake. Facing the challenges ahead requires renewed determination to craft the theoretical frameworks for deepening our understanding of our varied contexts in order to dismantle existing relations of oppression and domination. [...] creating more liberatory possibilities for African women and societies will necessarily be work-in-progress, drawing on and amplifying the possibilities for inspiration and strength through the building of feminist solidarity and collective action (29).

In the meantime, Zahra, Wurche, Aminah and Akua Afriyie are getting ready for the future to come.

In an interview carried out by James Murua, Attah is questioned about historical fiction. She declares admiring the way that Gabriel García Márquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* puts together a family's history with the makings of a country. "Also", she says, "a part of me is searching for who we are as Africans, for what our essence was before outside influences of religion, philosophy, and ways of living became so rooted in us". In a former interview, by Jennifer Malec for *The Johannesburg Review of Books* she also declares "that writing historical fiction is a way of fighting that rootlessness and searching for what we lost when we suffered invasions on every front: physical, religious, cultural, and so on" (1).

We agree with Víctor Palacios to whom forgetting represents rootlessness and disconnection, in spite of the fact that in life it is necessary to omit certain memories in order to move forward. Shaping memories determines owing an identity. Ayesha Harruna Attah gets inspiration to write *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, in her great-grandmother who had been a slave sold at Salaga slave market, a key place in the connections of West Africa. She found out that "People either simply didn't know much about her or they didn't want to talk. Writing this book was a chance for her to finally speak through me" (unnumbered). In this way, Attah employs storytelling and memory as tools for comprehension and reconciliation.



We share Sarah Foust's assertion that "women's stories of the past –that is, *storied accounts of their memories*– become vital records of personal or communal histories that otherwise may not be voiced or even acknowledged" (9). For her,

the special power of narratives of memory to bear testimony to and resist women's often oppressed and sometimes even often traumatic experiences, they also reveal that contemporary women's writing can provide counter-memories and thus counter-histories, to official totalizing versions of history, and these counter-histories can resist and revise limited conceptions of identity and culture (11).

These conversations between Wurche, Salaga-Kpembe's king's daughter and a German official are an example:

"What are your people doing here?" [Wurche] asked. [...She said when she was young they never saw people like Helmut. [...] Then suddenly it seemed as if, day after day, more pale people with unusual straight hair and multicoloured eyes were showing up. "We were told that you would protect us. But from what?" "From people like the Asante [...] [who] dominated you for decades. [...] Your own father told me this." "We can fight our own wars," said Wurche. "And you say you are helping us, but how are we to know it's not to take over our land and drive us away?"

"This is the whole world [Helmut spread a map]," Various places had been marked in ink... if he'd travelled that distance in a ship, it had to be for a good reason. "My people moved, too," said Wurche. "And it was to conquer other people." "It's all about friendship," said Helmut. Wurche wasn't convinced, but she was tired (194-5).

Stephanie Newell in *Writing African Women*, talking about Grace Ogot's protagonist in *The Promised Land*, defines women "as alert observers and critics of both their husbands and their societies." (14) We can notice the way Attah's main characters do observe attentively their husbands but also the men in their families, both parents and brothers. Lizzie describes the cruel episodes of her father's beatings; Akua Afriyie cannot understand why her mother pretends to ignore her father's hidden marital life in Germany, Wurche feels her father has used her as an exchange coin to get more power when she thought he respected her intelligence as a royal.

Two days later, Etuto summoned Wurche to his quarters. ... "Those Kete-Krachi princes must be dealt with," he slurred. "I'm sending Sulemana to the Gold Coast because those princes want to destroy Salaga." Now that he was friends with the British, he wanted them to help him take military action. The Kete-Krachi people had even begun to poach his best soldiers. He sucked from his wineskin. "Will you go with them? Having a woman in the delegation might soften the governor's heart."

"Yes." She didn't pause to consider her husband or her son or her plan to escape. This was the start of what she really wanted (169).

Further on, Newell addressing the Kenyan writer Grace Ogot's female subject contends that "the claims of marriage as defined by her community are themselves



forms of displacement and imprisonment and an abnegation of choice and will” (15). This is also what happens to Wurche who also suffers from marital violence and links this fact to her teachings of the Coran to other Muslim women about their duties as wives. Her grandmother was constantly remembering her to behave like a woman in order to attract a husband. She is the descendant of a chief so she has to marry someone who equals her in importance and status. For her, marriage is a prison since she does not love her husband. “I’m suffocating, Jaji. If I stay in this marriage, I’ll lose my mind [...] there is no love between us. Or maybe it’s me. I don’t like him and I don’t think I can grow to love him” (71). Finally, after several episodes of marital violence, she decides to tell her husband she has been seeing Moro:

Whore! Shaitan! Adnan bellowed ... even if her relief was mixed with regret, Wurche felt a sudden desire to laugh. All these years, she’d felt caved in, imprisoned, and suddenly, finally, she’d broken free. She felt as if she were floating on air. She would miss her family, but none of them had said, Adnan is no good, here’s your way out (73).

