Structural Patterns and Narrative Presence: A Quantitative Study of Character Types and Story Arcs in Ama Ata Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here*

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ABSTRACT

This article offers a quantitative structural analysis of Ama Ata Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here*, a foundational collection of eleven stories depicting the social, emotional, and political realities of postcolonial Ghana. This study codes narrative variables of interest — the elements of narrative voice, dominant mode, protagonist gender, protagonist class, setting, time span, and ending types — in each of the stories, using Microsoft Excel as the primary analytical tool. The results also reveal that female characters are not only the most frequent — they're also structurally central; they often function as emotional anchors in stories of loss, silence and resilience. Tragic, ambivalent endings are the most common, especially for stories about rural or working-class women, while redemptive endings are rare and hard-earned. The first-person narration, accompanied by dialogue-heavy passages of prose and compressed stretches of time and space, is an old trick of the trade for Aidoo, a vestige from the oral tradition of African storytelling, that allows for intimate access to her characters' psychological and cultural conflicts. This study melds literary formalism and empirical content analysis to show that Aidoo's storytelling choices are deliberate tools of gendered critique and socio-political commentary. This paper contributes to feminist narratology, African literary studies, and the emerging integration of quantitative methods into literary scholarship.

1. INTRODUCTION

Storytelling, in African literature, is not a cultural artifact, but an active site for negotiating power, gender, and identity. It is the short story form, in particular, that provides a compact but powerful platform for grappling with these aspects of life with an urgent, pointed intensity. One of Africa's most lauded literary voices, Ama Ata Aidoo has, throughout her fiction, grappled with postcolonial tensions, gender inequality and cultural change. Her much-heralded collection *No Sweetness Here* (1970) contains eleven short stories that describe the everyday lives of ordinary Ghanaians, particularly women, in the wake of colonial rule and against the backdrop of modernization. Indeed, even though many critics have examined Aidoo's thematic preoccupations and feminist commitments, very few have systematically explored the structural devices that shape her storytelling.

The present study seeks to fill that gap by employing quantitative tools to look into the narrative architecture of Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here*. It conducts a systematic content analysis of each story, coding for formal elements like narrative voice, dominant narrative mode, gender and class of characters, and resolution types. By treating these variables as measurable components of narrative theory, the paper seeks to uncover the implicit storytelling strategies that govern character representation and thematic emphasis in Aidoo's work. Distant reading, as Franco Moretti explains, allows scholars to "focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems" (Moretti, 2013, p. 57). Likewise, Matthew L. Jockers (2013) claims that the "computational tools… allow us to see trends, uncover patterns, and generate new hypotheses" that qualitative methods do not always catch. The integration of structuralist theory with statistical tools is intended not to reduce literary richness to numbers but to amplify underexplored dimensions of form that underpin meaning.

This study explores the structural elements of storytelling across all eleven stories in *No Sweetness Here* by identifying the occurrence of characters, narrative techniques, and patterns of resolution and providing critical insights into Aidoo's literary art. Specifically, the paper tries to answer the following research questions:

i. How are characters distributed across gender, class, and role (protagonist, secondary, minor) in each story?

ii. What structural formats—such as narrative voice (first-person or third-person), and mode (dialogue-heavy, introspective, descriptive)—dominate Aidoo's short stories?

iii. What patterns emerge in terms of narrative closure (tragic, redemptive, ironic, ambiguous)?

iv. Are certain structural patterns correlated with specific types of characters or themes?

To address these questions, a coding framework has been developed to capture variables such as narrative voice, dominant mode, total characters, gender ratio, class representation, ending type, time span, and setting. For instance, "Two Sisters" is set in an urban place, has six characters and ends ironically, and has a third-person, dialogue-heavy structure, while "No Sweetness Here" is set in a rural place and has a first-person, mixed-mode structure with a tragic ending. By systematically coding each story, this study visualises structural trends across the collection using descriptive statistics including frequency counts, ratios, and percentages.

