



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

Womanist Discourse from Margin to Center: A Critical Analysis of Amma

Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*

Dr Bawa KAMMAMPOAL

**Department of English,
Université de Kara, Togo,
kammampoalbawa@yahoo.fr**

Abstract

This paper does a critical reading of Amma Darko's Beyond the Horizon and observes that in her endeavour, the novelist seeks to challenge prevailing patriarchal thrusts which contribute to the dehumanization of women especially, in contemporary times. She concludes that trafficking, human as well as sex, has harrowing effects on the mental, emotional and physical well-being of her female characters who fell in the web of traffickers betrayed by their husbands who forced them into prostitution to serve masculine egoistic tendencies.

Keywords: dehumanize; egoistic tendencies; sexual exploitation; motherhood

Introduction

Gender theorists are much more concerned with unearthing the hidden tradition of Western feminism by examining gender dynamics of canonical literature. The construction of a counter tradition is made difficult by the fact that there have been many feminist writers but few of them offer to write openly about their peculiar experience depending on the context and space. Some of them come to the conclusion that the conceptual and practical differences between the Third World and Euro-American First World in relation to feminism inform research questions and the construction of theory. In fact, while it is true that the oppression of impoverished and marginalized Euro-American Women is linked to gender and class relations, that of Third world Women is mostly linked to race relations and imperialism thereby facilitating the understanding or the meaning of Third World or better African women's struggles. Undoubtedly this pushes us to acknowledge that historical and contemporary differences help create different contexts and highlight tensions accordingly in trying to resolve them. They question and interrogate the identity of male and female and the hierarchical relation (mainstream and margin). Since Third World Women seem to have much in common in their relationship to an international women's



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

movement, one may argue that there is more than one school of feminism and they believe that Western feminism confines itself, as was said earlier, to a struggle against gender discrimination. The 21st century has seen a lot of African writers, male as well as female, plumbing new directions and aesthetics. These writers are engaged with issues that appear marginal ones that for the most ponder on identity, subjectivity, sexuality, hybridity, and transnationality. Obviously, it is this emerging trend, which inspires Amma Darko to write narratives, namely *Housemaid* (1993), *Beyond the Horizon*(1995), and *Faceless* (2003), to confront patriarchal oppression and subjugation by demonstrating quite evidently through her female characters a resounding feminist position so as to show how women must reconstitute their subjectivity : rise from the subaltern positions they occupy in society and refuse to live as victims of subjection and thereby, move from the margin to the imagined center.

Amma Darko, through her narrative, exhibits powerful anti-patriarchal tendencies and attempts to deconstruct and demolish the patriarchal status quo by reducing men to worthless and irresponsible beings : ranging from grotesque images to wicked husbands as well as fathers in her effort to establish a new social order in which she believes women will be in control of their common destiny. The result of her endeavour is that none of the men she features in her fictional works is a man of honour. The principal male characters are, to a greater extent, irresponsible fathers as well as husbands, drunkards, rapists, exploiters, predators and monsters. They are described to the reader as people who do not care about the general social malaise and moral decadence inherent in the society where they live but are in the main congenital and pathological predators, sexually depraved, perverse and evil. In the patriarchal society where she is born and raised, her fellow women are often victims of rape, assault, abandonment by their male counterparts, of betrayal, of economic exploitation due to obnoxious cultural practices. This master-servant relationship leads women to live in perpetual fear, trauma, suffering and eventually death.

In an interview with Raymond Ayinne (2004), Darko believes that it is her responsibility as a woman to create spaces of female power in the social, spiritual, economic, political and religious spheres:

We've started writing from our point of view because, for a while, you were writing for us [...]. So [...] if we are writing, probably there is some pain that has to come out. And I think rather than take it as male-bashing, you must take it as a better understand the women folk of Africa [...]. You were always portraying us as all-enduring, all-giving mothers and that is the attitude we find in males [...] but I don't want to be all-giving all the time, I don't want to be all enduring, I want to be angry, I want to react.



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

Thus, in Darko's works, the text becomes the site to express her disgust about women's predicament as well as their insurgencies. There is a need to explore the injustice inherent in patriarchal society, to concentrate on women as victims of patriarchal violence, and to show that even women are in part complicit in their own predicament, and finally to define the way she treats women and girls in relation to men and boys in her narratives. In the end, the social issues she projects are subsumed in the sheer power of bashing men's social agenda.

This paper uses feminism as a theoretical framework and seeks to briefly explore the concepts of feminism, its contextualisation and theorising which has given birth to a new conceptual tool called 'womanism'. It tries to show womanism as an outgrowth of feminism and see how it is reflected in the work of the novelist. It also seeks to prove that the creation of female characters in Amma Darko's work underscores a certain commitment, a rejection of the existing social order, a fight for gender equality, and has it that central to all these many branches of feminism are its unquestionable quest for emancipation and equality of the sexes and its pursuit of a more equitable gender relations.

I- Feminists Theories : Common Space Different Contexts : Womanism as an Outgrowth of Feminism

This part of the paper attempts to briefly explain conceptual and practical differences between Third World, mostly overexploited, or better underdeveloped areas like Africa, and Euro American First World women in relation to feminism. Though Feminism has grown up to have a number of different approaches or waves, there exists some areas of commonality. However, gender issues play an important part in every aspect of human production and experience, including the experience of literature itself consciously or unconsciously. It is a fact that all feminist activity, feminist theory as well as literary criticism, has the ultimate goal to change the world by prompting gender equality. In this sense feminist criticism has in many ways and contexts followed what theorists call the three waves of feminism depending most of the time on the context. First world feminists, for example, far from being monolithic, is considered by Third world feminist as a feminism emerging from white middle class and tries to confine itself to the struggle against gender discrimination together with its narrow conception of the feminist terrain as a singular antisexist struggle.

