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GENDER INTERRELATIONS IN THE WORKS OF AMMA DARKO

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DEGREE.**

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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that, this work is a result of my own original research under supervision with the exception of the cited references. This work has not been submitted in part or whole to any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

The past decades have seen a proliferation of works from women which are of importance to society and deal with current issues going on in Africa. These female authors centered on the woman and her experiences in the real world thereby uncovering the predicaments of the woman on significant issues in society in all totality. However, most works of women have been praised vociferously as emanating from feminist consciousness. This implies that most women writers are assumed to exclusively focus on advocating for better opportunities for women resulting in a large extent to the loss of credibility of their works. The research is based on critical study of Amma Darko, a Ghanaian female author who has gone beyond just writing about issues of women to explore problems of society through her perspectives as a woman.

The aim of the research is to study and unearth the interrelations of men and women in the 21st century as presented by the Darko and establish the idea that women writers have gone beyond domestic writing to write about governance issues and societal problems that affect not only the woman but the whole society at large. This will be done by studying the circumstances in which she puts men and women and what strategies they employ to cope with these predicaments in the midst of economic and political pressure. Also the researcher seeks to establish that Darko raises womanist concerns in her works by advocating for the survival of both sexes therefore demonstrating that eliminating discrimination against women does not end the struggle of inequalities. Darko aggressively questions and criticizes existing patriarchal structures in society that continue to marginalize women in contemporary Ghana.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty who in his gracious ways has made this thesis a success. I also dedicate this work to my father, Mr. Jimmy Kpeglo and my mother Mrs. Selasee Kpeglo both of whom contributed immensely to the success of this thesis. I also dedicate this thesis to Mrs Esther Dzikunu. God richly bless you for your support.



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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Female authors have contributed immensely to the development of many societies especially African societies. Through their authorships, they have contributed to the development and broadening of the literary canon and have dealt with relevant issues that affect society as a whole. Amadiume (1998) affirms that there was a male bias in colonial education thus more boys went to school than girls did because society saw the woman's role as a wife and housekeeper. This resulted in the late arrival of women on the literary scene because writing and education go hand in hand. Their appearance on the literary scene, although delayed, has brought about new perspectives on the past and contemporary issues especially issues concerning women.

The past forty years have seen a proliferation of works from women which are of importance to society and deal with current issues going on in Africa (Cooper, 2016). The flourishing of women's writings in the 20th century led to women being able to speak on issues that were of importance to them. However this raises questions as to whether there is such a thing as women's writing. There is the idea that based on the fact that writers write from experience, then it is undeniable that women's experiences are different from men's experiences. Thus, what the woman lays emphasis on in her work might be totally different from what the man chooses to emphasize per his perspectives on issues. However it is important to note that some female writers do not want to be called women writers but writers. According to Gilbert and Gubar, (1980), Female authors began to concentrate on the woman and her experiences in the real world thereby uncovering the predicaments of the woman on issues in society in all totality. In the course of doing so, issues of the woman and womanhood are sufficiently dealt with and objectively analyzed. However at the dawn of the growth of female writing till recently, female-authored works were and are tagged as

being feminist and attracted criticisms from scholars from varied fields (Nfah- Abbenyi, 1997). Accusations arose as to how the female authors are biased towards issues of women and others accepted the new perspectives presented by such authors.

Women authors explore various themes in their works. Some of the issues dealt with revolve around the woman and her life experiences in society and in the process of developing these issues, female authors set to present their perspectives on political, economic and social issues ongoing in society. Ogundipe-Leslie (1987) asserted that works of women set out to correct false images portrayed by male authors about the woman and redefine the woman from the woman's own authentic view. According to her, the woman writer has three main commitments. First and foremost, she has a duty as a writer to commit to art, her vision and tell her own truth thus writing what she wishes to write. Secondly, she has the commitment to write from a woman's perspective because she is a woman. She has the right, therefore, to write about the life of the woman in a society irrespective of the conflict of people's opinions, actions and characters. Lastly, the female author has the commitment to write as a third world person. As a result, she must not ignore social predicaments that come with colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism as they affect and shape her life. The focus being the woman is to try and tell the story of women that has been told on their behalf for too long. This does not mean that their works do not revolve around every member of society and are devoid of pertinent issues in society. It is undeniable that some female writers have gone beyond just writing about the woman to writing about real life experiences including political and economic issues currently happening in society.

Increased access to education has made it possible for girls and women to gain access to knowledge and skills in the last forty years of the twentieth century and into the new millennium which used to be the preserve of boys and men. The evidence of this includes access to paid work, more women representatives in parliament and increase in well-being

of women and their families (Kabeer, 2005). Thus, they have the capacity to write and present their views about anything or any subject provided their interest and knowledge is versed in that subject. What should be important to the reader or critic is the critical and systematic questioning or examination of the issues raised by the author and how he or she approaches it. Therefore the validity of women's writings lie in the ability of that writing to stir up debates on the issues being discussed, raise awareness, get critics or find a solution to the problems through their perspectives presented.

Various perspectives on women have led to a change in the images that used to be portrayed of the African woman in the era of colonialism. According to Nfah Abbenyi (1997) "African critics now generally agree that African women writers offer more dynamic representations of women than the images of subordination" (p. 6). The reader is carried into the woman's world in a detailed style through the struggles and ability of a character to make choices. Female authors now define themselves through their lived experiences. Some authors portray educated women characters, who are fully aware of current affairs and who make decisions that affect them and society at large. Depending on the author, her background and experiences, her point of view differs. Some female authors such as Ama Ata Aidoo believe that the woman needs education in order to be empowered in society while others such as Darko the Ghanaian female writer whose works the researcher examines, think what she needs is economic empowerment. Thus the stories they present develop and explore their perspectives about life through their experiences. According to the point of views of Darko and Aidoo, it is only through education or economic independence that the women can really become free and not marginalized in society.

Although the commitments of the female writer as explained in the initial paragraphs are essential to the female author, it is important to note that it should not be an obligatory task.

Jones (1987) states that ‘having corrected the misconceptions, the African woman writer must be free to follow her creative impulse and write about what she pleases’ (p.3). The researcher seeks to identify the free creative impulse in the works of Darko who is the author selected for this study. Does the author being studied have some kind of flexibility in her works in the sense that characters being male or female go through similar circumstances in the struggle for a better life? Thus the situations men and women go through are not necessarily as a result of their maleness or femaleness? The researcher intends to find out what self-images and insights Darko offers through her perspectives on the woman’s situations. In addition, the researcher intends to find out if Darko’s works focus on the female issue only or does it deal with nationalism and social problems.

Female authors such as Darko are concerned about issues of women in contemporary times. Hence it is on this observation that this thesis seeks to establish by critically examining the roles assigned to characters represented by the author and how she situates them in societal circumstances which lead them to make choices which affect them. By so doing the researcher intends to find out what differences exist between Darko and other female authors concerning the preference given to women in their works. In the process of this examination, the researcher also seeks to explore the idea that Darko’s texts espouse womanism: a form of ‘feminism’ which seeks to negotiate a common ground between the consciousness of the male and female identities through questioning of existing categories of sexual identity and images and roles ascribed to males and females in society.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The works of African female authors are categorized on the basis of them being ‘feminist’ or extremely feminist because it is assumed that their approaches to addressing issues of concern to them are based solely on making the woman the center of their works. Nfah-

Abbenyi (1997) puts it clearly when she states that the works of women have been praised vociferously as emanating from feminist consciousness. This implies that most African women writers are believed to exclusively focus on advocating for better opportunities for women. This restricts the range of themes they can tackle.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research provides a platform to look at the work of a woman writer who appears to have taken a new approach to her chosen themes. Understanding the predicaments not only of women but of men and the mechanisms both men and women employ to survive amidst social and political and economic pressure.

An objective of the study, also, is to establish a womanist concern in the selected texts of this author and identify how the works seek to ensure the welfare and survival of men, women and children. In the process of establishing a womanist perspective of the author selected for this study, differences and similarities in the approaches used by female authors in the 21st century will be unearthed.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Who is Darko as a narrator and what approaches and styles does she use in asserting her own culture and themes in the selected texts?
2. What are the realities of men and women's roles and lives in the selected texts and how does the author approach them?
3. How do these roles interrelate with each other and what strategies do both sexes employ to deal with issues that arise?