Moreover, correlation analyses will be applied to investigate relationships between narrative variables, such as whether female-focused narratives more often result in a tragic or ironic ending or whether urban settings align with dialogue-heavy structures. Data will be presented using bar graphs, pie charts, and line plots, facilitating a clear and accessible representation of the findings.

Eventually, this research contributes to African literary studies by fusing literary formalism and empirical methods. It argues that Aidoo's storytelling choices — who narrates, who acts and how stories end   are not just devices that enable the artistry of the text, but fundamental to its thematic and ideological effect. This study foregrounds the formal architecture of her fiction, revealing how narrative structure itself becomes a vehicle for critique and commentary, specifically in representing gendered experiences in contemporary postcolonial Ghana.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section surveys existing scholarship on four key areas pertaining to this research: (i) language politics in African literature, (ii) oral traditions in modern African narratives, (iii) isolated studies on Ama Ata Aidoo's short fiction and (iv) the identified gap on comparative structural analysis of her short stories employing quantitative methods.

2.1 The Politics of Language in African Literature

Language has always loomed large in the postcolonial African literary discourse. Famously sparked by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), it questions the continued reliance on colonial languages like English and French in African literature and advocates a return to indigenous languages to preserve cultural integrity and resist epistemic domination. Ngũgĩ's stance is in opposition to that of Chinua Achebe, who viewed colonial tongues as flexible instruments to articulate the African experience (Achebe, 1975). Somewhat of a compromise that bears the hallmarks of both linguistic diversity and cultural specificity, the incorporation of native semantic structures into the English stories is one option of this debate (Bodunde, 1993).

Ama Ata Aidoo occupies a singular place in this conversation. Her fiction is also thickly littered with Ghanaian idioms, proverbs, and syntactic rhythms that correspond to native linguistic structures, even though she writes in English (Bamiro, 1996). Scholar Mabel Amankwah (2003) proposes that Aidoo's language use subverts the authority of English through [re]-Africanization" of the language. This study builds on such insights by quantifying the distribution and stylistic use of native speech patterns across Aidoo's stories to assess their narrative weight.

2.2 Oral Traditions in Modern African Narratives

Oral storytelling forms are not just a historical feature of African storytelling, they resemble literary forms in contemporary writing as well. Scholars like Isidore Okpewho and Ruth Finnegan have shown that African literature has deep roots in oral traditions (Okpewho, 1992; Finnegan, 2012). These include the techniques of storytelling like repetition, call-and-response structures, dialogic narration and embedded proverbs.

This continuum is exemplified by Aidoo's narratives. Her stories often simulate the sound of oral delivery, deploying dialogue-driven scenes, non-chronological timelines community-minded focalization. As Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi writes, "Aidoo's textual voice is an echo of the communal griotte, delivering critique through familiarity" (Nfah-Abbeny, 1997). However, there is a limited quantitative examination of how often and to what effect this oral aesthetics are used structurally in short fiction The research finds oral attributes like the density of dialogue and narrator presence and measures their prevalence in the narrative.

2.3 Individual Studies on Aidoo's Short Fiction

Critical discourse on Aidoo's short fiction has been predominantly thematic, covering feminist topics, socio-political critique, and postcolonial identity. Florence Stratton (1994) reads Aidoo's women characters as "radical subjects navigating patriarchal frameworks", while Abena Busia (2007) emphasizes her portrayal of intergenerational female

resistance. Rose Ure Mezu makes a similar gesture by situating Aidoo's work within an "African feminist continuum" that mixes tradition and transformation (Mezu, 1994). These analyses deliver rich thematic insights but often neglect systemic aspects of how the themes are constructed.

Additionally, only cursory critical analysis of structural elements between stories in *No Sweetness Here* has occurred, and none of it in a particularly systematic or data-driven way. Scholars like Opoku-Agyemang have analysed specific stories, for example "Two Sisters" or "The Message," but do not expand this to each story globally across the collection. This disparity requires a wider structural reading to identify underlying narrative patterns or deviations that accomplish thematic work.