It is, then, significant to note that Cheryl Johnson-Odin in "Common themes, different contexts : Third World Women and Feminism" (1991), an article featured in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, writes that, "While it is clear that sexual egalitarianism is a major goal on which all feminists can agree gender discrimination is neither the sole nor perhaps the primary locus of the oppression of Third World Women..."(315). Commenting on the contextual relevance of feminism, the author believes that it is a challenge at both national



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

and international levels to construct or theorise a feminism that is relevant to feminist struggles in various places, and yet have the breadth needed for the widest consensus and cooperation (315).

A number of Third World feminists including hooks (1981,1984), Moraga and Anzaldua (1981), Joseph and Lewis (1981), Okeyo (1981), Hull, Scott and Smith (1982), Savane (1982), Smith (1983) have tackled this problem in their effort to make the definition of feminism more relevant to philosophy and agenda articulation. In reaction to this narrow view or definition of feminism some Third World women have even refused to use the term feminist because for them, it has Western connotation.

In this situation, Alice Walker, an African American literary theorist, essayist and novelist has coined the term *womanist* to express her peculiar experience. For her, through their literature, women have to understand, conceptualise, frame and rename critical areas of human life such as mothering, sexuality, bodies, friendship, spirituality, and economics. So, in her essay, 'In Search of Our Mother's Gardens'(1983), Alice Walker asked the questions, What is my literary tradition ? Who are the black women artists who preceded me ? Do I have a ground to stand on ? Walker's revolutionary petunias describes a womanist as a *black feminist or feminist of colour* and argues that womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender (xi). She further on states that a womanist is committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female in a dynamic rather than a fixed space. Walker's pronouncement has it that feminism need to be reconciled with the concerns of the black community and must advocate the promotion of dialogue and community, the valorisation of women as well as the varieties of work women perform. Her comments underscore the feelings among Third World Women that their struggle as feminists is concerned to the struggles of their communities against racism as well as economic exploitation. For Cheryl Johnson-Odin, Alice Walker's desire to coin a new term has nothing to do with lack of commitment to women's desire for equality and everything to do with her vision of interconnectedness of her life as a black woman and concludes that her perception that mainstream feminism, or better liberal gender specific feminism, has been too narrow to encompass Third World Women's concern in their struggle. She therefore advocates a refashioning of culturally defined strategies to meet the needs of new challenges.

In her essay, "The Female Writer and Her Commitment" (1987), Molaria Ogun-dipe-Leslie writes that "Feminists have posited that the woman writer has these two major responsibilities: firstly, to tell about being a woman; secondly, to describe reality from a woman's view, a woman's perspective". For her, the female writer has the responsibility to correct certain false perceptions and allegations about womanhood, especially the woman in Africa. She argues that "the female writer must tell us about being a woman in the real complex sense of the term". Essentially, Molaria establishes female writers as primarily concerned with issues related to women folk in their effort to fight numerous colonialisms. Feminism as a literary movement has grown to



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

embrace many articulations. There are several varieties of feminism and that feminism is not monolith, there are many different, even at times contradictory positions which may spring from feminists' motives (Kate Schulman : 1982). This paper has womanism as its main theoretical base because of the latter's stance against all forms of domination and its ability to analytically expand its horizon to embrace culture, colonialism, ethnicity and imperialism and the ways in which all these interact to construct the concept of gender. Central to all these many branches of *feminism* is the quest for emancipation and equality of the sexes and the pursuit of a more equitable gender relations. The South African feminist scholar, Ruth Meena (1992 :15) thinks that feminism in the African context should entail creating spaces for women to participate in the management of their societies. This involves empowering women through access to resources such as health, education and housing. So the rationale, modalities and context she advocates inspires Amma Darko and many others as Third World writers.

I have chosen for the purpose of this work to use the terms feminism and womanism interchangeably in the light of foregoing consideration but with a special emphasis on Alice Walker's concept 'Black feminism' or feminism of colour to encompass Third World Women's experience, particularly Ghana and Africa. hooks (2002 :8) believes that "feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression". Her argument derives impetus from cultural and historical contexts.

Today it is a fact that African women have become indispensable in the social structure and thereby stressing the need for all *feminists* to come on board to make sure these women are recognised as the cornerstone of Africa's development and progress. To wit, Segun (2001) posits that:

Women have an additional commitment to employ their art to place women at the centre of development and change. There should be the sort of empowerment that reveals to women their peculiarities, for so long suppressed by male domination (p.297).

In the same vein, Chukwuma (2002: 229) gives credence to the need for African women to position themselves by motivating their fellow women to write so that their issues will be heard:

The success of feminism in the African context derives from the discovered awareness by women of their indispensability to the male. This is the bedrock of her actions. This gives her the anchor and the voice. Thus, the myth of male superiority disappears, for the woman looks inward for fresh appreciation of self.



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

In the light of these argued points, African feminists or female writers like Aminata Sow Fall, Mariama Bâ, Zainab Alkali, Calixte Beyala, Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo and Amma Darko have stressed the need for a common struggle with African men to reconstruct Africa. They have, in their endeavours recognised that there are inequalities in African society as a result of colonialism and that African culture needs to be analysed holistically in order that what is of value to her women are maintained and those of less value discarded to create a viable society where the African woman can strive devoid of cultural barriers. Despite the idea of male bashing which shows in their works, it is an acknowledged axiom that in its agenda or articulations, women's insurgency is suffused with the language of compromise, collaboration and negotiation its practice and, for that matter, invites men as partners.