1.5 METHODOLOGY

The research will be based on a close reading of the three texts namely *The Housemaid*, *Beyond the Horizon* and *Faceless*. Particular attention will be paid to major characters consisting male and female characters whose roles will be studied to unearth womanist concerns raised by the author. The researcher will do a critical study of the relationships that exist between the male and female characters in their daily activities. Mechanisms adopted by the characters to deal with gender inequities, and the phenomenon of bad economic circumstances perpetuating suffering and ideas of subordination among both sexes will also be analyzed in the course of study.

This research will critically examine interviews and reviews and critiques based on the study. Works of other female scholars whose works are centered on the woman and the approaches they employ would be probed. The researcher will also do a critical study of the style of writing of the selected author especially how she uses language to articulate her views and how she gives voice to her characters through the language they speak.

The researcher intends to interview the author if accessible and also engage in conversations with male writers, readers of the author's works and other scholars vexed in the field of study in order to seek their views and opinions on female writers and their works and what they think about gender interrelations in the texts they have read and how the author approaches this issue.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

On account of the issues that arise in the study of gender and feminism and how they are considered by some African writers such as Oyewumi as western ideas that do not deal with African issues in totality, the theoretical framework that will guide this research is "womanism". According to Phillips (2006), womanism has at its basis a social change

perspective which is established on everyday problems and experiences of African women and other women belonging to the minority. Its main objective is to look for ways to annihilate inequalities for all marginalized people. Womanism is said to be coined from womanist which was put forward as an idea by Alice Walker.

A womanist theologian, Delores Williams, asserts that the task of a womanist is to seek out the voices of the unheard and the experiences of the neglected irrespective of their biological makeup. This theory is believed to suit the experiences of African women rather than feminism which is associated with experiences of white women and which has authoritarian implications. By characterizing women as willful and capable, it opposes the image of a subservient and substandard woman which in turn empowers the woman and challenges them to break from the traditional definition of womanhood.

It is observed that womanism and other new terminologies such as: motherism, stiwanism and negofeminism seek to redefine feminism to suit the situations of the African especially the African woman. The differences between these terms come from the angles from which scholars perceive and comprehend the issues of women and how they believe issues of women can be addressed. 'Stiwanism' as espoused by Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) is derived from 'Stiwa' an acronym which stands for 'Social Transformation Including Women in Africa' insists on the participation of women as equal partners in the transformation of society. Catherine Obianuju Acholonu's motherism, an Afrocentric substitute to feminism, has at the center of its nature, motherhood nurture and respect for the environment (Maduka, 2009). The motherist, therefore, is a man or woman committed to the survival of mother earth by indulging in attributes of the mother which includes love, service, tolerance and more importantly mutual cooperation of the sexes thus rejecting any form of sexism. Negofeminism also propounded by Obioma Nnaemeka is based on negotiation and no ego

feminism. Thus it includes complementarity, and collaboration of both sexes in transforming the society. In the case of Ogunyemi (1985), the vision of womanism is to answer the ultimate question of how to equitably share power among the races and between the sexes. All these attempts by African scholars are geared toward gender inclusion in order to create equal opportunities for men and women in Africa. More importantly, what is common and essential to these scholars is that it must be anchored in the African cultural contexts.

In comparing the ideas adopted by Alice Walker to Ogunyemi's definition of womanism, it can be observed that both intersect at a point where womanism goes beyond just the experiences of women to effect a social change which involves men and women. Womanism, unlike radical feminism, highlights the plight of oppression experienced by African women. It does not act in opposition to men but encourages complementarity of both sexes. Every feminist theory deals with the oppression of women from different perspectives. For instance, liberal feminism acknowledges that women are just as capable as men thus making equality their main goal. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) is recognized as the path breaking exposition on feminist thought in Europe and America. A sequel to this was the redirection of ideology from advocacy for social, economic and political reform to "politics of reproduction, to women's experience to sexuality as at once a form of oppression and something to celebrate" (Selden et al., 1997, p. 128).

Radical feminism, on the other hand, states that society is built on patriarchy and so they lobby to change laws and remind people that women are just as good as men. Radical feminism according to Willis (1984) "began as a political movement to end male supremacy in all areas of social and economic life, and rejected the whole idea of opposing male and female natures and values as a sexist idea" (p. 91). Kate Millet's radical feminism which

was termed *Sexual Politics* perceived the culture of patriarchy as a means of looking down on the female and treating her as an inferior human being. Allan (1995) asserts that educated middle class white women developed theories that concentrated on the middle class white woman. They categorized the theories as universal thereby neglecting experiences of majority of women who were not part of that category. This brought about ethnocentrism within feminist studies. Thus the error of universalizing the oppressions of women and categorizing them as victims of male violence raises questions as to whether western feminist ideologies are adequate for the African's predicaments.

In view of the above, the researcher employs womanism as a framework of analysis for this study because it is devoid of prejudices about women and negotiates a common ground between the male and female consciousness of identity. It questions the fixed categories of sexual identity and images considered as normal in thoughts regarding sexes (Kolawole, 1997). Thus the justification of the use of this framework lies in the fact that it is based on the African idea of feminism which emphasizes not just the survival of the woman but also of the man and child in every society. Also, since most African female writers are not comfortable with being referred to as feminists, it is appropriate to analyze their works using a framework based on an ideology which they either espouse or consider preferable to a foreign ideology. In addition, it adopts the idea of complementarity as a basis of survival of both sexes in a society or Africa in totality.

In her article, *Womanism: the dynamics of the contemporary Black Female Novel in English*, Ogunyemi posits that

Many black female novelists writing in English have understandably not allied themselves with radical white feminists; rather, they have explored the gamut of other positions and produced an exciting, fluid corpus that defies

rigid categorization. More often than not, where white woman writer may be a feminist, a black woman writer is likely to be a "womanist." That is, she will recognize that, along with her consciousness of sexual issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural, national, economic, and political considerations into her philosophy (Ogunyemi, 1985, pp.63-64).

Ogunyemi (1985) lays emphasis on how black women and black men are disadvantaged because of issues such as race, white patriarchy and abuse by white men. As a result, he concludes that:

The womanist vision is racially conscious in its underscoring of the positive aspects of black life. The politics of the womanist is unique in its racial-sexual ramifications; it is more complex than white sexual politics, for it addresses more directly the ultimate question relating to power: how do we share equitably the world's wealth and concomitant power among the races and between the sexes? (Ogunyemi, 1985, p.68).

The above statement implies then that womanism tackles issues of race and white patriarchy in addition to fighting for equal rights for women. Hence one goal of womanism is to raise awareness and eradicate all forms of white suppression on all blacks including men and women since feminism is suspected to be another means of subjugation and imposition of white values on blacks. Thus the difference between feminism and womanism according to Ogunyemi is their perspectives of patriarchy and what can be changed. (Ogunyemi, 1985).

The selected works will be analyzed on womanist themes which include self-realization, self-empowerment, freedom from male dominance and abuse and lastly survival of men, women and children in African societies.

Womanist novels are mostly characterized by features that might be similar or totally different from feminist novels. These features are what the researcher seeks to unearth in the study of Darko's novels in this study. Womanist novels according to Ogunyemi demand that readers thus male and female oppressors or females who are oppressed are made aware of ideological issues so that it helps change their attitude towards patriarchy. Therefore it must not concentrate on issues of women alone. Other authors such as Emecheta who support the idea of redefining feminism to suit the African also asserts that African feminism must be responsive to the needs of black/African women. This implies that it must take into account freedom from structures created by various forms of oppression oppressions. Hence it must be "free of the shackles of Western romantic illusions" because the African woman lives for many things such as a sense of sisterhood and not just cultivating herself and enjoying sex. It also "tends to be much more pragmatic" (Emecheta, 2007, p.554). More importantly, African feminisms according to Maduka (2009) does not negate men but rather accommodates them because they are 'central to their lives thus their continuous presence is assured' (p.10).

According to Carole Boyce Davies in an article *Some Notes on African Feminism*, a genuine African Feminism needs to recognize the following:

A common struggle with African men for the removal of the yokes of foreign domination and European/American exploitation. It is not antagonistic to African men but it challenges them to be aware of certain salient aspects of women's subjugation which differ from the generalized oppression of all African people (Davies, 2007, p.563).

