

Exploring Female Commodification in Efua T. Sutherland's The Marriage Of Anansewa

Mensah Junior Raphael

University of Education, Winneba, Ghana, Department of English Language Education
mensahraphael930@gmail.com

Charlotte Biney Evadzi

University Of Ghana, Legon, Department of English
bineycharlotte2@gmail.com

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i5.2322>

APA Citation: Raphael, M.J & Evadzi, C. B. (2025). Exploring Female Commodification in Efua T. Sutherland's The Marriage Of Anansewa. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 7(5).320-329.
<http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v7i5.2322>

Received:

01/08/2025

Accepted:

23/09/2025

Keywords:

Bride Price,
Commodity,
Female
Commodification,
Feminism,
Patriarchy,
Resistance.

Abstract

The female body has often been regarded as a commodity across various historical phases, including capitalism and colonialism. In the absence of wealth or personal property, the female body assumes an exchange-value status. Numerous literary texts, such as *Woman at Point Zero* and *From a Crooked Rib*, foreground this commodification. Similarly, Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* addresses the issue of female commodification. Drawing on feminist theory, this paper employs a qualitative research design to conduct a literary analysis of how the female body is commodified in *The Marriage of Anansewa*. The findings reveal that Anansewa is commodified by her father, who exploits her bride price to address his economic challenges, arranging a transactional marriage with four chiefs whose pursuit of her underscores patriarchal dominance. However, the study also shows that she partially resists this commodification through her songs and "staged" death to reclaim the female agency and decides on who to marry. Furthermore, dramatic techniques such as characterization, stage directions, and symbolism, are used to illustrate the commodification and resistance of Anansewa who is seen as an "object of interest." The study concludes the play is relevant in contemporary discussions on gender, autonomy, and equality in African literature..

1. INTRODUCTION

Female commodification refers to the process by which women's bodies, bodily functions, or identities are transformed into products or services that can be bought, sold, or exchanged within economic, social, or symbolic markets. In other words, it involves reducing women to their physical attributes, reproductive capacities, or aesthetic value, thereby treating them as objects of use or consumption rather than as full human beings. Several scholars have examined the commodification of the female body from multiple perspectives. For instance, Sharp (2000) argues that women's reproductive health is also subject to commodification. She describes surrogacy as a form of "incubatory servitude" and highlights how some agencies advertise women's wombs as rentable spaces.

"Women are targeted for their reproductive labor, where genetic, gestational, and parental labor is unbundled and sold piecemeal." (Sharp, 2000, p. 298)

The author also reveals that fetal tissues, embryos, and genetic materials are treated as exchangeable property, commodified within medical and scientific institutions. Similarly, Raymond (1995) as well as Ginsburg and Rapp (1995) argue that surrogacy and in vitro fertilization (IVF) transform women's bodies into "biological factories," as these technologies both commodify and racialize motherhood.

In furtherance, Sharp(2000) also comments on the sexual commodification of women, arguing that prostitution exemplifies this process through the fragmentation of the body, in which parts such as the vagina, womb, and breasts are turned into marketable zones. Similarly, Kempadoo (2009) explores how global sex tourism in the Caribbean commodifies women's bodies—particularly those of women of color, by transforming their sexuality into consumable products for predominantly Western male tourists. Kempadoo further highlights how race, gender, and postcolonial economic inequalities create a system in which Black and brown female bodies are racialized, eroticized, and sold, often under exploitative labor conditions. In the same vein, Pateman (1999) critiques both prostitution and marriage, viewing them as markets that exploit women's sexual and reproductive capacities. She argues that such institutions commodify women by treating them not as autonomous individuals but as objects to be exchanged. This paper builds on this perspective, situating Anansewa within this framework of commodification, as her role as a bride positions her as a product being sold into the hands of her suitors.

It has also been observed that another form of commodification gaining roots in our world today is Aesthetic Commodification. According to Sharp (2000), cosmetic surgery, such as eyelid surgery, is commodification driven by beauty ideals rooted in colonialism and sexism. In the words of Sharp (2000). "Women submit to cosmetic procedures that alienate them from their bodies in the name of consumer choice" (p. 314–318). Other scholars who resonate with Sharp (2000) include Bordo (2023), Davis (2013), and Shea (1997), who discuss how capitalist beauty standards shape women's bodies. They argue that cosmetic surgery is often marketed as a form of empowerment, but in reality reproduces social and gender inequalities.