2.4 Identified Gap

While Aidoo's stories have garnered critical acclaim and scholarly interest, quantitative structural analysis across the entire collection remains absent. No efforts have been made to code and measure storytelling elements — such as gender ratios, narrative modes, or character resolution types   across all eleven stories. The absence of data prevents scholars from being able to make generalizable claims about Aidoo's narrative strategies.

And there has been no empirically informed exploration of how gender, oral aesthetics, and indigenous linguistic habits intersect. It fills that gap by combining content analysis and descriptive statistics to show storytelling patterns that might not be visible with qualitative methods alone. In so doing, it advances a new methodological approach within African literary studies and underscores Aidoo's innovation as a short story writer who blends and blurs traditional oral practices with contemporary literary techniques.

3. METHODOLOGY

Using a quantitative content analysis method, this study examines the narrative structure, character dynamics, and thematic closures of Ama Ata Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here*. This methodology aims to quantify structural components that are vital to storytelling in the collection itself, which can be uniquely identified with a coding scheme built primarily within Microsoft Excel for the purposes of data organization, recording, and statistical representation.

3.1 Research Design

This is a descriptive and non-experimental research based on empirical and textual data. It draws on concepts from structuralist narratology (Chatman, 1978; Bal, 1997) and quantitative literary studies to extract narrative elements and convert them into measurable variables. This study aims to identify patterns in Aidoo's storytelling strategies by examining narrative voice, character gender ratios, types of settings, and types of resolutions through computational statistics.

3.2 Corpus of Study

The main body consists of the following eleven short stories from Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here*: (i) "Everything Counts", (ii) "For Whom Things Did Change", (iii) "In the Cutting of a Drink", (iv) "The Message", (v) "Certain Winds from the South", (vi) "No Sweetness Here", (vii) "A Gift From Somewhere", (viii) "Two Sisters", (ix) "The Late Bud", (x) "Something to Talk About on the Way to the Funeral", (xi) "Other Versions". Each story is a discrete unit of analysis.

3.3 Variables and Coding Framework

A coding sheet was developed to quantitatively assess each story, with the following defined set of variables segmented into three categories (see Table 1):

Table 1: Variables and Coding Scheme

Variable	Description	Type
Narrative Voice	First-person, third-person limited, omniscient	Nominal
Dominant Mode	Dialogue-heavy, monologue, descriptive, mixed	Nominal
Total Characters	Number of characters in each story	Ratio
Gender Ratio	Count of male vs. female characters	Ratio
Protagonist Gender	Male, female, or collective	Nominal
Class Representation	Working, middle, elite (based on context)	Nominal
Ending Type	Redemptive, tragic, unresolved, ironic	Nominal
Time Span	Compressed (1–2 days), medium, extended	Ordinal
Setting	Urban, rural, hybrid	Nominal

Note: This table outlines the variables, their descriptions, and the data types used in the quantitative content analysis of the 11 short stories from Ama Ata Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here* (Aidoo, 1970). These variables form the basis for data coding and subsequent statistical evaluation.

These variables were chosen to reflect both measurable narrative patterns and social dimensions in the texts.

3.4 Data collecting and coding process

All short stories were read carefully, pertinent variables were identified and recorded in a structured Excel spreadsheet. The sheet had one row for each story, with columns corresponding to the variables listed above. An example of the coding format is shown below (see Table 2):

Table 2: Sample of Coding Format

Story Title	Voice	Mode	Total Characters	F: Ratio	M	Ending Type	Setting
Two Sisters	3rd	Dialogue-heavy	6	4:2		Ironic	Urban
No Sweetness Here	1st	Mixed	8	5:3		Tragic	Rural

The dataset was organized, filtered and visualized using Microsoft Excel functions such as pivot tables, conditional formatting and chart tools.