In addition she states that African feminism does not reject its connection to international feminism but is fundamentally based on the needs and realities of African women. It

acknowledges pre-existing structures that give women equality thereby rejecting those ones that do not support women. Also, it promotes economic independence and self-reliance in women and makes inquiries into ways in which women can access power in traditional and contemporary societies.

The ideas suggested above by Davies can also be found in Ogunyemi and Alice Walker's womanism. According to Walker, womanism is committed to survival and wholeness of the entire people, male and female but who loves herself. (As cited by Davies, 2007). Davies (2007) affirms that "seriousness, capability, self-reliance, love of culture and love of self are indicated" (p. 565). Thus aside the differences in the 'feminist' theories which might be a result of differences in cultures, African feminists are committed to the emancipation of the woman and the total liberation of the African.

It is important to state that in depth debates still continue on the issue of feminism (s) and the emergence of African feminism has unveiled a branch of feminism whose beliefs, values and ideas extensively depict womanism. Chandra Mohanty's critique of western feminism restricted ability to relate to the experiences of African women because of assumption of women as a homogenous group, that women are sexually constrained and the dynamics of power relations and struggles, is very important to understanding feminism. Thus basing analysis on some prejudices such as men and women are already constituted as a sexual-political subject and that women are oppressed and undeveloped continue to perpetuate the first/third world dichotomy. Also, combining all experiences of different groups of women ignores questionable and counter experiences. (Chandra, 1988). In addition to this is a body of profound scholarly knowledge on intersectionality, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), which is the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations. This perspective of understanding gender suggests the

need to disaggregate identities in order not to analyze based on prejudice and misconceptions. The study of the production and reproduction of oppression, dominance and inequalities formed the basis on which intersectionality developed. Its development as a theoretical framework is usually retraced to ‘black feminist’ responses to the recognition that intersections of gender with other dimensions of social identity are defined in relation to one another (Shields, 2008). Thus intersectionality emphasizes the qualitative differences among different intersectional situations. There is no single identity category that describes how humans respond to social environment or are responded to by others in a satisfactory manner. Nevertheless, since its inception, there has been large confusion concerning what intersectionality actually means and how it can be or should be applied in feminist research. It has been observed that intersectionality fosters heterogeneity of approaches which researchers using intersectional perspectives employ to shape different disciplinary studies. As posited by Davis (2008), the ambiguity of the intersectionality concept and its open-endedness is what makes it a good and successful theory. According to Shields (2008), in employing an intersectional approach to tackling gender issues, it is important to note that “Identities are fluid in that they can change over time; at the same time, however, they are experienced as stable, giving the self a sense of continuity across time and location. Some identity categories, perhaps most notably gender, are found in all historical periods and cultures, though how and to whom the identity category applies can vary as do the social meanings attached to the category.” (p. 304).

In relation to this thesis, an intersectional approach may be based on theories in the analysis of the selected texts. This will prevent the researcher from depending solely on one theoretical framework as an analytical tool. The other idea is that the characters are analyzed with an intersectional perspective which will be based on the identities given to the characters by the author.

Although the main theoretical framework of this thesis is not intersectionality, in the analysis of the characters, the researcher examines not just their gender ascriptions but also the situations in which they find themselves. Thus economic, racial issues, political and more importantly gender issues will be examined to see how they interact to put the characters being analyzed in the situations in which they find themselves. This will expose the root of the issues being examined.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study will be organized into five chapters. Chapter one deals with introduction and background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives, purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, methodology and organization of the study.

Chapter two reviews existing literature related to the topic under study. This will include a perusal of journal articles, books, critiques and interviews that are of relevance to the topic gender interrelations in Amma Darko's works. It will also highlight issues surrounding the discourse of black feminism and African feminisms. In addition, works of authors before the emergence of Darko will be probed. This will be done in order to provide a background on the issues that female writers especially in Africa, dealt with before the emergence of Darko.

Chapter three critically examines the roles assigned to major characters in the selected texts and their relationships as males and females. Also in this chapter the approaches and mechanisms used by the author selected for this study in her own attempt to cope with new situations that are paramount in this 21st century are examined. Chapter three will also identify factors that suggest that Darko articulates womanist concerns. This will be done by analyzing while discussing the gender interrelations in the text through a study of the roles assigned to the characters and how they cope with reality. By identifying social

circumstances created in the texts and issues taken up by the author the researcher intends to identify the womanist ideology in the selected texts and how the author deals with them.

Chapter four will consist of what the researcher's findings on the author's style of writing. This will include the techniques that she employs in her works. Chapter five gives a summary of the previous chapters, draws conclusions, makes suggestions and recommendations.



CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The study of a literary author cannot be done without a study of the approach that is employed in his or her work. The author's approach goes a long way to convey her message clearly. A writer's approach to some extent may depend on various factors including her experiences and the point of view from which the study originates. The review focuses on some general approaches used by female authors who were writing before Darko in articulating their views and perspectives on issues in society especially gender. This will be done within the framework of womanism. The researcher would concentrate on the way authors express womanist concerns. This chapter will also review the biography of Darko and her style of narrative as a prerequisite to understanding the messages and perspectives she seeks to convey in her works and how she portrays men and women in her texts.

2.2 APPROACHES IN LITERARY WORKS

Several approaches including the cultural studies approach, post-colonial, feminist, pan-African and comparison of similar works of other authors are used by scholars to analyze the works of women authors based on the ideas and messages they intend to convey. These approaches help to reflect the context from which the authors emanate and the effect of society on them. Thoughts and themes explored by authors go a long way to shape the consciousness of society. Thus women writers tend to represent women as powerful and having equal capabilities to carry out responsibilities and make important decisions in society. Asiedu and Ampofo (as cited in Adams, 2012) argue that an increased number of women participating in the process of creating cultural products will go a long way to allow

for an alternative representation of women. Hence, women writers have tried to recreate the stereotypical images handed down to generations.

One important issue that arises in the study of written works of Africans, especially women, is the fact that their works must identify with the African woman and her predicaments. According to Heywood (1971), writers can only be recognized as African in the sense in which they give African characters to their works. These characters can also only be accepted by Africans so far as they speak with the voice and accent of the African. Thus it is important that the work of the writer be related to the African's life and experiences in society. This applies to works by African women authors and their audiences. Therefore, the language in which an author writes (although is mostly European Languages) must relate to the feelings and attitudes of the characters and audience who engage with the texts. Sutherland-Addy in Adams (2012) for instance argues that the conscious interplay of Mfantse and the English language by Ama Ata Aidoo and Kobina Sekyi serves various purposes other than portraying the style of the author. According to her, it reveals the topic under discussion and the culture of the people. In the case of Sekyi, Mfantse names given to characters connote the persona of the characters and symbolize their social status in society. He employed this technique in *The Blinkards* to lash at society for the blind adoption of western cultures especially by the Mfantse which does more harm to them as a people than good. On the other hand, Aidoo's use of Mfantse words is to 'stay faithful to a genre' (p.338) and more importantly articulate her perspectives on national issues.

In view of the above, it is observed that the use of language by some authors irrespective of their sexes serve the sarcastic purpose of lashing at unacceptable societal practices in order to correct and establish writers perspectives on issues that are of paramount concern to society. Thus the ability to speak one's language is in a way a means to not accept the

impositions of colonialism or western culture with all its implications and deficiencies. Western culture has permeated the very fabric of the African culture which can be said to start from the use of the language of the western people.

The discourse on feminism and gender and how they are considered by some scholars such as Oyewumi, are deemed as not adequate to describe the predicaments of the African. It is not erroneous to state that language goes a long way to define the people of a society. Oyewumi's reservation about gender is based on the idea that the term gender did not exist in the language of the Yoruba. This is because roles and responsibilities were assigned based on seniority and societal arrangements rather than the biological makeup of an individual. Thus, gender as a western discourse has Eurocentric implications which do not apply to the African's way of organizing society. However, Bibi (2004) in his review of Oyewumi's work argues that it was problematic for Oyewumi to base her argument on language because language is prone to change over a long period of time and so the language she refers to as the original which had no pronouns that identified people by their sexes could in actual case not be the original language. She also pointed out that seniority could be used as a form of abuse hence it should be explored further since abuse is not ideal in achieving coherence in society. However, whether problematic or not, language plays a vital role in the growth and development of a people.