In their fictional works, they present to the reader situations in which the relationship between men and women is one in which various types of physical and psychological violence exercised by men over their women folk are portrayed. It is a fact that gender roles are socially constructed and need to be discussed within a context of particular cultures. Many African feminists do not attack tradition and custom blatantly but express their disapproval of certain glaring abuses therein, which more or less impede progress as well as women's fulfillment. With her text, she demonstrates a sort of an unflinching faith in freedom of choice in the institution of marriage and believes in the gain the community will benefit from it if it wants move forward. Amma Darko uses ordinary women, illiterate ones, which she transforms into super heroines to withstand and defeat male power mechanics. The status of women in traditional Africa has been a major attention to scholars especially female ones. The woman has been always presented as a victim of cultural practices which makes her subservient. Amma Darko has, in *Beyond the Horizon*, painted a very unfortunate picture of the African woman as a being who is created to serve men in the patriarchal society she is born and raised. As such her sole business is to respond to the whims of or to satisfy men even at their own peril. In Darko's text, it is not surprising when Mara, Akobi's wife, Vivian Osey's wife and Pompey's wife, Kaye, sacrifice their dignity as women by going through excruciating pains in the brothels of Frankfurt, Germany, through prostitution so as to satisfy the requirements of their various societies. It is on this premise that African feminists look at the way the African woman has been oppressed physically and emotionally with the intention of rewriting or revisiting the shortcomings of patriarchal thrusts in Africa.

2. From margin to center. Women's Quest for Rights

When the novel opens, African women are presented as docile, naïve and inferior to their men. Thus, men in this novel symbolised by Akobi, Kaye's husband-to-be and Osey capitalise on the



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

docility, naivety and inferiority complex of their wives, respectively Mara, Kaye and Vivian to barter and eventually exploit them. It is the reason why Osey, Kaye's husband and Akobi use Mara, Kaye and Vivian as sex slaves to amass wealth without them having part of the spoils gained from their whoring profits. Their social status puts them in the mainstream of sex slave trade. But one woman contrasts them sharply in the novel. Comfort, the girlfriend of Akobi who sees herself as superior and too intelligent and as such she consents to Akobi's proposal on realising that he is going to travel abroad. But for her ability to read between the lines, Akobi could not use her as a prostitute like the illiterate Mara. In Germany, whereas the literate Comfort sits idle and milks Akobi, Mara and Gitte, Mara sleeps with countless men to make much money under the strains of drugs. Akobi's determination to marry the sophisticated secretary, Comfort, brings him to contact first Mara, his Ghanaian wife, and then Gitte, his German wife. Both Mara and Gitte become pawns in the exploitative hands of Akobi, who makes use of the money they make for his egoistic tendency. When Akobi informed Mara that he is travelling abroad, the latter testifies the assertion that African women are not only docile, naïve but also inferior beings:

'Akobi', I said dreamily, 'whatever you say I am sure is the right thing. What you decide on I am sure is the right thing. I am sure Akobi'. And it was like I was in the middle of a dream, being made love to by Don Juan. There was nothing Akobi would have said at that moment that I wouldn't have done. His word at that moment was holy. And not even the Pope could have thwarted me. If Akobi had suddenly suggested I allowed myself to be beheaded, that cutting my head off at that moment was the right thing to do, I would readily and gladly have given in still gone hopping headless, singing hallelujah unto him. So taken in was I by him (36).

For Ogundipe-Leslie (1994:36), the sense of feeling naive, inferior and docile is embedded in African cultural values and seen through the ideologies of patriarchy and gender. Thus, she explains:

Women are shackled by their own negative self-image by centuries of exteriorisation of the ideologies of patriarchy and gender hierarchy. Their own reactions to objective problems therefore are often self-deflating and self-crippling. Woman reacts with fear, dependence complex and attitudes to please and cajole where more self-assertive actions are needed.



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

Another theme tilted with dexterity throughout the novel is that of lopsided love. This emotional issue is shown in the relation between Akobi and his wife Mara, Osey and his wife Vivian and Kaye and her boyfriend. The fact of the matter remains that the traditional ethic has it that women must not be shown love. Akobi, Kaye's boyfriend, and Osey have shown consistently that they do not have any iota of feeling for their spouses and treat them with disdain. Akobi and Osey send for their spouses from their various countries, Mara and Vivian and make them work in brothels to acquire wealth for themselves. Kaye's case is different because the man who coerces her in the trade was only a boyfriend who lied that he was studying Engineering at the University. Just like Akobi and Osey, he came to Germany full of dreams. But when he realized that the amount of money he was aiming for could take him years to raise, he invests the little money he had in bringing Kaye to Germany. Ironically, the money that these women make from their prostitution spree or through the sale of their bodies is spent by their husbands on other women and in buying expensive things. For instance, Akobi spends the money Mara gains on his mistress, Comfort. Akobi is inhuman: If in the least, Akobi loved his wife, Mara, he would not treat her as he actually does. This desire of money to fulfill his egoistic tendency makes his wife go through the most inhumane condition that a woman in love could be subjected to. Thus, Mara recounts her predicament in the following lines:

I felt drained, so drained that I had asked for a glass of water. My husband brings me from home to a foreign land and puts me in a brothel to work, and what money I make, he uses to pay the rent on his lover's apartment, and to renovate a house for her in her village back home. I came to Gerhardt expecting the worst, but this was even worse than I had conceived of (137-138).