In addition to scholarly work, literary giants have long addressed the commodification of women in their texts. Western literature, for instance, has not been silent on this global concern. Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* recounts the ordeal of the maiden Emelye, who becomes the prize in a contest between two men competing for her hand in marriage. Emelye's value rests on her chastity and social status, effectively reducing her to an object won through male rivalry. Similarly, William Shakespeare engages this discourse in *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. In the former, women are depicted as economic assets: Portia, an heiress, is renowned for her wealth and "worth," and suitors must pay a high entry fee and solve a riddle to win her hand. In the latter, marriage is framed as a transaction; Baptista decrees that the younger Bianca cannot wed until her sister Katherine ("the shrew") marries. Both sisters are thus commodified, treated as bargaining chips for advantageous unions, with little agency of their own. Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* also examines female commodification, portraying women who are compelled to sell their bodies through sex work and other means to survive. George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* continues this critique, exposing the commodification of women in both marriage and prostitution, where women are left with only two options: to starve or to sell themselves as commodities. Likewise, Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* illustrates how Lily Bart's beauty becomes her primary form of social currency, forcing her to perform within the marriage market, her worth contingent on male desire. Finally, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* makes female commodification explicit: fertile women, known as Handmaids, are assigned to wealthy men solely for reproductive purposes. Their worth is reduced entirely to their ability to bear children, as Gileadean society treats women as property to be "rented, used, and recycled."

It is worth noting that Western literature is not alone in this discourse; African literature has also made significant contributions to the discussion of how women are commodified as objects to be bought and sold. African literary texts such as Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter* explores how the protagonist, Ramatoulaye, is betrayed by her husband and how her value is tied to fertility (her ability to procreate) within the Senegalese setting. Similarly, in the Nigerian context, Buchi Emecheta condemns the traditional roles imposed on women in *The Joys of Motherhood*, where the protagonist, Nnu Ego, is valued primarily for her capacity to bear children. In *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, Lola Shoneyin highlights the plight of women who are commodified in a polygamous household. The novel satirically examines how wives compete for favor and status, with their worth determined largely by childbearing and domestic usefulness. In Egyptian setting, Nawal El Saadawi in his *God Dies by the Nile* and *Woman at Point Zero* by Nawal El Saadawi also depicts how women's bodies, labor, and identities are treated as objects of economic and political control. In the latter, the protagonist Firdaus recounts how society reduces her to a sexual commodity—first by her family, then through prostitution, and ultimately through the state.

In the Ghanaian context, which forms the focus of this study, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Changes* examines a modern Ghanaian society where Esi resists societal expectations that commodify her role as wife and sexual partner. She chooses a polygamous marriage in the hope of attaining autonomy. Building on this background, Efua T. Sutherland stands out as one of the Ghanaian writers whose play, *The Marriage of Anansewa*, foregrounds female commodification, though the play has received relatively limited critical attention in this area. Existing scholarship, such as Gibbs (2009) & Collins (1994) recognizes Sutherland's crucial role in shaping modern African theatre and Ghanaian drama through her innovative fusion of indigenous storytelling traditions with Western dramatic structures. They argue that *The Marriage of Anansewa*, rooted in Ananse folktales, employs storytelling, songs, audience participation, and ritual elements to preserve and elevate African cultural heritage while simultaneously addressing contemporary social issues. Similarly, Asante and Edu (2018) highlight the complex characterization of Ananse as both a trickster and a heroic figure, a duality that enriches the play's narrative.

In addition, Mikell (1997) foregrounds African women's activism in grappling with patriarchal oppression, colonial legacies, and economic marginalization. Her concept of "survival strategies" as everyday forms of resistance parallels Anansewa's limited agency under patriarchal control, particularly within marriage arrangements, and underscores how colonial legal structures entrenched women's subordination. Likewise, Ukaegbu (2007) identifies gendered misrepresentations and marginalization in marriage customs that reinforce male dominance in both *The Marriage of Anansewa* and *Anowa*. Despite these valuable contributions, a gap remains in feminist literary analysis specifically focused on female commodification and resistance in Sutherland's play. This study seeks to address this gap by employing feminist literary analysis to examine how *The Marriage of Anansewa* dramatizes and challenges the commodification of women, thereby contributing to postcolonial feminist discourse through its distinctive theatrical form and narrative strategies.