With reference to this, it is right to say that language, in any form that it comes, serves several purposes in the works of writers. For instance writers such as Aidoo, and Achebe try as much as possible to write in a language which gives voice to rural and urban people in their texts. Through language, the characters are able to communicate clearly their ideas and messages with the audience understanding it from their point of view. Achebe, for instance, uses Pidgin language to identify and give voice to the characters that have not had formal education in his texts. Thus, as the reader reads, he or she is able to assume the

positions of such people in order to understand their perspectives on issues based on their backgrounds. This style of writing fosters nationalistic tendencies by showing that in order to live in harmony with one another every person must be understood based on his/her differences. Most of Achebe's works, however, portray problems of most African countries in the neocolonial era thus the element of nationalism is portrayed in his themes as well. So it could be said that although Achebe is not known as a feminist, his quest to support nationalism promotes a womanist concern although the woman is not the center of his work.

Female authors all over Africa adopt different approaches to express their views on general societal problems and those that are specific to the woman and which affect her. What is important to them is the need for the woman to be fully liberated from societal oppression and be given opportunities just as any human being in society. This as deduced from the African women writing collection of stories and poems cannot be achieved without addressing the societal problems the writers elaborate in their texts. This is because most of the oppression of women either emanate or are worsened by these problems. In the process of highlighting the predicaments of the woman, men are revealed as cultural law makers and agents of change. Nevertheless the problem is not from the men but from the laws they make that put limit on women in the society. The act of writing about the man, child and especially the woman's plight is to reach a wider audience in order to expose them to the problems to make them understand and take action if possible (De Hernandez, Dongala, Jolaosho, & Serafin, 2010).

This suggests that change cannot come from the woman alone but the man must also come on board to understand the effects of societal laws that oppress and marginalize women and children.

2.3 AFRICAN FEMINISM AND GENDER

Issues regarding sexuality and gender in Africa have been categorized under various discourses that often times do not take into consideration the particular and complex nature of African societies Kolawole (as cited by Anfred, 2002). Black feminism became popular in the 1960s in response to sexism of civil rights movement and racism of feminist movement and also because of the fact that feminist theories do not take into account the experiences of the African (black woman). A school of thought states that sexism, class oppression, gender identity and racism are incapable of being disentangled from each other (Carby, 1996). Hence there was the need to redefine feminism to ensure that it is relevant to the African context. Filomina Steady defines African Feminism as:

Emphasizing female autonomy and cooperation nature over culture; the centrality of children multiple mothering and kinship. It concerns itself with the liberty of African people. It delineates concerns peculiar to the African situation. Questions features of traditional African cultures without tending to discredit them, understanding that these might be viewed differently by the different classes of women. If African feminism is to succeed as a humane reformation project, it cannot accept separatism from opposite sex (Steady, 1987, p.17).

The above excerpt suggests that African feminism is not in resistance to the man but creates the platform for them to know that the subjugation of African women differ from that of the western women due to various factors including culture, race and gender.

The need to come up with terminologies that best described the woman's predicaments in Africa, arose out of the realization by women writers, activists and critics that uncritical adoption and application of western concepts were inadequate in accounting for the experiences of the African woman (Kolawole, 2004, p.258). Hence there were arousing concerns about feminism and what it meant to the African. Some scholars such as Narayan

(1997) assert that feminism is the same everywhere because feminist scholars in the diaspora recognize complexities and changes in the west but ignore that of the third world countries. According to him, this implies that cultural differences do not adequately differentiate western feminism from African feminism. Thus the main issue is the same ideas and aims these two groups share which include giving the woman equal rights as the man in all situations.

Meanwhile, scholars such as Oyewumi (2002) are of the view that western feminist concepts emanate from their system of social organization which focuses mainly on the nuclear family system which neglects the essential elements of the extended family unit in African societies. Thus feminism does not exist in Africa. She also argued that Yoruba's do not do gender because their social system is organized on seniority basis rather than on the basis of biology. However this did not mean that the form of social organization she talked about did not discriminate or abuse subordinates according to Bakare-Yusuf (2004). Amadiume (1998), posits that women in Africa were not universally regarded as having no power by virtue of their culture. Coquery-Vidrovitch (1997) discusses how women during the 19th century took up roles such as traders, chiefs and peasants and how they play important roles in the agricultural sector. They are described as challenging the status quo which implies that women were not feeble and passive but for the imposition of Victorian principles and western ideas of what constitute femininity and masculinity. The man and woman have the capability to carry out any responsibility assigned to her/him irrespective of their biological makeup. The imposition of colonial values on women and men brought about the displacement of roles in most African societies. Thus the history of women in Africa is different from women in the western world and so what 'feminism' means to the western woman is not what it means to the African woman.

Meanwhile, other African scholars such as Ogunjipe Leslie are of the view that feminism exists in Africa and that Africans must define for themselves what they mean by feminism so that it is not based on the meanings ascribed to it by the westerners since the African woman's history differs from the western woman's history. Thus she proposes *STIWANISM* as a theory for dealing with issues of women. The main aim of stiwanism is to make women part of transformation in society and not just passive members. It is geared toward correcting economic inequality between the man and woman. Catherine Acholonu also coined the term motherism to be used instead of feminism. According to her "Africa's alternative to Western feminism is motherism and motherism denotes motherhood, nature and nurture" (Amdt, 2002, p.54). Thus it is only when women are involved in transformation and change that it is complete.

Some women writers have refused to be addressed as feminists. Ama Ata Aidoo for instance argues that whenever feminism is mentioned the thought of it being imported to destroy the beautiful relationship between men and women in Africa bothers her. Also Buchi Emecheta in an interview was asked why she refuses to be called a feminist stated that:

I will not be called a feminist here because it is European. It is as simple as that. I just resent that...I don't like being defined by them...it is just that it comes from outside and I don't like people dictating to me. I do believe in the African type of feminism. They call it womanism, because, you see, you Europeans don't worry about water, you don't worry about schooling, you are so well off. Now I buy land, and I say, Ok I can't build on it, I have no money, so I give it to some women to start planting'. This is my brand of feminism (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997, p.7).

The above extract suggests that women writers simply disapprove of the feminist title because they believe that it has embedded in it Eurocentric implications. Thus they tend to perceive it as a form of imperialism in the neo colonialist era.

Several other reasons account for why African women are against western feminism. One reason is the idea that western feminism projects ideas of a woman who rejects feminine attributes and who is aggressive. Feminism is often mistakenly equated to radical feminism which lays emphasis on rejection of traditions that subjugate the woman leading to hatred of the man and feminine roles assigned to women by society such as motherhood (Arnt, 2002). Adjei (2009) also posits that Darko adopts violence in her texts with the aim of destroying patriarchy and male dominance. This approach makes her to be perceived as a man hater thus feminists are man haters. Also there exists perspectives such as women who call themselves feminists espouse lesbianism. This implies that feminists are either lesbians or they support lesbianism. Therefore feminism is assumed to have emerged from lesbianism (Campbell, 1980). These views in addition to the idea that feminism has European implications which makes it inadequate to completely account for the 'black' woman's predicaments account for the rejection of feminism by some women authors from and of Africa.

The need to redefine feminism to be fluid in order to contain the varied positions of the woman especially in Africa has resulted in the continuous search for concepts and theories by scholars and writers. Scholars such as Chielozona Eze (2011) are of the view that "African feminism is largely flawed by being couched in the discourse of anti-colonial movement. As a result, it inherited cultural setbacks of the movement. Feminism must free itself of resentments in order to focus on creating flourishing communities" (p.97). The extract above suggests that colonialism keeps emerging at every point where scholars try to eradicate it. Therefore, as stated by Ogunyemi (1985), it is important that "Africa must be

recognized as a participant in the different faces of colonialism and not simply as a recipient” (p.22). As a result, definitions of feminism keep evolving. For instance new feminism espouses the philosophy that men and women have complementary roles rather than superiority of men over women (Walter, 1998). This concept tries to curb every inequality and discrimination based on culture and lays emphasis the ability of the person or individual. Nevertheless it emerges from the west although it has engrafted in it some ideas of womanism. The discussion surrounding feminism is unabated with new ideas emerging every now and then. Scholars have further deepened debates on feminism which largely mirror ideas of womanism and have a common goal that is to find a suitable theoretical approach to dealing with issues of the African especially the woman.