In another instance, we see Vivian recounting this illtreatment in the following words: "Even the money that I make, he controls it. I can't buy anything without his consent, not even for my own mother at home" (89). Due to the way these women are exploited, once again, Mara recounts her ordeal in a flashback:

I am in brief silky red underpants so I'm virtually naked, but that is not why I feel so cold because this coldness I feel does not grip my body so much as it does my soul. It's deep inside me that feels this chilliness, from the dejected soul my body harbours, a soul grown old from the much use of its shelter (1).



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

The issue of woman's illtreatment, subjugation, oppression in patriarchal societies is vividly captured by Egejuru (1997) who argues that "women issues constitute important aspects of working towards a most just and humane future for African society" (9). In this sense, feminism seeks social change as far as women's status is concerned by changing overtly the way in which patriarchal society views and treats them. Peter (2010: 30) reiterates feminist's goal by declaring that feminism "wants society to change its ideas on patriarchy and accept women as being a valuable part of society". In all her fictional works, Amma Darko the novelist is much more interested in how her novels relate to patriarchy and to the patriarchal ideal of women. Women in Africa were told in the numerous advice books or much oral literature that it was their sole role to be chaste, silent and obedient. Considering her novel, *Beyond the Horizon*, in the light of African cultural ideals and/or debates, women like Mara the protagonist, Vivian and Kaye, her partners in the sex market, are easily understood through their embracing prostitution. In the same novel, women are portrayed as gullible people; in other words, as people who are easily deceived. In an instance, Kaye's "aspiring engineer husband-to-be" (117) brings her to Frankfurt, Germany, coerces and blackmails her into prostitution by using many devious ways. To put his tactical ploy into practice, he uses nude pictures of his wife-to-be Kaye taken clandestinely with men to blackmail her anytime she deviates from his set purpose. He menaces Kaye that anytime she dares stop prostitution he will send her nude pictures to her family back home. This pushes her to delve deeper into prostitution and is forced to submit to the dictates of her brutish and exploitative husband for at least one and half years before she parts with him and meets Pompey, her German husband. Thus, Mara's comments on Kaye's predicaments are telling:

...then he coerced her into prostitution, pocketed every mark she made and kept her in the trade by blackmailing her with pictures he had clandestinely taken of her in action with different men. 'You back out today, tomorrow these pictures will be on their way back to your family at home', he had threatened whenever she mentioned her desire to get out of the business so for a whole year and a half Kaye worked for him (117).

The tactical ploy used by Kaye's boyfriend is the same as that of Ossey: blackmail. This does not make Kaye and Vivian feel free and allow them to live a decent marital life. In this instance, the novelist shows that the depiction of her female characters expose the fact that women are not only just weak but also vulnerable, though they could be worthy partners in men's struggle for sociopolitical and economic advancements.

In *Beyond the Horizon*, Amma Darko delineates the modern African woman as one who is opportunistic and materialistic. Being an opportunist means taking advantage of some



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

opportunities as they arise and appear to come out of a lot. Materialistic desire connotes preoccupation for material things. For instance, the urbanized African women in Darko's novel who resides in Accra, the capital town of newly independent Ghana, has her eyes cast on whatever comes from Europe; hence her insatiable desires for material possessions like cars and fridges. Cupid women like Comfort do not date men who are lowly ranged on the social ladder or have almost the same wages as herself; rather, they prefer men who have hefty purses or who are at least a "been-to". Comfort is a typist at the ministries where Akobi works but she cannot genuinely cope with him. Akobi expresses much interest in her and decides to send her to his village to meet his parents; but she turns down his proposal. Comfort prefers dating men who are wealthy irrespective of their stature. The narrator in the following lines supports Comfort's reason for rejecting Akobi's proposal:

And the very next day, back within the walls of the ministries, Comfort gave him a nasty cold shoulder. Ignoring him, she elegantly disappeared into the back of the silver metallic Pontiac belonging to the ugly, fat first secretary to the Housing and Construction Minister, who in spite of his munched-up face and flabby pot belly had laid half of the pretty girls... (6).

But when Comfort realises that Akobi has got the opportunity to travel abroad, that is Germany, she makes a quick turnaround because she knows very well that if she allies herself with Akobi she might become a coveted been-to, having an opportunity to travel abroad. Intelligently and immediately, she comes back and thereafter sees Akobi off at the airport in lieu of his legal wife, Mara. Mama Kiosk, Mara's trusted friend, makes the reader aware of this when she tells Mara, "it was her [Comfort] who saw him off at the airport" (45). Surprisingly on his arrival, Akobi sends for Comfort earlier than Mara but with the sinister view of using Mara as a sex worker. A sign of opportunism is seen in the attitude of Comfort for if Akobi fails to travel abroad, Comfort will surely turn him down.

Amma Darko's womanist or feminist credentials is seen in the way she presents women as loving, caring, sympathetic, and empathetic as well as good partners or better companions in her *Beyond the Horizon*. In this work, women are projected as pillars; even when men fail, they step in to care for the family and devote themselves totally to the preservation of the family. She calls for solidarity between men and women as a surely and meaningful way to emancipation. In many instances featured in the novel, Darko not only clamours for independence for her female characters but also asks that their uniqueness be recognized. Thus, Mama Kiosk, an elderly woman who is the best friend of Mara undoubtedly exhibits these rare qualities. She shows pure love and motherly care to Mara in times of distress and in her Mara finds comfort and a strong



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

tower to rely on. Mama Kiosk gives Mara food clothing and offers her sound advices because she sees Mara as a “Greenhorn” (45), i.e., a person who has just come to the city and does not know how to find her way. A case in point is when Mara *takes seed* and is going through some hormonal changes. She runs to Mama Kiosk to talk to her about her metamorphoses and she luckily explains to her that this could be the early signs of pregnancy. Astonished and happy to fulfill one of the functions of a woman, Mara herself recounts:

‘There is something wrong with me, Mama Kiosk’, I uttered under my breath, and I must talk to somebody. Her jovial look turned serious. ‘Come’, she beckoned me to a seat, and added, ‘you have something serious on your chest, I can see’. Let it out...I haven’tseen my blood for two months now, Mama Kiosk,’ I began and I am also suffering fits and dizziness. You think I’m dying?’ To my astonishment, Mama Kiosk roared with laughter, stood me upon my feet, clasped me to her generous bosom, and shrieked excitedly, ‘you are pregnant greenhorn!’ (15).