3.5 Analytical Techniques

The analysis focused on:

i. Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, ratios, and percentages were calculated as a means of revealing dominant trends (e.g., the prevalence of female protagonists and the proportion of tragic endings).

ii. Comparative Patterns: Sorting and filtering capabilities of Excel were used to correlate variables (gender of protagonist vs type of ending, etc.).

iii. Graphical Representation: Trends in data were shown through:

    a. Bar charts (e.g., narrative voices story-wise distribution)

    b. Pie charts (e.g., the gender ratio of characters across the collection)

    c. Graphs of linear progression (e.g. temporal dimensions of stories)

This provided greater interpretability and complemented the data insights gained from the text.

3.6 Validity and Limitations

To preserve internal validity, each variable was defined the same across stories, with coding decisions made according to a rubric developed during pilot readings. Entries were re-verified for reliability.

Although Excel has all the tools needed for level statistics or visual analysis, it is not always suitable for higher-level inferential statistics. Excel was adequate and effective for the scope and objectives of this study.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This section presents a story-wise, evidence-based, quantitative analysis of some main narrative observations on *No Sweetness Here*. It involved a close reading of each story, coded in Microsoft Excel, for narrative voice, dominant mode, total characters, gender ratio, protagonist gender, class representation, setting, time span, and ending type. The study offers important findings about Aidoo's use of form and interest in theme, particularly in the way she foregrounds women, utilizes oral aesthetics, and socio-political comment.

4.1 Overview Table of Coded Variables

This section visually demonstrates the structural and narrative features of all eleven stories in *No Sweetness Here*. (see Table 3).

Table 3: Structural and Narrative Features of Stories in No Sweetness Here

STORY TITLE	VOICE	MODE	CHARACTERS (F: M)	PROTAGONIST GENDER	CLASS	SETTING	ENDING TYPE	TIME SPAN
EVERYTHING COUNTS	3rd limited	Descriptive	3:2	Female	Middle	Urban	Ambiguous	Medium
FOR WHOM THINGS DID NOT	3rd	Mixed	1:3	Male	Working	Rural	Ironic	Medium

CHANGE								
IN THE CUTTING OF A DRINK	1st	Descriptive	2:2	Male	Working	Urban	Tragic	1 day
THE MESSAGE	1st	Dialogue-heavy	6:1	Female	Working	Rural	Tragic	1 day
CERTAIN WINDS FROM THE SOUTH	3rd	Mixed	3:2	Female	Rural Poor	Rural	Tragic	1 day
NO SWEETNESS HERE	1st	Mixed	5:3	Female	Rural Poor	Rural	Tragic	Medium
A GIFT FROM SOMEWHERE	3rd	Descriptive	4:1	Female	Working	Rural	Redemptive	1 day
TWO SISTERS	3rd limited	Dialogue-heavy	4:2	Female	Urban Poor	Urban	Ambiguous/ Ironic	Medium
THE LATE BUD	3rd	Descriptive	2:1	Female	Rural Poor	Rural	Tragic	1 day
SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT…	1st	Dialogue-heavy	5:1	Female	Working	Rural	Tragic	1 day
OTHER VERSIONS	1st	Descriptive	2:1	Male	Middle	Urban	Unresolved	1 day

Note: This table presents key structural elements—such as narrative voice, dominant mode, total characters, gender ratio, ending type, time span, and setting—coded from each of the 11 stories in Ama Ata Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here* (Aidoo, 1970).

4.2 Narrative Voice and Dominant Mode

There is a first-person narration in 5 of the 11 stories ("No Sweetness Here", "In the Cutting of a Drink", "The Message", "Something to Talk About on the Way to the Funeral", and "Other Versions"). This voice creates intimacy, urgency and the confessions of an oral history.