According to Showalter (1993) “Gender has been used within Anglo-Saxon discourse to stand for the social, cultural, and psychological meaning imposed upon biological sexual identity”. (p.259). Gender roles are cultural constructions of what constitutes masculinity or femininity. This includes models of behavior considered to be right and a norm in the context of a given society. Thus, behaviors considered appropriate for each gender change over periods of time from one culture to the other based on several factors including acculturation. Gender representation can then be understood as to how people choose to represent /represent themselves regardless of what category of sex they belong to. Writers ascribe gender roles to their characters in their texts either based on culture or what they perceive to be the change in cultural roles.

Contemporary life circumstances and western notions of the roles of a man create certain anxieties in men in a society where women are striving to yield greater economic, political and social power. Androne in Adams (2012) probes the issue of ‘nervous masculinities’ in Aidoo’s *Changes*. She argues that ‘what is important for Aidoo’s portrayal of male characters in *Changes* is her recognition of how colonial rulers imported ideas that

dramatically altered the economy hence gender roles and the behavior and practices that went with them' (p. 150). Therefore, the preference of male elites domineering in society resulted to opposing female in society. As a result of accepting European values on issues of gender and relationship between men and women, African values which made provision for men and women to have equal but complementary roles were exchanged for colonial ideas of gender roles. This puts the man in anxious positions in their quest to establish themselves as men. Androne made reference to such symbols of masculinity as having the power to marry or having affairs with women of their choice anytime and anyhow they wanted, expecting the woman to be impressed with his wealth acquisition, owning properties and acquiring education among others. In this contemporary era where men fail to attain these things and unfortunately for them, a woman especially their wives strive and acquire these things it becomes problematic to them because it undermines their masculinity. Nevertheless, Androne concludes that Aidoo's portrayal of such circumstances and the positions men find themselves in just emphasizes the fact that 'no one wins in this struggle' between men and women, for the reason that these social conditions are yet to be addressed. In this sense, the idea of womanism can also be seen in Androne's analysis, thus, the ultimate aim of womanism is to give rise to change that will lead to the survival of male, female and children.

This can be linked to Agadjanian's (2002) argument that "unemployment and increasing informalization of the economy that results from both the demographic structure and the structural adjustment reforms undermine men's economic advantage by pushing them into low-income and low prestige "women's" occupations" (p.329). This means that the era after colonialism brought with it the measure of masculinity based on economic power. Thus women had less economic power because they engaged in jobs that were menial and of low income. The unfavorable economy however pushed men into jobs that were tagged as

female jobs and thus made them lose the ‘masculine power’. This led to women striving to get into jobs formerly domineered by men in the second half of the 1990s. Agadjanian’s approach to the study of gender although not based on the study of female writers also suggests the assumptions and complexities that come with gender and the effort of many scholars to bring people to understand that the need for equality for every man and woman goes beyond mere differences and struggles between men and women. Thus economic factors are also relevant in the sense that they might either help to resolve issues of gender or make the case worse.

Meanwhile, Prasansak in Adams (2012) approaches Aidoo’s *Changes* from an economic point of view. She argues that “Aidoo makes a double critique of neocolonial capitalism and western feminism through her nuanced representation of commodity relations peculiar to Ghana’s political economy during the period of the 1970s and 1980s” (p.161). In her analysis, Aidoo equates *Esi* to the bourgeoisie because of her material possession and independent power as a woman. Also, she brings to bear the fact that there existed class stratification through the character of *Esi* and other women belonging to the working class who appear briefly in the text. The proletariat is represented by hawkers, market traders and other minor characters. She demonstrates that *Esi* creates some sort of alliance with these women through gender identification despite their social positions. This echoes the quest for female authors to promote ‘sisterhood’ or come together as women to find their autonomy and independence from societal suppressions. In addition, she argues that alcohol carried a gendered meaning since it was associated with female prostitution in the urban setting and just like how alcohol was a commodity for Englishmen so were women. Aside from the economic analysis of the characters and the commodities and properties, the author speaks of feminism particularly feminist consciousness which situates *Fusena*, *Ali*’s wife, as the most marginalized in Aidoo’s *Changes*. This is because of the choices she makes

which include not pursuing her education further but rather staying home to take care of her children. When compared to *Esi*, she is bounded to societal values which lead her to make choices to her detriment. For instance deciding to stay in her marriage although she knew her husband was cheating. However, *Fusena* thrived in her trade thus possessing a shop which has almost everything in her community. The review concludes that even in a society where class systems exist, life is hard for the professional/urban African women just as it is hard for the poor rural woman. Although the character's situations are different, class does not exclude them from being marginalized.

In Tomans review of Aidoo's 'To be a Woman' and 'The African Woman Today', she affirms how these two works assert African feminism in the sense that before colonialism there existed feminism in Africa. Women were the backbones of Agriculture and took part in decision making in cases of great importance. Thus Aidoo's analysis of gender issues in the above-mentioned works depict the life, struggles and experiences of women across the continent in reality and erases misconceptions about the African woman. She justifies this misconception by stating that even if they truly existed it is because of the long lasting effect of their encounter with the West and their current disappointment about neocolonialism. Thus women played significant roles in politics and also engaged in activities and were tasked with roles in the economic sphere. Food production was considered primarily a feminine activity and women engaged in several forms of trading. Several instances of this assertion exist in the works of women who are gender activists. The point the researcher intends to make here is that there is a stress on the complementarity of roles and the absence of subjugation of women to the domestic sphere based on their biological makeup, in the quest to write off marginality.

Carol Boyce Davies (1991) in her exploration of African women writers' marginality and canonicity states that:

Writing off marginality rejects the very terms and implications of the dominant/subordinate arrangements imposed on African women and entails, as well, a determination to create out of that very prescribed existence. It also recognizes that African women do not see themselves as marginal, but as central to their societies. Finally, it plays on the entire conception of marginality, recognizing that Western theoretical formulations can only partially elucidate African women's worlds because Western categories have historically functioned to locate unknown cultures and/or appropriate their meanings. (Davies, 1991, p. 249).

The above assertion implies that women see themselves as powerful and capable members of society. The study of women writers can therefore be done based on their marginality, effacement and minoring in order to determine their perspectives on various literary traditions. However, in the process, one must look beyond the marginalities to see and understand their contrasting perspectives on issues in society regarding the female in particular. This allows for fluidity in criticizing women's writings rather than just criticizing them within confined theories. This idea serves the purpose of womanism to a large extent in the sense that the easy flow of analyzing women's works creates room to include issues in society that affect in one way or the other the life of the woman. The relationship between men and women is central to the study of women writers thus using a 'decentered approach allows the works of women authors to be read with much attention to the context and text thereby unearthing various codes in the form of cultural codes, gender codes and or textual silences' (Davies, 1991, p.259).

For instance Davies (1994) further asserts in her review of *Anowa* that in order to unpack complexities in a text, different strategies of reading must be employed. This allows the reader to arrive at ways of making sense of the text and arriving at an interpretation. Thus a work can be read through different theories to help in its comprehension. For instance, if *Anowa* is read in Anzaldua's theory of borderlands 'which are set to define places which are safe and unsafe', then *Anowa*'s borderlands are:

The intersections of gender and class, colonial and neo-colonial relationships, masculinity and femininity, freedom and constraint. *Anowa* attempts a "remapping of boundaries" and a renegotiating of connections. We can read *Anowa*'s own internal contradictions as borderlands as well: her responses to polygamy, childlessness, heterosexual family relations, and the societal definition of her independent spirit as witchery (Davies 1994, p.49).

The borderline then accommodates the non-conformist who steps beyond the boundaries and limitations of society. In her conclusion of this section, she states that a common approach is to accept subordination. However, another approach to the story is to 'locate oneself in the struggle for social transformation'. Thus borderlands serve as sites for the transition. Female writers are torn between these two approaches hence some embrace subordination and others fight it.