From this quotation, it makes sense to say that Mama Kiosk is the only person in the surroundings who has shown at many times that she cares for Mara and for that matter feels comfortable sharing her problems with her. This particular act by Mama Kiosk is in consonance with the feminists’ principle which seeks to fight for the welfare of their fellow women. The novelist calls for solidarity and collaboration between men, women and their progenies. In another instance, Darko’s feminist feat is demonstrated when she decides to depict Mama Kiosk as one who is caring and is very sympathetic towards her fellow women. With this, the novelist is bringing to the fore the need to help the poor and the most vulnerable beings in society who unfortunately happens to be women.

Finally, Darko presents African women as industrious, very supportive and capable of sacrificing their lives for the sake of their husbands in particular and humanity in general. These attributes of the African woman is also seen in the characters of Mara and Vivian, respectively spouses of Akobi and Osey. They are ready to go to many lengths to help their husbands and in their different enterprises. In this sense we see Mara, throwing rubbish away; and both Mara and Vivian embracing prostitution in their effort to support their husbands to make both ends meet. Akobi’s wife Mara is pregnant, but she has to start hawking boiled eggs from one location to the other, sell cheap tobacco, fresh coconut, roasted groundnuts and banana with the intention of raising some money to help her husband cater for his travel expenses. Mara tells us about her effort to help her husband:



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

Then I sought an alternative place where I would hawk, and settled on the train station. But it was a place where a lot of women already hawked boiled eggs so I cut down my eggs by a third and also hawked roasted groundnuts to go with banana...then I also took up selling cheap tobacco at the night market, and, when time permitted on Sundays, fresh coconut at the beach(38-39).

This depicts the traditional role of a wedded African woman who has the sole role to do this as part of her business as a woman. For Dagarembga (2006:16), the African woman's business is:

This business of womanhood as a heavy burden; she said 'how could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can't just decide today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated! When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. And these things are not easy, from a very early age. The earlier the better so that it is easy later on. Easy! As if it is ever easy (16).

Furthermore, Darko portrays African women in *Beyond the Horizon* as people who can be trusted. Akobi sends Mara to the city of Accra and makes life uncomfortable for her instead of treating her as a wife and companion. He makes Mara go through a lot of emotional and psychological trauma by making her throw people's rubbish away for foodstuffs and hawking though she is pregnant. Mara does all these in order to survive because Akobi does not give her housekeeping money. In these situations one woman who acts as a mother and trusted friend is Mama Kiosk. The trust that Mara has in this woman is unprecedented and this makes Mara confide in her constantly for solutions as far as her marital problems are concerned. The trust that Mara has in Mama Kiosk is without reserve:

Between Mama Kiosk and me now existed a mother-daughter relationship. I had grown to trust and talk openly with her about everything. Then too she was the one person I spent most of my time with since I left in the evening with her...So it was that in my desperate need for a mother I saw a substitute in Mama Kiosk. And she took on the role wholeheartedly, advising me on what to do and what not to do; asking and searching for herbs, which she made me sniff and chew; bringing me up to date on hygiene and noting down for me things I could start buying. She was a true friend and a perfect substitute mother (23).



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

Had it not been for the trust Mama Kiosk had in Mara, she would not have been comfortable in going to her with all her problems which help in alleviating some of her sufferings. This trust is beneficial for Mara. She listens to Mama Kiosk's wise advice which eventually leads her to start a new trade in order to survive in the harsh city of Accra as a poor wife of a very callous and irresponsible husband, Akobi. Additionally, Darko brings to the notice of readers that an educated African woman has the capacity to fight patriarchal control and domination. An educated African woman has been projected by Darko in *Beyond the Horizon* as someone who has the power to make informed decisions about her life without falling prey to the dictates of patriarchy. All the uneducated African women featured in this novel such as Mara and Vivian are, on the contrary, subjected to all sorts of inhuman treatment. In this novel, Comfort rejects Akobi initially when she realises that he is not match for him; but shockingly when she gets the information that Akobi is going abroad she warms her way into his arms. Surprisingly, Comfort is the one who sees Akobi off at the airport and gets to Germany earlier than Mara. Mama Kiosk narrates this episode to Mara this way:

It's this other woman, Comfort. She was the reason why he left you early and without even a proper good-bye. It was to be with her... and not just that, Greenhorn. It was her who saw him off at the airport. To tell you the truth, Greenhorn, if I was you, now that he's gone I would forget him and start thinking wholly about yourself and your son (45).

In Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*, Mara's decision to block those who siphon her money is animated by her recognition of her total loss of human dignity : through prostitution, she realises that she is left with nothing, has lost virtually every form of meaning in life, her relationship with her family, mother and her two children. Worse still, Akobi the husband whom she has tried so much to please and serve has robbed her of this dignity. It is at this point that Mara asks herself, 'Why couldn't I take control of my life?' (118). This question awakens her to act. Her awakening is acknowledged even by Kaye, an older prostitute who watches over her at the brothel. Kaye puts it this way: 'At last, Mara! You have woken up' (119). In order to free herself from subjection, oppression and better exploitation, she engages Kaye. With the cunning, experience and assistance of this prostitute she is able to free herself from subjugation. In the process of prostitution, Mara tries to contrive a scheme aimed at liberating her from the control of Akobi. She demonstrates her first act of resistance, when she double crosses her pimp Pompey into believing that "her capital is completely destroyed" by one of her customers while she was having sexual intercourse with him" (119). So, instead of sleeping with three men daily as is her



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

quota, she appeals to Pompey, her pimp, to allow her to take on one man only for the next month, until she is whole and restored again. But Pompey will not accept the proposal. He is presented to the reader as one who is rigid in his transactions and is not ready to go back on his contracts with Akobi. Here, instead of allowing Mara to reduce her quota of customers to one, she is compelled to increase her count to seven men per day, what can enable her to make enough money to contract a marriage with a German man, and eventually obtain a five years' visa.

Darko advocates strong perspectives that critique the ways women are commodified through the various socio-cultural formations of her society. The novelist equally emphasises the necessity for reconstituting female agency, in order to survive the physical and psychological oppression engendered by male power. By analysing all her texts, it dawns on the reader that she is bent on illuminating how the prevailing phallogocentric culture exploits to the extreme gender difference in society and fosters an environment in which men reduce women to objects of use and of abuse ; and thereafter, obliterates the agency of any oppressed female who seeks to resist its stronghold on the traditional structures of family and marriage. *Beyond the Horizon* interrogates female subjectivity and autonomy against the backdrop of established traditional and modern socio-cultural formations and practices. Mara's first act of awareness was to connive a scheme that will prevent Akobi from siphoning her money and her second one occurs when she, as an illiterate woman, hires the service of a private detective to extract information on Akobi's financial deals, private arrangements, and properties acquired. Thus, she says, "every deal and activity that you are capable of finding out about, I want to know" (133). Armed with this important incriminating information, she resolves to expose her estranged husband and split his liaison with Comfort, her rival and source of her problems. Vengeance in perspective. This marks a remarkable turn of events in the novel. She pulls the situation off successfully. From this, Mara undergoes a powerful psychological development for she is at long last able to take stock of herself. Comfort is deported to Nigeria where she starts a new life with a Nigerian diplomat. According to Mara, Vivian is marrying an American GI and is going with him to Chicago, and Gitte Akobi's German wife divorces and returns to her family. Akobi or Cobby, Mara's husband, is in jail in Germany and was caught when he attempts to sneak out of the country while still owing money to the bank. Everything he and Gitte owned has been seized by the bank. Gitte has divorced him and returned to her family (138-39). Earlier in the novel Kaye, who was to become Mara's mentor, breaks with her student husband and marries Pompey one of her regular clients who later on becomes the owner of Peepy, a night club where Mara works as a prostitute. In the end, Mara achieves all she sets out to do and regains her subjectivity. But unfortunately, falls in another trap in the dominant patriarchal practices of sexual objectification as she determines to delve deeper into prostitution with two fold reasons. Although she is freed from her pimp Pompey, she ends up being stuck with another pimp called Oves for the rest of her life (139).



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

According to her, “I have plunged into my profession down to the marrow in my bones. There is no turning back for me now” (139).

At the end of Amma Darko’s narrative, all her whoring profits have two purposes: firstly, to prove her motherhood by sending money home to care for her two children, brother, and mother ; secondly as a strategy to exploit men’s desire for sex by making much money. Having lost her dignity she makes sure all the money she earns comes to her directly for she has nothing dignified and decent left of her to offer than material things. Although no attempt is made to label Amma Darko as a radical feminist, her commitment to finding solutions to women and children’s problems draws her close to many female writers in this instance. Significantly, Mara’s unbreakable friendship with Gitte, Vivian, Kaye and Mama Kiosk can be seen as a deliberate attempt by Darko to suggest that one of the ways to attain women’s emancipation from the shackles of patriarchy is through sisterhood—a bond unbreakable by race, education, colour, religion or geographical differences. This type of solidarity is a landmark of African feminism. Amma Darko gives a very thorough treatment to the issue of prostitution. The pain, the ritual of taking drugs and the loneliness she feels are some of the consequences of body merchandising. With this text, the novelist tries to explain that Mara’s plunging into prostitution has nothing to do with an insatiable libido or spiritual enchantment. It has everything to do with Mara’s own psychological need to experience perpetual abuse from men, be it sexually or physically.

Conclusion:

This paper has shown that while womanist theory may be seen as confined to African American discourse, some of its elements such as audaciousness, community, spirituality and capability have found successful application in the African cultural model particularly and Third world one in general. The novel has been examined by means of close reading and analysis against the backdrop of Alice Walker’s womanist theory. The study’s focus has been on the ways in which language, deeds and acts are used by the novelist to develop womanish characters, to use Walker’s term, capable of overcoming limitations of their position in spaces that confine and silence them within domestic realms and beyond. From Alice Walker’s womanist perspective, the instability of gender as well as language categories used in early phallogocentric novels may become apparent in the tensions between the ways in which women writers use their writing to redress not only female identities but also their social status. Although numerous feminist discourses have offered theoretical frameworks concerning the roles of women and their position in phallogocentric societies, variously based on socio-cultural, historio-political, linguistic and ethnic factors. It thus become worthwhile at this point to say that these perspectives have factored in acquiring a better understanding of gender relations and social inequalities in western



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

and non-western species. This paper is largely influenced by womanism, as originally defined in 1983 book *In Search of Our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose* by African American novelist, theorist and essayist, Alice Walker. In its pronouncement, it aims to show viability of the theory as it offers to rescue the marginalised woman from negative and inaccurate stereotypes that mask her in the feminist discourse.