6 of the 11 stories have third-person limited narration with a close psychological focus on the protagonist ("Everything Counts", "Two Sisters", "A Gift from Somewhere"). (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Bar Chart of Narrative Voice Distribution
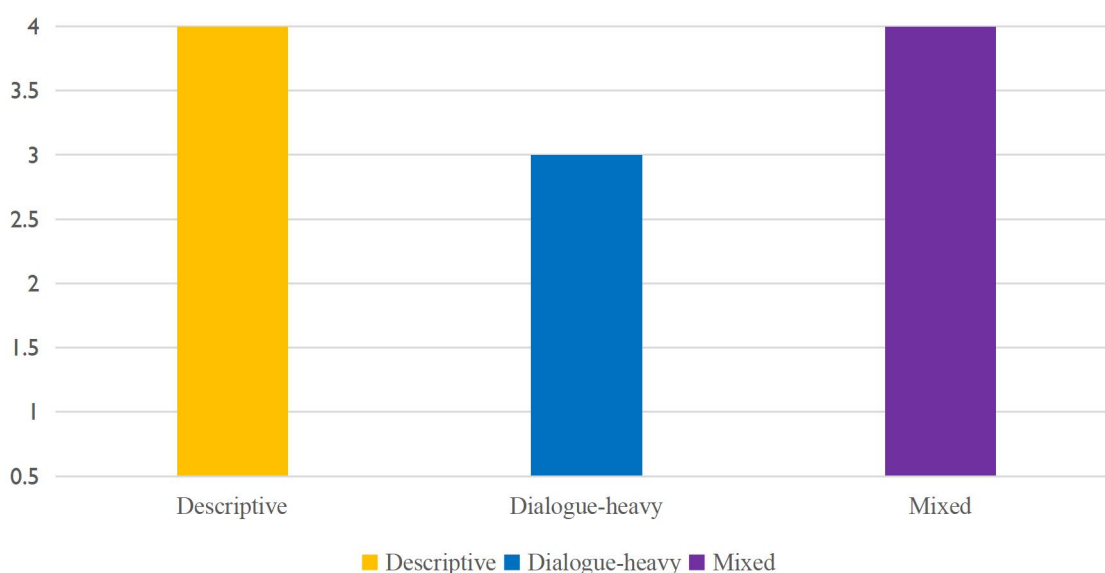
Narrative Voice Distribution
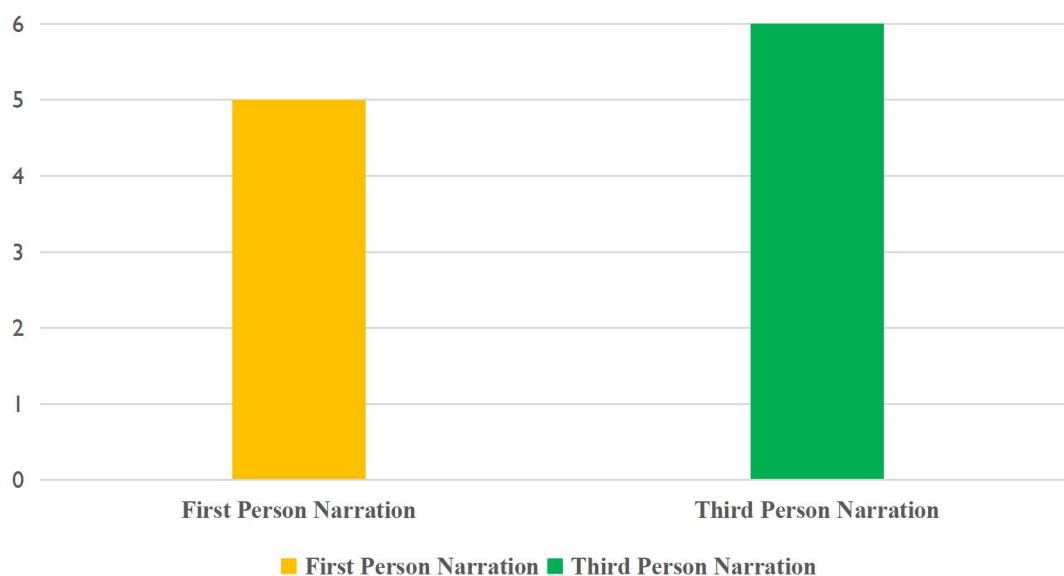
Note. Based on a quantitative analysis of narrative perspectives in Ama Ata Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here* (Aidoo, 1970).