From another point of view on gender and marginality of women, Busia (1988) affirms that the issue is not that African women did not exist but their act of writing to transform is to reclaim their stories which have for a long time been told on their behalf. This gives room for women themselves to tell their own stories from their own point of view. She states: "...and it is in the belief that our narratives can be transformational that we begin. . . . We are not reaffirming our presence or! 'actualizing" ourselves as if we have been absent, we

know we never left; we are simply, but quite radically reclaiming our own *stories* which have for so long been told for us, and been told wrong”(as cited from Davies 1991, p.259). In view of this, it presupposes that the very act of the woman writing for either representation or transformational purposes either defies or completely nullifies the idea of marginality especially in the form of silence. The woman author therefore, is entitled to write about political and economic issues aside the so-called ‘domestic’ issues she writes about. Hence she wields the power to express her views anyhow she wants to because she has the right to tell her own story.

In addition to the above, Ogunyemi (1985), concludes that in employing womanism as a model of African female discourse, female resistance changes from the idea of difficulty to focus on compromise, consensus, and sexism among others. Based on this idea and knowledge, the researcher seeks to examine the gendered interrelations in Darko’s *The Housemaid, Faceless and Beyond the Horizon*. It is important to note here that, the analysis of these texts would be done in a prism of difference which involves taking into account the conditions that surround the roles assigned to the characters by the author. Such conditions include race, economic situations, gender and sexism among others.

Meanwhile, Andrade (2002), proposes that women’s works are read as part of the whole approach to the question of the national. Thus “when focusing on female protagonists, women produce an alternative narrative of the nation. Such a reading strategy puts one in a better position to perceive how domestic life functions both materially and allegorically in relation to nationalism” (p.48). Susan Andrade gave examples such as the Igbo women’s *sitting on a man* a technique, which women used to air their opinions and get offenders to admit to and correct their mistakes. The Nigerian women’s war which was waged against warrant chiefs at the time of colonialism to curb corruption was also a mechanism employed

by women. I agree with her when she states that the actions of women whether through writing or cultural practices serve the larger purpose of nationalism thus interpretations to such works must be valued. Writers in contemporary times address issues of nationalism and governance through writing and through criticisms hence more ideas are derived from their perspectives on several issues.

Criticisms are important to a body of work because according to Heywood (1971), they bring the author's work to the public, build a tradition which more audience yearn for and presents new meanings to the works. Most/some women especially African women writers as members of society seek to see society change for the better not only for women but for the marginalized hence they engage in activism. For instance, according to Owomoyela (1993) women such as Ogunjide Leslie see 'activism for women by women writers as part of 'warfare' on exploitation in society in general. Thus women's liberation is but an aspect to liberate the total society from dehumanization and marginalization' (p.339). Unfortunately, women form the majority of the marginalized. Undeniably, it is through the writing of women that attention is paid to certain important issues in society which formerly used to be ignored. Most contemporary women writers present their perspectives on political and cultural matters by taking up traditional ideas and exploring them beyond the traditional boundary. The main function of literature whether oral or written according to Gerard (1990) is to direct society's knowledge and wisdom which would bring about growth and development of society and which can be passed down from generation to generation.

In the next section, the researcher will examine some of the themes explored by earlier female authors before Darko's first published book. This will help the researcher to identify similarities in trends of the authors and how they deal with issues on gender. It will also

help to establish whether there is continuity of the ideas explored and how the approaches have changed over time.

2.4 TOPICS EXPLORED BY AFRICAN FEMALE AUTHORS

Darko's first book *Beyond the Horizon* was published in the year 1991 in Germany. Before she began writing, several female writers were writing from the 1970/80s when female authored works began gaining recognition. Literary writers including Efua Sutherland, Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, Flora Nwapa and Yvonne Vera to mention a few were prominent in the African literary scene. At the late period of the seventies and the early part of the 80s the themes these authors explored in their works varied from country to country. African female writers usually focus on opposing all forms of patriarchy and the idea that women can live their lives the way they want to and be responsible for their own means of living and future. Prior to the appearance of Darko on the literary scene, Efua Theodora Sutherland already broke through the Ghanaian literary culture. Her concentration on developing the Ghanaian theatre led her to establish herself as a pioneer of not just Ghanaian theatre but as an author for children and a dramatist. Her works include *Foriwa* (1962), *Edufa* (1967), and *The Marriage of Anansewa* (1975) among others. Efua Sutherland based her texts on tradition and sought to educate her audience on the idea that traditions must not be hurriedly discarded but examined to see what its significance is to the current period. Thus female authors at the dawn of writing wrote to not only change the stereotype perceptions about them but also wrote to engage with culture. It is observed that Sutherland in her works makes use of praise songs, music and dance and storytelling which involves mimes and music. Most of her tales come from oral literature which preserves much of the oral forms such as the Ananse stories in a written form by giving it a modern twist. This preserves the storytelling practice by the Akan and the use of Ananse as a trickster character. During the 1960s Sutherland's concentration was more on culture (for instance *Edufa* and

The marriage of Anansewa) than the woman although women played vital roles in her texts. Foriwa the protagonist in *Foriwa* was projected as a strong young woman who was courageous to bring a bridge between tradition and development and uniting two ethnic groups. She used writing to project her views on how women can bring about change in their communities thus challenging the status quo. *Edufa* was mostly based on traditional beliefs, how powerful they remain and how they cannot be taken for granted. *Edufa*, the protagonist was very rich and wanted to live longer than the time predicted by a soothsayer. In his obsession to maintain his position and prestige, he barter his wife's life for his. *The marriage of Anansewa* also presented to the reader a story of how Ananse, the trickster cunningly arranges marriage for his daughter in order to take care of his financial difficulties. The main theme of the play is the triumph of love which is evident in how Ananse was concerned with giving his daughter to a chief who loved his daughter most. Sutherland uses techniques based on the Akan tradition of storytelling which includes mimes, audience participation and musical interlude among others.

Ama Ata Aidoo's emergence in the 1960s marked an increase in the number of female authors in Ghana. Her first written work was a play entitled *The dilemma of a ghost* followed by *Anowa* both of which are single stories before she moved on to writing a series of short stories in the 1990s. According to Petri Liukkonen (2008), she "studied drama at the University of Ghana in the early 1960s (at the time Sutherland began work there) and her mentor was Sutherland" which explains the impact of her influence on her works especially the earlier ones. Aidoo's first works portrayed a clash between cultures and a female protagonist whose choice of behaviour was her own until she married a Ghanaian and experienced conflict between her foreign culture, western education and values, and her husband's culture. Her second story which was written in the 1970s was more aggressive towards cultural practices that restricted the woman. She projected a young woman who was

a non-conformist to the social practices that were imposed on her. She marries a man who her parents were against and who turns out to be a devil. Although Anowa who is the main female character in Aidoo's *Anowa*, died unfulfilled, Aidoo creates her as a form of resistance to cultures that confine the woman and render her unable to make her own choices in life especially regarding the choice of a life partner. Aidoo has ventured into other literary genres such as poetry and fictional prose and short stories, in addition to the drama she shares in common with Sutherland. *No sweetness here* is a collection of Aidoo's first short stories written in the mid-60s and *The girl who can and other stories* dealt with themes revolving around culture and tradition and accepting change and more importantly empowering the woman to achieve her dream through education. She employs such techniques as storytelling especially in '*Something to talk about on the way to funeral*' and oral narrative such as what is used in *Anowa*. In her recent work, '*Changes*' she portrays marital challenges that the modern middle class educated and independent woman goes through in the midst of expectations from society conflicting with her choices. Esi Sekyi, the protagonist, is presented by Aidoo as a strong willed and educated woman who works at the Department of Urban Statistics. She seeks divorce after she is raped by her husband does not allow traditional boundaries to prevent her from living the kind of independent life she wants. Thus she marries a second husband whose marriage arrangements are convenient for her. However she feels terrible and isolated in her new marriage. Aidoo through Esi, portrays resistance to cultural limitations on the woman. Opokuyaa, Esi's friend just as Esi is educated and strong willed and a wife. However, she is presented as a traditional figure than Esi because despite her disagreements with her husband, she does not see a reason to divorce him. She rather prefers to settle them. Aidoo suggests that the married elite woman in society is presented many choices in life, however what an individual decides to do is depends on her. The text does not suggest whether Opokuyaa would be complacent or

otherwise if she is raped by her husband. Nevertheless it can be inferred from the text that she is not against Esi's decision. Aidoo presents issues that contemporary women face in marriage and in society and how they either oppose or accept certain cultural norms based on their individual convictions and choices.