1.1. Research Questions

This research guided the following questions.

1. How is female commodification projected in the *Marriage of Anansewa*?
2. How does Anansewa react to her commodification?

2. METHODOLOGY & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, centering on *The Marriage of Anansewa* as the primary text of investigation. According to Myres & Newman (2007), qualitative research

is particularly suitable for exploring social and cultural phenomena because it seeks to understand human behavior, knowledge, attitudes, and the sociocultural contexts that influence them. Given that *The Marriage of Anansewa* reflects the post-colonial Ghanaian culture, traditions, and social dynamics, qualitative methodology is well suited to examining how female commodification is projected in the text, how the character Anansewa resists this commodification, and how dramatic elements accentuate this issue. In line with this, the study employs feminist literary analysis as the specific qualitative method, grounded in feminist theory as the overarching theoretical framework. Feminist theory facilitates analysis of gendered power relations, female agency, and patriarchal structures as portrayed in the play.

The textual analysis combines thematic analysis and close reading. Thematic analysis identifies the recurring theme of female commodification and resistance throughout the entire text. Close reading will focus intensively on specific textual elements such as dialogues, stage directions, song lyrics, symbolism, and metaphors that evoke commodification and feminist critique. For instance, attention will be paid to the portrayal of Anansewa as a "parcel" in marriage negotiations, the use of song to voice resistance, the photograph of Anansewa and the play's dramatic irony during her "fake death".

In addition, this study employs a feminist theoretical framework to analyze the commodification of women in Efua T. Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa*. Feminism has undergone various changes, commonly referred to as "waves". The first wave of feminism occurred between the late 19th century and the early 20th century, primarily advocating for the political rights of women (Kakroda et. al 2023). The second wave expanded its focus to societal inequalities, including reproductive rights, workplace discrimination, and cultural disparities. It began in the 1960s and ended in the 1990s (Mohajan, 2022). According to Alhumaid (2019), the second wave was driven by both white and non-white women, unlike the first wave, which was primarily led by white middle-class women of the West. The third wave emphasized intersectionality, acknowledging that various factors contribute to the suppression or marginalization of women. This wave transcended "laws" and "political processes" to center on "individual identity", driven by the understanding that women come from diverse "races", "ethnicities", "nationalities", "religions", and "cultural backgrounds"; thus, it is impossible to establish a universal female identity (Fisher, 2013). The most recent wave, the fourth wave of feminism, is characterized by online or digital feminism, emerging from social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter (Mohajan, 2022). Paulina Maclaran notes that this wave is a powerful force for change, challenging sexism, harassment, and body shaming. It aims to empower men, women, and transgender individuals, promoting acceptance of all body types. The various waves of feminism bore the different forms of feminism, including liberal, socialist, radical, eco-feminism, black feminism, and intersectional feminism, among several others.

The term feminism has been defined differently by various scholars, including Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who views it as the "belief in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes" (Adichie, 2024, p.47). Hooks (2000) defines it as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression" (p.8). This suggests that feminism is not a static concept but an evolving framework that moves with individuals in their efforts to halt all forms of exploitation and subjugation rooted in sexism, whether perpetuated by men or by women.

This study is grounded in the principles of second-wave feminism, a movement that emerged during a period when societal inequalities affecting women reached a heightened level of visibility and resistance. In this study, Anansewa is portrayed as a "subject" by her father because of her gender, leaving her in a state where she has no control over her decisions and life choices. By integrating feminist literary criticism with thematic and close reading techniques, the study aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of female commodification

in *The Marriage of Anansewa*, capturing both broad socio-cultural critiques and detailed textual nuances. This paper, however, argues that, although Anansewa is used by her father to solve his economic problems, she fights for her rights, and this step compels her father to reconsider his decision of just “making money off her” by going out of his way to ensure she finds a suitable partner.

3. SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY

The play recounts the story of George Kweku Ananse a cunning and mischievous man who uses his daughter's beauty as bait or an "object of interest" to improve his social standing and gain wealth. As the play reaches its climax, all four chiefs make their intention to marry Anansewaa on the same day. Unable to handle this tornado, Ananse, with the help of his immediate family, fakes his daughter's death in order to determine the most suitable choice among the wealthy suitors. All but Chief, who is - Chief wins as he remains committed going so far as to plan a full funeral with all the necessary rituals as if Anansewa were truly his bride. He still considers “dead” Anansewa as his wife and Ananse as the father-in-law. On the other hand, the other three suitors, namely the Chief of Mines, the Chief of Sapaase, and Togbe Klu, merely send messengers to bid her farewell with gifts. The play ends happily as Anansewaa resurrects, claiming she heard Chief -who- is -chief, calling her back to life. Thus winning the bridal race.

3.1.How is female commodification projected in the Marriage of Anansewa?

Efua T. Sutherland's play, *The Marriage of Anansewa*, explores the commodification of women in traditional Ghanaian societies. Through the character of Ananse, Sutherland exposes the entrenched male-dominated norms that persist in this cultural context. Anansewa, as a character, embodies the struggle for female autonomy within a patriarchal framework. Her resistance to her father's actions ultimately symbolizes the assertion that women deserve respect and should be recognized as individuals rather than mere objects of wealth.

One of the most compelling elements of the play is Ananse's treatment of his daughter, Anansewa, as an “object” to be utilized for resolving his financial difficulties. Sutherland introduces Ananse to the audience as a “troubled man,” frustrated by the adversities of life and yearning for improvement. His depiction, wearing a “shabby raincoat,” symbolizes his attempt to shield himself from life's miseries, yet the “shabby” condition of the raincoat leaves him exposed. In a traditional Ghanaian society, where men are expected to be the primary providers, Ananse feels burdened by societal expectations, fearing his inability to fulfill them. He articulates this fear with the following words:

...take a look at my condition...To what can I look forward? After you have gone out and return home here, will there be a better, leak-proof roof over our heads? The mattress on which I try to rest my bones after each day's up and down—will it have changed from a straw-stuffed, lumpy mattress into a soft, bouncy dunlopillo?...Tell me, how many times have I missed going to church because there is nothing in my pocket to deposit in full view of the public? (Sutherland, p.2)

This fear of failing to meet traditional societal expectations drives him to commodify his daughter, Anansewa. Although the commodification of women is socially condemned, the societal structures and cultural norms that favor male dominance allow such practices to persist. Ananse, aware of these structures, exploits them to secure his financial stability. He views his daughter, Anansewa, as an “object” that can be used. Ananse auctions his daughter to four chiefs, and waits for the highest bidder to “claim” his “object”. It is not surprising that he keeps referring to Anansewa as “the object of your interest.” Ananse's portrayal of his daughter illustrates how women are reduced to objects of exchange, with their value determined by their

“auctioneer.” This portrayal symbolizes women as human possessions, assets owned by men and exchangeable for a price. In Ananse’s case, he seeks to exchange her for material possessions, a comfortable life, and an elevated social status, which would enhance his sense of masculinity within society. Anansewa protests against being commodified and sold “like some parcel to a customer” (p.8). This quotation underscores the extent to which Anansewa is objectified, reduced to a mere commodity subject to purchase and sale. The theme of female commodification is further illustrated by the ulterior motives of three out of the four chiefs in their pursuit of marriage to her. These chiefs represent patriarchal figures who perpetuate the commodification of women within the institution of marriage. Their actions reveal that they regard Anansewa not as an individual, but as a means to satisfy their own aspirations for prestige and lineage. Each chief endeavors to surpass the others with lavish gifts to Ananse, such as money and clothing, to demonstrate their worthiness. This competition reinforces the concept of bride-wealth, wherein a woman's value is assessed by the wealth she can attract. For instance, the Chief of Sapaase dispatches his messengers to Ananse’s residence to present him with money. Sutherland articulates this as follows:

and he asks us to place this money in your hands so that if the object of his interest should need anything, you will have the wherewithal. He wants you to understand that in doing this, he does not mean to say that he wants anything from you immediately. This is an outright gift. If other gifts follow, he knows you will understand that he is merely doing what it is beautiful to do until the time arrives. (p.15)

The term “object of interest” used to describe Anansewa reflects how she is perceived as “an object” in which the chief has a particular interest. This terminology suggests that Anansewa is viewed as a mere commodity by the chief. The phrase “outright gift” and the promise of future gifts imply a transactional relationship, potentially indicating expectations of reciprocity. The chief is attempting to establish a patronage relationship, where Ananse is expected to provide something in return, leading to the loss of her autonomy. This exchange game seems to be a give-and-take one, where a human being is exchanged for material possessions. Hence, it resonates with Pateman (1999), who postulates that marriage is an institution that commodifies women, and Anansewa’s marriage is no exception to this rule.