Stephanie Newell in her study on Flora Nwapa’s *Efuru*, explains the way the main character, “embodies certain deliberate strategies for unearthing and privileging women’s submerged worlds and consciousness [...] it embodies a deliberate strategy to enact the pattern of interactions and relationships which represent the world in which the protagonist defines herself” (15). We find similar strategies in *Saturday’s Shadows*, where Attah contrasts the slow-paced rhythm of life at Auntie Adisa’s farm, a woman-centred community, with Zahra’s hectic way of life. Zahra realizes in the end that such a rhythm is not hers. “It felt magical and yet unsettled me slightly, because it made me wonder why I’d chosen to live the way I did. Constantly running up and down, chasing the next thing, when at heart I was a farm girl” (260). The flow of feeling from woman to woman who are not tied by blood ties, both in Adisa’s community and the relationship between Wurche and Aminah, is the source of bonding and sisterhood among them.

Margaret Hauma Kassam, in Newell’s *Writing African Women*, explores “women’s symbolic status as “custodians” of culture and tradition... operating outside the parameters of Western education” (117):

A group of women, old and young, sat on mats outside Jaji’s hut, in the shadow of the tall Lampour mosque [...]. Their eyes patiently watched Wurche, waiting for her to teach them Nana Asma’u’s poem [...] as she recited the lines, again, she realized how much the poem was a warning for her. She had left her home to pursue education, but the last thing she was doing was behaving like a respectable Muslim woman. [...] this was now the only reason Adnan let her out of the house –to teach those women. Her panic was imbued with a sense of loss –an absence of something she couldn’t even name– and another sentiment: that of being covered by a thick cloth [...] (104-5).

The importance of the community is highlighted by Attah in *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*. It pretends to make Wurche a powerless woman. Wurche believes



herself more powerful than she really is. When it comes to terms of real life, she is no longer her dad's favourite daughter, she is the tool for her father and his clan to be stronger. She is clever, strong and she has a whim for war, however contrary to former literary heroines she is absolutely powerless. She can only have complete control over her body. When she decides for herself, even her father repudiates her reminding her own mother was a concubine, "for [Wurche] is both within and outside the norms and prescriptions of her patriarchal world, and her reactions to some of its requirements often shift in relation to a pragmatic sense of her own needs as a person and as a woman" (NEWELL 15). Sometimes, to please her father or to her own advantage in order to meet her lover, she accepts the ordinances of tradition, custom and what the community expects from her as a woman in an influential position due to the fact that she has given more territorial power to her father's clan.

Carole Boyce Davies contends that "feminist politics is a resistance to objectification of women in society, in literature, art and culture. It is also the articulation of a critical practice [...] which challenges all patriarchal assumptions and norms. It is also a politics of possible transformation" (BOYCE DAVIES 28-9). This challenging in pursuit of transformation is what Ayesha Attah's female characters work for. Her first two novels are historically centered in Ghana after independence from colonial power. The last one, *The Hundred Wells of Salaga* goes back in time to pre-colonial Ghana and it also portrays the life of people at the time. The author seems to be quite committed to the everyday lives of those who build her country in a way similar to her literary precursors Ama Ata Aidoo, Efua Sutherland and Mabel Dove Danquah, did before right after Ghana's independence. They are all committed both as women and as writers at different points in time in the history of their country which also sheds light to other areas in the continent.

Although Ayesha Harruna Attah declares herself a womanist as someone who is committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, we have been able to trace some other concerns relevant to African feminisms throughout her novels. Her female characters both resist objectification in society, as Wurche in *The Hundred Wells of Salaga*, and challenge patriarchal assumptions and norms as Lizzie in *Harmattan Rain*. Concerned with the role of women in the real history of their country, Attah positions her characters in accordance to those features described by Nnaemeka's nego-feminism as it is depicted by Auntie Adisa and her co-operative of women in *Saturday's Shadows*. They live their lives under the premises of negotiation, giving and taking, compromise and balance for empowerment and inner-fulfillment. Besides those feminist theories, grassroots movements of women have also proved relevant to the history of the women represented by Attah after Ghana's independence from colonial powers. Both of them stand for women who experience work, struggle and resistance as Ayesha Harruna Attah's characters do.

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