Flora Nwapa is a Nigerian literary writer, born in 1931 and died in 1993. Achufusi in Jones (1994) asserts that:

Flora Nwapa's novels and almost all her short stories recreate the life of women as human beings with all their imperfections. She does not idealize her heroines but highlights the best in them as she criticizes their negative qualities. By allotting principal roles to her female protagonists, she sought to affirm that the woman deserves credit for a great deal of other things than just procreation and that she takes part in making decisions that affect her. (Jones 2003, p.111).

In her three stories *Efuru* (1996/70), *Idu* (1969) and *One is enough* (1981), Nwapa portrays how women deal with issues that affect them and the roles society assigns to them. Also she presents her perspectives on women's own perceptions about themselves and society's way of perceiving them. More importantly she presents different issues on the childless woman's predicaments and what she goes through in the hands of society. In the quest to project characters who seek self fulfilment through economic independence, she creates female characters who are strong willed, rebellious, who respect traditions of their people but reject those that oppress them as individuals. Thus her works indicate that 'the woman, her activities, her wishes fulfilled and otherwise joys and tribulations are all worthy themes for discussion'. (Jones 1994, p.111). Also, Mariama Bâ, a Senegalese author and feminist and

author of *So Long a Letter* which is an account of two friends who have had disappointments in their marriages and one deciding to leave and the other deciding to stay despite her condition. It also talks about the life of women in Senegal during the 1970s and 1980s, community and family lives, Islam and more importantly polygamy and death rituals. In her works, she criticizes what she perceives as inequalities between the sexes resulting from African traditions.

Buchi Emecheta, a Nigerian- born British novelist based in the United Kingdom from 1962 is a female writer who explores similar themes as Aidoo, Bâ and Nwapa. Some of the themes include child slavery, motherhood, independence of women, freedom through education and sexual abuse among others. *The Joys of Motherhood*, opposes the maltreatment of women based on infertility and the necessity to give birth to a son as an ultimate in marriage. Nnu Ego, the female protagonist, whose life centered on her children and who gained the respect of the community only after childbirth especially a male child. Unfortunately, she dies without any of this children by her side after she toils tirelessly to take care of them. Emecheta portrays that although there are pleasures derived from childbearing and nurturing, it also brings pain, anxiety and responsibilities. In *The Bride Price*, Emecheta describes how Aku-nna's step father, Okonkwo who has ambitions of becoming a chief anticipates a large bride price for her. Thus she decides to hide her menarche from them. Also, she has fallen in love with Chike her teacher who has an inferior background although his family could offer a generous bride price. When she finally reveals that she had her first mensuration, suitors started expressing interest and making offers. Unfortunately she gets kidnapped by an arrogant suitor Okoboshi in order to keep her from Chike. However, Aku-nna lies to Okobohi on her wedding night that she is not a virgin and that Chike has slept with her. Word of her disgrace spreads and Chike rescues her and they both flee to Ughelli to start a happy life together. Okonkwo is angered about her unpaid bride price and refuses

any progressively generous offers made by Chike's father. Sadly, Aku-nna gets pregnant but dies in childbirth. In this novel, Emecheta lashes against the gap between the privileges of men and women. When a girl goes to school, her education stops when she is married. Also, just as portrayed by Aidoo in *Anowa*, a girl does not have the privilege to choose the man he wants to marry, but is obliged to go and live with the suitor whose bride price her father receives. Thus Emecheta through Aku-nna, rebels against this cultural limitation. Hence she suggests that traditions that are detrimental to the well-being of women and impedes their development must be discarded. In most of her novels, Emecheta develops her heroines through the choices they make and through the various circumstances in proceeding from a state of powerlessness and subjugation to a point of fulfilment of their capacities which makes them assertive in order to triumph over oppression by culture especially.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, is a Nigerian writer of the 21st century, who explores themes in contemporary era and tells her perspectives on issues that confront the modern African individual. She has written the novels, *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, *Americanah* and a collection of short stories. Her novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, explores the effect of the Nigerian civil war through various relationships of her characters. She presents to her readers intellectuals who discuss the political turmoil and African governance in Nigeria. The novel highlights the conflict between the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba which even extends to today. The war started because of political and ethnic struggles partly caused by attempts by the south eastern provinces of Nigeria to break away and form a republic of Biafra. This brought about coups and the cut of humanitarian support to Biafra leading to the death and starvation of many people. Also, it resulted in loss of resources. Themes examined in this novel include marriage, women empowerment, and relevance of academia in everyday life, politics and the role of westerners in post-colonial Africa. Adichie also explores identity

issues and transnationalism in *Americanah*. Her perception about marriage is that it is a realistic decision and that women who don't need to get married might not, even when their partners are willing to. Adichie does not present conflict between women and patriarchal structures common in most feminist novels. However, she suggests that women must not behave like their life belongs to men. Also through the intellectual discussions, she juxtaposes the transient nature of opinions and political realities. In her TEDx talk '*We should all be Feminists*' she shares her experiences about being feminist and her ideas on gender construction and sexuality. She states that the problem with gender is that it shapes who we are. Thus humans have the capability to make and unmake themselves. By presenting her views, Adichie opposes what she believes are unacceptable to the African and can be changed.

The above authors in the process of writing about women, when read carefully, have written about commerce, kinds of works people did and how men related to women, moral degeneration and class stratification and other social problems including the hopes of independence and how disappointed they are with the commercialization of almost everything. Thus one sees the nation written in the works of these authors. On the other hand, they use their writing as a form of resistance to traditions that bring inequalities among the sexes and which sometimes threatens the lives of women who are mostly the victims in most of the situations presented by the authors.

The researcher would like to explore the stories and themes presented by women writers who contributed to African women writing resistance since they represent current issues that are of concern to the 21st century woman. Female authors highlight and explore the lives of women from different walks of life. In trying to identify the situations of women in African countries, de Hernandez et al (2011) bring together women from African countries

to write about their experiences. The project was titled African Women Writing Resistance. She describes resistance as “challenging beliefs, traditions and values that place women below men in terms of being heard, making decisions and choices” (p.6). Other women authors had their own definitions of resistance but what is common in their definitions is the freedom from discrimination and marginality as women. This presupposes that the trend of fighting discrimination and marginality still continues. The researcher gives a detailed attention to this collection because it presents accounts of female writers and the challenges they face; who are apparent in the present time and how they use writing as a tool for resisting some societal limitations.

The researcher has observed that most resistance approaches to issues of women’s nature take the form of subtlety rather than a radical one. However, according to Banda-Aaku one of the contributors to this project, as quoted by Hernandez, no matter what form their resistance takes, it provides a platform for the larger society of women ‘to come out of the shadows and use their potential to contribute to economic and social development and change their communities’ (p.6). Through writing, the challenges women face are exposed to the larger society including men, and solidarity and awareness is created. This gives the opportunity to people to question and critically examine certain practices so that societal problems emanating from those practices can be curbed. The coming together of African women from various African countries to share their experiences with a wider audience belonging to different cultures is an approach by female writers to get females in other societies to identify with each other so as to form solidarity and encourage activists to support the fight for equal opportunities for women and the marginalized so that the survival of all people will be achieved.

Contributing authors address challenges of women through engagement with tradition which includes laws by society which subjugate the woman. This is similar to the angle from which earlier writers such as Sutherland tackled her work. What de Hernandez puts as “a process of negotiating with the past in order to empower themselves in the present” (p.13). In the first story presented in the first section of *African women writing resistance*, an account is given of a young lady who fought to take back the throne of her father which was stolen from her by people who killed her father who was King. She triumphs and became ruler and queen to her people who praised and supported her for her courage. The following story also gives a record of how an old lady is wrongly accused of being a witch and eating up the spirit of her grandson. In the end the woman was proved innocent by what we are made to believe is the same spiritual forces who caused the traditional healer to wrongly accuse her. More often than not, the tradition and belief is that, as women grow and become old, they become witches who engage in bad practices that bring bad fortunes. The story suggests that most old women who are usually innocent suffer as a result of such witchcraft accusations. These two stories like the following one portray how women have the power to engage in traditional practices and turn it around to their advantage. The authors do this by emphasizing the difficult situations women face while engaging in positive cultural practices coupled with abject poverty and oppression/ less support from society. The conclusion one draws from these stories is that the woman has the power to create her own cultural practices by engaging with the existing practices.