Anansewa is once again commodified by three of the four chiefs, who, upon hearing the news of her supposed demise, inadvertently reveal their true intentions for wanting to marry her. For instance, the messengers of the Chief of the Mines reveal that, contrary to the advice of his counselors, he sought to marry her because Anansewa was educated and could therefore assist his numerous offspring “whom his wives have given birth to.” To the Chief of Mines, Anansewa represents merely another asset to be utilized for his family's advancement. He aims to exploit her education and marry her. The chief’s perception of their marriage as a reciprocal relationship exemplifies how those in positions of power tend to trivialize her worth. It suggests that her value as a wife is contingent upon her ability to fulfill his desires immediately.

Furthermore, the Chief of Mines’ messengers disclose that they supported the marriage because they perceived her as capable of bearing children for the chief, which could be used to shame the chief's wife, whom they described as “bitchy” and “ugly” (p. 38). Had Anansewa married the chief, she would have been embroiled in a familial conflict that could potentially lead to unhappiness in her life. This underscores how patriarchal society reduces women to reproductive objects and tools for producing offspring to populate their homes. This can be likened to the character Nnu Ego in the novel *The Joys of Motherhood*, whose value in her marriage lies in her capacity to bear children. Anansewa is again objectified in the play through the chiefs' lack of interest in knowing her personally, driven instead by their desire to possess her upon seeing her attractive photographs. This reflects their disinterest in her true identity

and the development of a genuine relationship, focusing instead on claiming the asset for which they have bestowed numerous gifts. This diminishes Anansewa's value to something unworthy of appreciation. Hence, in consonance to what Sharp (2000) postulates that when females are commodified, they lose their worth.

3.2. How does Anansewa react to her commodification?

Anansewa's resistance to commodification is manifested in two distinct forms: emotional outbursts and pretending to be dead to test the four chiefs. Her initial opposition to her father Ananse's scheme, which involves using her as a pawn to acquire material wealth from the four chiefs, is articulated through her disapproval of his plan. Anansewa expresses her dissatisfaction with this scheme in a song, as she "clasps her neck and sings":

My father is selling me, alas, alas! Whoever thought he would? Alas, alas! But let me tell you bluntly, I'll never comply, I will not let you sell me like some parcel to a customer. Not ever! Not ever! (p.7-8).

Anansewa's singing challenges the patriarchal decision made by her father to "sell her." Her resistance to being "sold" aligns with feminist ideals that advocate for women's autonomy in choosing their own partners rather than being coerced into arranged marriages. It also critiques systems of transactional marriages, where women are exchanged for dowries or material benefits. Her emotional expression of "alas" conveys her sorrow over her father's attempt to sell her. This sadness, however, is not a sign of weakness but a strength that represents her resistance to her father's actions. The repetition of "alas, alas" signifies Anansewa's emotional uproar and disbelief at her father's decision to treat her like a "commodity." This defiance reflects feminist concerns about how traditional societies often prioritize male authority over women's autonomy. Anansewa further rejects male power by declaring, "I'll never comply, I will not let you sell me," directly undermining her father's authority, which traditionally would have never been questioned. This act of defiance aligns with feminist ideas of rejecting male dominance and advocating for women's independence. Ananse's attempt to commodify her "as a parcel to a customer" serves as a metaphor highlighting the objectification of women under patriarchal systems. By resisting this through singing, Anansewa asserts that she is more than an object to be exchanged for financial gain. The use of voice as a tool of resistance is a powerful symbol of autonomy. Anansewa's singing can be seen as her reclaiming her voice, both literally and metaphorically, in a society that seeks to silence women. Her public singing also allows her to assert her autonomy without physical confrontation. The words in her song expose the injustice of her situation and transform her into a vocal agent of resistance. It is also a tool she uses to break the silence, especially in marital or family matters. Her singing, therefore, becomes a symbol of feminist rebellion against cultural norms that suppress women's voices.