The quintessence of this study is twofold in terms of pedagogy as well as literary criticism. As regards pedagogy, it has contributed significantly to the teaching and learning of African literature, theory and criticism ; especially, in analysing how the traditional African woman has been presented in literary works yesterday and today. In terms of research, the study has also, it is hoped, contributed a lot to the heated cultural ideals and debates as far as contextual feminism(s) and literary analysis are concerned, it has, in the main, will also serve as a resource material from which a range of knowledge can be tapped for further research.

Bibliography

- Amadium, A. *Re-Inventing African: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture*: London: Zed Books, 1997.
- Appadurai, A. 'Disjuncture and Difference In The Global Cultural Economy'.
In Patrick W. et al. (Eds). *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. New York: Colombia, 1994.
- Armstrong, K. *End of Silence: Women and the Priesthood*. London: Fourth Estate, 1993.
- Ashcroft, B. et al. *The Empire Writes Back*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Ayinne, Raymond Akolbire. *Emerging Issues in Amma Darko's Novels: Beyond the Horizon, The Housemaid and Faceless*. Undergraduate Long Essay, Department of English. Legon: University of Ghana, 2004.
- Balk, D. 'Defying Gender Norms in Rural Bangladesh: a Social Demographic Analysis'.
Population Studies. 153-172, 1997.
- Bohmer, E. 'Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa'. In Nasta, S. (Ed.). *Motherlands: Black Women' Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia*. London: Women's Press, 1991.
- Bressle, C. E. *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice of Criticism*. New Jersey: Upper Saddle River, 2003.
- Bringle, R. & MacDowell, L. *Defining Women: Social Institutions And Gender Diversions*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1992.
- Charvet, J. *Modern Ideologies in Feminism*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1982.



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

- Chukuma, H. 'Voices and Choices: Feminist in Four Novels'. In Emenyonou, E.(Ed.), *Literature and Black Aesthetics*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1990.
- Chukwuma, H. *Accents in the Nigerian Novel, 2nd(Ed.)*. Port Harcourt Pear Publishers, 2002.
- Clifford, A. *Introducing Feminist Theology*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2001.
- Dagarembga, T. *The Book of Not*. London: Ayebia Clarke, 2006.
- Dagarembga, T. *Nervous Conditions*. New York: Seattle Press, 1988.
- Darko, A. *Beyond the Horizon*. London: Heinemann, 1995.
- Davies, C. B. & Graves, A. *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African literature*. Trenton, New Jersey: African World Press, 1986.
- De Beauvoir, S. *The Second Sex*. New York: Batnam, 1986.
- Dennis, C. 'Women and the State In Nigeria: The Case of The Federal Military Government (1984- 85)'. *Women, State and Ideology*. USA: State University of New York, 1987.
- Egejuru, P.A. 'The Paradox of Woman Being and The Female Principle in Igbo Cosmetology'. In Katak, K.H. (Ed.). *Woman Being and African Literature*. Trenton: African World Press, 1997.
- Eichler, M. *The double Standard: A feminist Social Science*. London: Croom Helm, 1980.
- Fapounda, E. R. 'Economic Recession And Employment Patterns Among Women in Modern Sector'. In Fashoyin T. (Ed.). *Women in Modern Sector Labour Force in Nigeria: Issues and Prospects*. Lagos: Leamson Printers Ltd, 1985.
- Fonchingong, C. 'Unbending Gender Narratives in African literature'. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 8(1), 135-146., 2006.
- Fort, J. 'Realism, Narrative and Feminist Playwright: A Problem of Reception'. In Keyssar, H. (Ed.). *Feminist Theatre and Theory*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996.
- Foucault, M. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. New York: Pantheon, 1980.
- Frank, K. 'Women Without Men: The Feminist Novel in Africa'. *African Literature Today*, 15, 14-34., 1987.
- Golombok, S. & Fivush, R. *Gender and Development*. USA: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Gubar, S. 'The Blank Page and the Issue of Female Creativity'. In E. Showalter (Ed.). *The New Feminist Criticism* (pp.292-313). New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.
- Hindin, M. J. 'Women's Power and Anthropometric Studies in Zimbabwe'. *Social Science and Medicine*. Pp. 1517-1528., 2000.
- hooks, b. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000.
- Humm, M. *Feminism Criticism: Women as Contemporary Critics*. Sussex: The Harvest Press, 1986.
- James, A. *In their own voices: African Women Writer Talk*. London: James Currey Ltd, 1990.