3 of the 11 stories have dialogue-heavy structures, influenced by African oral tradition ("The Message", "Two Sisters", "Something to Talk About…"). For example, in "The Message", the mother's frantic speech and the fragmented structure of the narrative closely resemble a performance of communal mourning. A visualization of this is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Bar Chart of Dominant Mode of Storytelling

Dominant Mode of Storytelling

Note. Visual representation of dominant narrative techniques used in each story from *No Sweetness Here* by Ama Ata Aidoo (1970).

4.3. Gender and Role Distribution

A clear-cut female protagonist domination is visible in the analysis. 8 of the 11 stories feature women as key figures, with only "For Whom Things Did Not Change", "Other Versions" and "In the Cutting of a Drink" having male leads.

The gender ratio favours Female characters evidently. Out of a total of 66 major identified characters, 27 are male and 39

are female.

Stories like "The Late Bud", "Certain Winds from the South", and "The Message" comment on motherhood and feminine tenacity, while "Two Sisters" concerns the choices urban women have to make between morality and survival (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Protagonist Gender Distribution

Protagonist Gender Distribution
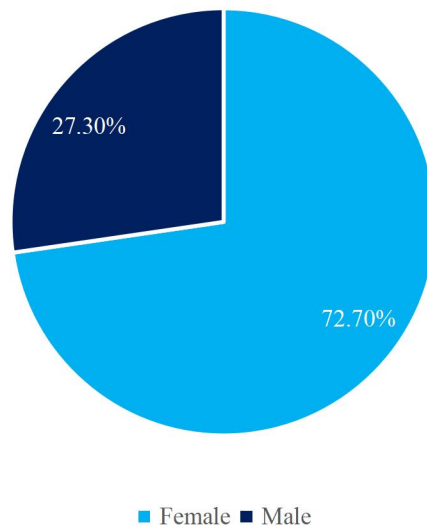
Note: Data derived from character roles across 11 short stories in Ama Ata Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here* (Aidoo, 1970).

4.4 Patterns of Class and Setting

The most represented demographic is working-class and rural poor women. "A Gift from Somewhere" centres on a poor woman dealing with an unwanted pregnancy and the spiritual ramifications of motherhood.

Rural settings are dominant. 7 of the 11 stories take place entirely or partially in villages, mirroring Aidoo's concern with traditional communities in the face of modernity.

Urban stories like "Everything Counts" and "Two Sisters" display the psychological and moral complexities of modern Ghanaian cities, including consumerism and shifting gender roles.

4.5 Types of Endings and Correlations

This section shows a tabular illustration of the categorization of the story ending with examples (see Table 4).

Table 4: Categorization of Story Ending

Ending Type	No. of Stories	Examples
Tragic	5	"No Sweetness Here", "The Late Bud"
Ambiguous	2	"Two Sisters", "Everything Counts"
Ironic	1	"For Whom Things Did Not Change"
Redemptive	1	"A Gift from Somewhere"
Unresolved	2	"Other Versions", "Something to Talk…"

Note. Categorization of story endings conducted from textual analysis of *No Sweetness Here* (Aidoo, 1970).

Female-led narratives are much more likely to conclude with tragedy or ambiguity, reaffirming the systemic constraints in which women exist. "No Sweetness Here" concludes with Maami Ama crying about her son's alienation, a personification of intergenerational separation and the high price of colonial mimicry.