Another way Anansewa resists being commodified is through agreeing to her father's scheme of pretending to be dead. Although initially a passive participant, Anansewa ultimately uses this strategy to ensure she is valued for the woman she is, and not merely perceived as an object by a chief who views her solely as a reproductive entity or as a woman whose educational background could enhance his pre-existing family. Through this dramatic irony, her feigned death becomes symbolic of her rejection of commodification. Sutherland articulates this notion as follows:

Open your eyes wide, and let me see...Shut them tight...Stiffen your limbs...Do it properly. I want you to look as though you are dead. What do you mean? I have never died before...And now can't you stop breathing a little? Can't you hold your breath?

Hold my breath? I shouldn't breathe? As for that, definitely no, I can't do it... But father, how can I switch my life off and on like electricity? You are forcing me to tell you that those four people are coming. They are rushing here, sprinting. ... They are coming to claim me as their own indeed! They dare not. .. Tell me quickly what it is that I have to do. I'm ready... From head to toe, I'm ready. (p. 27-29)

Ultimately, at the conclusion of the play, Anansewa successfully asserts her partial autonomy, liberating herself from being treated as a mere "parcel" to be exchanged among the chiefs. The dialogues and stage directions illustrates how she partakes in her staged death and resurrection to ensure that has a say in who she marries, that is "Chief-Who-Is-Chief".

ANANSE: ...Wake, oh wake
Oh wake, oh wake.
Kweku's child, Anansewa,
Wake, oh wake!
Love is calling you, return,
Wake, oh wake!
Chief-Who-Is-Chief
loves you true
Wake, oh wake!

[He moves swiftly to ANANSEWA's side and walks round the bed staring at her. There is a hush.]

ANANSE: *[Suddenly]* Oh, she is waking. Are there such wonders in the world? My child is waking. *[ANANSEWA stirs]*. Does love have such power? Christie, open the doors and let everybody see the power of amazing love. *[CHRISTIE and PROPERTY MAN mime opening up the house, and beckon people in. The PLAYERS surge all over the place.]*

There is my child, awakened for me by love. How strong love is. Love has awakened my child. She is rising! She is rising! She has risen, complete. *[ANANSEWA Springs out of the bed, causing MESSENGERS and all the others to scatter and hover round in bewilderment. But ANANSE, CHRISTIE, and the PROPERTY MAN huddle around ANANSEWA hugging one another, and shaking hands.]*

ANANSEWA: *[Just like one suddenly woken from a deep sleep]* Father! Where is father? Father.

ANANSE: My lovely child. My one and only daughter. Here I am. *[ANANSEWA smiles and nestles her head in his bosom.]*

ANANSEWA: Father, I could hear Chief-Who-Is-Chief calling me.

ANANSE: He was indeed calling you. His love has won a victory for us all. *[The guests express much amazement.]* (P.90-91)

In the above dialogue, after Ananse performs a ritual, Anansewa miraculously wakes from the dead and reveals her true love as Chief-Who-Is-Chief, explaining that she heard him calling her name while she was "dead," urging her to return to life. This outcome underscores her resilience and ability to navigate difficult circumstances in order to secure her freedom and exercise choice in marriage. In this way, her actions resonate with the core tenets of feminism, particularly the assertion of agency and autonomy within patriarchal structures.

4. FINDINGS

The analysis reveals that female commodification is central to the play's conflict. Anansewa is consistently objectified and treated as an exchangeable asset, while her father attempts to

auction her to wealthy suitors in return for gifts and social advancement. The study finds that Anansewa's resistance was through emotional protest and symbolic acts such as feigning death and songs. Again, dramatic techniques such as the dialogues, characterization, stage directions, and symbolism illustrate the commodification and reclamation of the female agency. In furtherance, this represents a strong feminist critique of patriarchal traditions. This highlights how commodification operates both within family structures and societal expectations in postcolonial Ghana

5. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* uses satire and dramatization to critique the commodification of women in Ghanaian society. By portraying Ananse's exploitation of his daughter as a pathway to wealth and status, the play underscores how women are often denied agency and reduced to objects of transaction. Nevertheless, Anansewa's resistance demonstrates resilience and the potential for female voices to challenge patriarchal authority. Anchored in feminist theory, the study reaffirms the relevance of Sutherland's work in contemporary discussions on gender, autonomy, and equality in African literature.