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

- Johnson-Odin, C. 'Common Themes, Different Contexts : Third World Women and Feminism'. Chandra T. Mohanty, Ann Russo, Lourdes Torres, (Eds). In *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- Kammampool, B. 'Fighting Two Colonialisms in Ama Ata Aidoo's Changes-A Love Story'. In *Research Scholar, An International Refereed e-Journal On Literary Explorations*, Vol.5 Issue II, May, ISSN 2320-6101, 30-44., 2017.
- Kammampool, B. 'A Critical Review of African Social Constructs as Seen through the Paradigmatic Lens of Literary Structuralism'. In *Research Scholar, An International Refereed e-Journal On Literary Explorations*, Vol.1, Issue IV., November, 2013 ISSN 2320-6101, 1-17., 2013.
- Kammampool, B. 'A Woman's Revisitation of Social Norms : Bigotry Versus Feminism : The Case of Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*'. In *Research Scholar, An International refereed e-Journal on Literary Explorations*, Vol.2. Issue 1, February, 2014, ISSN 2320-6101, 1-17., 2014.
- Kandiyoto, D. 'Identity and its Discontents : Women and the Nation'. In Laura C, & P. Williams (Eds.). *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*. Hertfordshire: Harvest Wheats-heaf Campus, 376- 91, 1993.
- Kolawole, M. *Womanish of African Consciousness*: Trenton: African World Press, 1997.
- Kolawole, M. 'Women's Oral Literature as a Site for Dynamic Self- Expression'. In Kolawole, M. E .M. (Ed.) *Gender Perceptions and Development in Africa*. Lagos: Arrabon Academic Publishers. 26, 1998.
- Mabura, L. 'Breaking Gods: an African Post-Colonial Gothic Reading of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow'. *Research in African Literature*, Vol. 39, 203-222, 2008.
- Manu, T. *Law and Status of Women in Ghana*. Addis Ababa: A paper prepared for the UN Economic Commission for Africa, 1984.
- Maseno, L. & Kilonzo, S.M. 'Engendering Development: Demystifying Patriarchy and its Effects on Women in Rural Kenya'. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 3(4)., 2011.
- Mawuli, A. 'Male-Bashing And Narrative Subjectivity in Amma Darko's First Three Novels', 47-61, In *SKASE Journal of Literary Studies* [online]. 2009, vol. 1, no. 1 [cit. 2009-06-23]., 2009, Retrieved 16 september 2017. http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/JLS01/pdf_doc/04.pdf.
- McFadden, P. *The State of Feminism In Africa Today*. Retrieved July 23, 2017 from www.nai.uu.se/publication/news/archives/002mcfadden/, 2002.
- Mikell, G. *African Feminism: The Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa.*, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania, 1997.
- Mohanty, Chandra T., Russo Ann, Torres Lourdes (Eds). *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Bloomington and Indianapolis : Indiana University Press, 1991.
-



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

- Nwakweh, P. Debunking Patriarchy: the Liberation Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangaremgba's *Nervous Condition*. *Research in African Literature*. Vol, 26, pp. 75-84., 1995.
- Ogundipe-Leslie, M. *Recreating Ourselves: African Women And Critical Transformations*. Trenton: African World Press, 1994.
- Ogundipe-Leslie, Molar. 'Stiwanism: Feminism in an African Context.' *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. (Eds). Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson. Malden: Blackwell, 531-41., 2007.
- Ogunyemi, C.O. 'Women and Nigerian Literature'. In Ogunbiyi, Y(Ed.). *Perceptiveson Nigerian Literature : 1700 to Present, Vol.1*. Lagos: Guardian Books Limited., 6- 67., 1988.
- Okome, O. 'What Women, Whose Development'. In Oyewume, O. (Ed.). *African and Feminism: Reflecting On The Politics Of Sisterhood*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003.
- Palmer, E. 'The Feminine Point of View'. *African Literature Today, Vol.13.* , 38-55, 1983.
- Parson, T. *The Structure Of The Family: Its Function And Destiny*. Chicago: University Press, 1959.
- Peter, Z. W. *The Depiction Of Female Writers In Selected Drama Works*. Diss: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, 2010.
- Quayson, Ato. Eds. 'Postcolonialism and the Contradictory Orders of Modernity'. *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson. Malden: Blackwell, 585-91., 2007.
- Rakoczy, S. 'Religion and Violence: The Suffering of Women'. *Sexuality in Africa Magazine*, 2(4). Retrieved, 13 September 2017 from <<http://www.arsrc.org/downloads/sia/dec05/deco5.pdf>>., 2006.
- Rampton, M. *Three Waves of Feminism*. Retrieved, September 12, 2017 from <http://www.pacificu.edu/magazine/2008/fall/echoes/feminism.cfm>., 2008.
- Ruth, S. *Issues in Feminism: An Introduction to Women's Studies (4th Ed.)*. London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1998.
- Salami, M. 'Seven Key Issues in African Feminist Thought'. Retrieved 12 September, 2017 from www.msafropolitan.com/2012/08/7-key-africanfeministthought.html., 2012.
- Schipper, M. 'Mother Africa on a Pedestal: The Male Heritage in African Literature and Criticism'. In Jones et al (Eds.). *Women in African Literature Today*. London: James Currey Ltd, 1987.
- Segun, M. 'Challenges of Being A Female Writer in A Male Dominated Developing Society'. *Matatu.*, 23-24., 2001.
- Sotunsa, M. *Feminism and Gender Discourse, The African Experience*. Sagamu: Ojoko- Biri Kale Press, 2008.
- Steady, F. C. *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Sachenkman, 1981.
-



The Achievers Journal

Volume 3, No.4.

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 October-December, 2017

- Tripp, A. M. *How African Feminism Changed the World*. Retrieved July 22, 2017 from thinkafricapress.com/gender/how-african-feminism-changed-world, 2013.
- Umeh, M. 'The Poetics of Economic Independence For Female Empowerment: An Interview with Flora Nwapa'. *Research in African Literature*, Vol. 26, 75- 84., 1993.
- Umezurike, U.P. 'Resistance in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and ChikaUnigwe's *on Black Sisters' Street: An Introduction*'. *An International Journal of Language, Literature and Gender Studies*, Vol 4(2), 2015.
- Walker, A. *In Search of Our Mother's Garden: Womanist Prose*. New York : Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1983.