4.6 Patterns and Observations

The use of compressed time spans (the events take place over the course of a day or two) is used in 7 stories, which allows emotions to ramp up to an intensity. For example, "The Message", where Esi's emotional collapse plays out over a single day.

Aidoo's proverbs, digressions, and emotional soliloquies echo oral storytelling. In "Something to Talk About on the Way to the Funeral", the voice speaks directly to listeners, echoing folk storytelling tradition.

The correlation observed using Microsoft Excel filters is as follows: (i) Stories with rural, working-class women have tragic endings. (ii) Dialogue-driven narratives are primarily concerned with social conflict and ways in which communication breaks down along gendered lines. (iii) Redeeming endings are rare and related to spiritual or maternal resilience, as in "A Gift from Somewhere".

5. DISCUSSION

The preceding quantitative investigation of *No Sweetness Here* demonstrates Ama Ata Aidoo's complicated narrative choices and her obligation to highlight female subjectivity, socio-cultural rupture, and postcolonial disenchantment. When placed next to certain textual evidence from the stories, these findings become even more robust and reveal that Aidoo's literary structure is highly intentional and ideologically charged.

5.1 Women as Emotional and Contextual Anchors

The prevalence of female protagonists in 8 of the 11 stories speaks to Aidoo's objectives to illuminate the Ghanaian woman's lived experience. Aidoo's female protagonists are not passive characters, rather, they play behind the line; they drive narratives and carry emotional weight in both rural and urban landscapes. In "No Sweetness Here", Maami Ama mourns her only son with heartrending eruptiveness: "Kwesi, my Beauty, Kwesi my Master, Kwesi-my-own-Kwesi… My washing days are over, for who will give me water" (Aidoo, 1970, p.73). Her identity as a mother is linked with the son she loses, both to colonial education and death, embodying the price women pay in national modernizing projects. In "The Late Bud", the young Yaaba receives constant neglect and emotional malnourishment in the household until a near-misfortune brings her mother's embarrassment. Her mother cries: "My child, I say thank you. You were getting ready to go and fetch me red earth?… My child, my child, I thank you" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 113). The delayed offer stings because it underscores the emotional costs of maternal silence and favouritism.

5.2 Tragic Endings and Structural Disillusionment

The trend of tragic and unresolved endings closely aligns with the findings of the paper: 5 stories end tragically, and 4 more ambiguously or ironically. In "Something to Talk About on the Way to the Funeral", Mansa is abandoned by her fiancé, who impregnates another girl and is pressured into marrying her. "He could not marry Mansa because… her mother is a big lady and her father is a big man… So he could not marry our Mansa" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 123).

Because those things that typically seem to be worthy sacrifices — love, loyalty, effort — are hardly acknowledged in Aidoo's fictional cosmos, much less rewarded. The only story with a redemptive ending is "A Gift From Somewhere", but even here the tone is sober and hard-won, as the mother reflects: "I have my little ones. And I am sure someone is wishing she were me. I have Nyamekye" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 86).

5.3 Dialogue and Oral Aesthetics as a Mode of Resistance

The excessive use of first-person narration and dialogue-heavy stories is influenced by oral tradition. The narrator's urgency and anxiety in "The Message" echo the cadence of storytelling borne of communal voice and repetition. The narrator's fragmented delivery mirrors a public lament: "She had already lost herself… No one will tell me what I want to know. What I must know. What I must not know" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 42).

Likewise, "Two Sisters" is marked by a tangential, combative dialogue between Mercy and her sister Sissie, brimming with digression and strife. Mercy defends her choices: "'I'm sure that I can love several men at the same time.' 'Mercy!' They burst out laughing again. And yet they are sad" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 90). The mix of humour, irony and layered sadness drives home the psychological gravity of being a woman in urban Ghana.