REFERENCES

- Adichie, C. N. (2014). *We should all be feminists*. Vintage.
- Aidoo, A. A. (1993). *Changes: A love story*. Feminist Press at CUNY.
- Alhumaid, K. (2019). Feminist perspectives on education and pedagogy: A meta-synthetic insight into the thought of four American philosophers. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(3), 31.
- Asante, E., & Edu, J. (2018). From anansesem to anansegoro: 'Literarising' Akan folktales. *International Journal of Advanced Research and Development*, 3(1), 348-353.
- Atwood, M., & Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. (1986). *The handmaid's tale*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Babatunde, R. (2018). *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Bordo, S. (2023). *Unbearable weight: Feminism, Western culture, and the body*. Univ of California Press.
- Bulman, J. C. (1991). *The merchant of Venice*. Manchester Univ. Press.
- Collins, J. (1994). *The Ghanaian concert party: African popular entertainment at the cross roads*. State University of New York at Buffalo.
- Davis, K. (2013). *Reshaping the female body: The dilemma of cosmetic surgery*. Routledge.
- Defoe, D. (2002). *Moll Flanders*. Modern Library.
- Emecheta, B. (1994). *The joys of motherhood* (Vol. 227). Heinemann.
- Fisher, J.A "Today's Feminism: A brief look at third-wave feminism." *Being Feminist*, 2013, <https://beingfeministblog.wordpress.com>, accessed 28 July 2025.
- Garcez, C. (1996). *William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew*. Research & Education Assoc.
- Geoffrey, C. (2022). *The Knight's Tale*. Legare Street Press.

- Gibbs, J., & Gibbs, J. M. (2009). *Nkyin-kyin: Essays on the Ghanaian theatre* (Vol. 98). rodopi.
- Ginsburg, F., & Rapp, R. (1995). The politics of reproduction. *Annual review of Anthropology*, 311-343.
- Hooks, B. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics*. Pluto Press.
- Kakroda, N., & Sole, N. A. (2023). Through the lens of feminism: Concept, origin, and the four waves. *Journal of Political Science*, 9(2), 87-94.
- Kempadoo, K. (2009). Caribbean sexuality: Mapping the field. *Caribbean review of gender studies*, 3, 1-24.
- Maclaran, P. (2015). Feminism's fourth wave: a research agenda for marketing and consumer research. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 31(15-16), 1732-1738.
- Maclaran, Paulina. "Feminism's fourth wave: a research agenda for marketing and consumer research." *Journal of Marketing Management*. Vol. 31, nos. 15-16, 2015, pp. 1732-1738.
- Mariama, B. (1979). *So long a letter*. Oxford Heinemann.
- Mikell, G. (Ed.). (1997). *African feminism: The politics of survival in sub-Saharan Africa*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Mohajan, H. (2022). Four waves of feminism: A blessing for global humanity. *Studies in Social Science & Humanities*, 1(1), 1-8.
- Morgan, K. P. (1991). Women and the Knife: Cosmetic Surgery and the Colonization of Women's Bodies. *Hypatia*, 6(3), 25-53. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1991.tb00254.x>
- Myers, M. D., & Newman, M. (2007). The qualitative interview in IS research: Examining the craft. *Information and organization*, 17(1), 2-26.
- Nawāal, E. (2007). *God dies by the Nile*. Zed.
- Nawal, E. (1983). *Woman at Point Zero*. Humanities Press.
- Pateman, C. (1999). What's wrong with prostitution?. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 27(1/2), 53-64.
- Raymond, J. G. (1995). *Women as wombs: Reproductive technologies and the battle over women's freedom*. Spinifex Press.
- Sharp, L. A. (2000). The commodification of the body and its parts. *Annual review of anthropology*, 29(1), 287-328
- Shaw, B. (1929). *Mrs. Warren's profession*. Constable.
- Shea, T. (1997). The politics of beauty in late capitalism.
- Sutherland, E. T. (1987). *The Marriage of Anansewa; Edufa: Two Plays*. Longman Publishing Group
- Ukaegbu, V. I. (2007). Written over, written out: the gendered misrepresentation of women in modern African performance. *African Performance Review*, 1(1), 7-23.
- Wharton, E. (1997). *The House of Mirth*. Wordsworth.