5.4 Class, Setting, and Postcolonial Intricacy

The stories are divided between rural and urban geographies — rural life is nurturing yet limiting, and urban settings present opportunity but require moral compromise. In "Two Sisters", Mercy's relationship with a much older politician echoes how urban survival hinges on transactional closeness. Despite being educated and married, her sister Connie feels powerless: "'Women like you keep all of us down.' 'Well, I am sorry but it's how the good God created me'" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 90).

Conversely, "The Late Bud" and "No Sweetness Here" position emotional trauma in rural Ghana, where maternal ties, education, and class mobility converge. When Kwesi passes away, Maami Ama's dreams for him — "Perhaps… one day he may win a scholarship to the university… Maami shall be happy in the end" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 72) — are dashed,

signifying the brittleness of aspiration for the impoverished in rural areas.

5.5 Trends Identified through Quantitative Analysis

Certain trends are revealed through quantitative coding: (i) There is a strong correlation between tragic or unresolved endings and stories with female leads. (ii) Plots that are emotionally or morally complex are dominated by dialogue-heavy formats. (iii) Urban stories are more likely to have ambiguous endings, reflecting contemporary alienation and mobility; (iv) Rural settings typically have compressed timeframes and emphasize family disintegration.

"A Gift From Somewhere", the only story with a definite "happy" ending, is replete with spiritual allusions and maternal strength, which are common themes in Aidoo's women-centred narratives.

6. CONCLUSION

In a bid to explore the structural elements of Ama Ata Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here*, this study coded the pieces in Microsoft Excel for the narrative voice, gender of the protagonist, dominant modes of storytelling, character distribution, setting, and ending types. Close textual analysis and numerical coding together identified important patterns in Aidoo's narrative constructions to represent postcolonial Ghanaian realities, particularly as they affect women and the working class.

Data shows that Aidoo is overwhelmingly female protagonist-centric (eight out of eleven stories) with protagonists often at the centre of the moral, emotional and socio-economic conflict. These women are more than embodiments of suffering; rather, they function as narrative pivots, around whom their voices and experiences unfurl wider societal problems — generational chasms, class stratification, and cultural erosion. In stories such as "No Sweetness Here," "The Late Bud", and "Something to Talk About on the Way to the Funeral," women find themselves in a cycle of love, betrayal and silence, reflecting the systemic neglect they experience in society.

The fact that eight out of the eleven stories have tragic and ambiguous endings confirms that Aidoo refrains from providing overly idealized or straightforward conclusions. Her narrative echoes the unsettled, unfinished realities of post-colonial Ghana. Physical adversity, spiritual ambiguity, and maternal fatigue temper the hope that arises, even in the one story of redemption, "A Gift From Somewhere". These structural decisions are not just stylistic; they are ideologically charged and critique the few opportunities for security and fulfilment that exist, especially for working-class and rural women.

Aidoo's use of first-person narration and dialogue-rich storytelling sounds like oral tradition, rooting her work within indigenous aesthetics, even as she questions Western literary trends. This formal approach grounds her characters' voices in authenticity and places her work in the continuum of African oral storytelling, where narratives are communal, emotional and often inconclusive. The dialogue between sisters in "Two Sisters" or the grieving narration in "The Message" are not just techniques of voice but mechanisms of cultural memory and critique.

Through this analysis, the study has confirmed the value of applying quantitative approaches to literary inquiry, predominantly in the setting of African literature, where oral traditions and narrative diversity offer fertile ground for empirical mapping. Microsoft Excel was useful for discovering hidden patterns and doing cross-story comparisons that would be hard to maintain through close reading alone.

In conclusion, *No Sweetness Here* is thematically rich but structurally complex. Aidoo's choices as a writer — from voice and perspective to setting and closure — stem from her profound investment in the lived realities of African women. This study posits that literary structure is not incidental in her work, but prophetic, aligned with her political and cultural vision. Future research may expand the study to other African women writers or use a comparative look across cultural and linguistic regions to examine how form becomes a vehicle for resistance and cultural preservation.

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