In addition to the above, the issue of sexuality and how women define for themselves to society the circumstances under which their sexuality enters into play within social relations, is addressed. Female characters in the stories are put at positions where they are entangled in cultural practices that do not support their ability to make decisions and take up political roles as individuals. Thus they are sidelined based on traditional norms and assumptions.

The approach the authors employ is to give voice to these female characters to redefine themselves not based on their sexuality but on their abilities and capabilities as human beings and individuals who have the right and ability to make their own choices. A story is told of a woman who is forced specifically abducted into marriage because she according to her society was ready for marriage. Her family and society at large ignored her disagreement to get married. She resorted to the legal system to help out but to no avail because the system was also flawed. This system she turned to was structured on patriarchy and was dominated by the same abusive and patriarchal men thus nothing could be done legally to save her. She fought against abuse and male domination alone till she found a female magistrate who worked on laws that protected women from such norms in society. The issue of lesbians being discriminated against in sports and other fields because of their sexual orientation was also raised. An account is given of how lesbians are blackmailed, raped or sacked from their professional jobs because of their sexual orientation. Thus in this contemporary era where awareness is created about such people and laws are put in place to support them, some people still discriminate against them.

Nowadays, female authors through the themes they explore in their texts and the resolutions they put to issues concerning marriage and sexual relationships suggest that marriages are supposed to be a mutual affair. The angles from which the authors address the challenges women face during marriage suggests that the women are hardly treated by men as equals in their relationships or marriages. More often than not they are abused, deceived and disrespected but find it difficult to challenge their partners because they are afraid of what they might do to them and what society might say about them. A section of the collection deals with “challenges in relationships with older men, negotiating safe sex, ability to freely talk about/discuss HIV/AIDS testing by couples, violence and politics as well as the economic difficulties and their impact at a very personal level on the decisions young

women make” (p.51). Women writers tend to put women in situations of abuse and violence. They create circumstances where the societal structures do not support the independence of the woman and her freedom to make decisions that she deems best for her individual growth and development. By so doing, they ridicule societal norms and expectations that put the woman in an obscure position and thus perpetuate violence and marginalization.

Resistance to marriage challenges such as marital rape, polygamy and childbearing takes the form of direct rejection of such structures including widowhood rites which subjugate, marginalize or put the woman’s health at risk. The poems and stories refute the postcolonial definitions of a good woman thus “showing obligation, duty, allegiance, loyalty, faithfulness and commitment to her marriage, her in-laws, children and husband. ...she must also be docile, passive, tame, meek and obedient” (p.119). The women authors directly redefine the woman through their characters so that they become self-empowered, free from sexism, male dominance, and abuse and audacious. They become the direct opposite of what society defines them to be. They become independent and no more under the beck and call of the men in society. The authors bring the readers to understand that the issue of marginalization of the woman goes beyond just the individual. This makes it a problem of society thus for it to change, society must change. In light of this they portray female characters who sometimes have to move out of their societies to pursue better lives in countries where they are free from societal pressure and limitations. They tend to suggest that being alone, happy and powerful is better than being with a man who rips you off your power and happiness. Most women who are independent and ‘deviate’ from the norms of society usually end up alone. They are stripped off female features making it difficult for society to identify them as such.

Also authors approach to the issue of childbearing in marriage suggests that the conventional manner of blaming just women for childlessness in marriage must change since the problem might be from the man as well. It is observed that the authors try to redefine the place and role of the woman in marriage thus Ngowma in Banda- Aaku's story concludes that "my culture thought me that strength and pride of a woman lies in staying and persevering in a marriage, irrespective of the challenges. I wasn't strong enough to persevere. I failed my culture. But I am free now and I am happy" (p.139). Banda-Aaaku suggests that it is alright for women to break free from their marriages if it inflicts pain and disempowers them. After all, of what benefit are widowhood rites to the woman aside emotional pain, physical and health hazards?

In addition to the issues addressed by the authors of African women writing resistance is health matters. In this section, health issues such as HIV/AIDS, female genital mutilation, cancer and trauma as a result of violence were addressed. A detailed account of FGM is given and its effects on boys and girls described. Account is given of how women struggle to maintain dignity in their societies in the course of sickness while even sometimes they are not the ones sick. Dangola explains the impact of civil war in her country on her and how it forced her and most families out of their homes to seek shelter in the forest. This exposed them to hunger, diseases and a state of precariousness. The authors in this section show how women manage pain and suffering and how they deal with trauma by resorting to the spiritual for healing and recovery. Women in Nigeria have been involved in state violence due to unstable government according to Dangola. These types of women are left at the mercy of military men who rape and abuse them and force them into military servitude. To this author, women suffer the effect of war more than men because they wield less power in society and are usually at the mercy of the men during the time of war.

Often times, women are neglected when it comes to issues of the environment. However, it has been realized over the years that they are an integral part of environmental sustainability because their livelihood mostly revolves around the environment (Sontheimer, 1991). The case of Wangari Maathai, author of *Unbowed* and Nobel Prize winner is an example. She was jailed several times because she was outspoken and protested against government policies that lead to deterioration of the environment. She portrayed that women are mostly affected by the effects of a damaged environment because of their reliance on it for their everyday activities and livelihood. Also she suggested that women have profound knowledge on the environment and should be used as agents of sustainable development by engaging them in practices that revive rather than deteriorate the green environment. Such issues as economic instability, political agitations and environmental degradation/conservation are problems that are common to most African countries. Through writing women try to address such issues and find solutions to some social problems from their own perspectives based on their experiences. Through activism some women make their voices heard and some of these issues are addressed.

The 21st century has seen emerging female authors who write from the diaspora. They narrate their experiences abroad bringing into perspective what it means to be an African woman living abroad. In the face of racism, cultural discrimination and gender, most women in the diaspora struggle through disturbing situations sometimes compromise their values in order to survive in the diaspora. However, this provides them the opportunity and equips them to compare and contrast their experiences from both worlds. Chimamanda Adichie for instance highlights her struggles as a woman who is an African in America where racism is prevalent. She raises issues of sexuality and colour which make people who are not Africans to treat her less of a human. She exposes her readers to the harsh conditions and treatments Africans go through in the diaspora. Through her narratives she suggests her own definition

of what it means to be a feminist centering on inclusion and awareness and what it means to be a woman in the 21st century. Darko is one of the female authors whose themes also include transnational experiences. Thus authors who lived experiences in different parts of the world are no longer defined by a single setting. The next section will examine with the biography of Amma Darko the selected author for this study.

2.5 BIOGRAPHY OF THE GHANAIAN FEMALE AUTHOR AMMA DARKO

Louise Allen Zak, an author, in her interview with Darko in Odamtten (2007) affirms that Amma Darko is a female Literary writer born in 1956 in Tamale in the Northern Region of Ghana and was raised by her aunt and uncle. She grew up in Accra and had her education in Kumasi where she attained a diploma and also worked for a while. She became involved in a drama group while in school and got the chance to write scenes for the group. During the 1980s she moved to Germany where she lived and worked. Her reason for moving was to escape the economic situation in Ghana at the time. Her expectations to find better jobs in Germany were shattered when she found out the only jobs available for African women were menial jobs including prostitution. She was unable to send money home. With her lived experiences she began to write. She stated in her account to Zak:

I did menial work and didn't make very much money. I saw girls making so much more on prostitution. Their families were happy because they sent so much money back home. Some of mine thought I was a failure. This was something that needed to be told (p13).

She returned to Accra where she worked as a tax inspector, married and had two children. According to Zak, unlike Aidoo and Emecheta, Darko did not have writing ambitions in her youth. Her experiences as a domestic worker in Germany enriched her knowledge about the life of young Ghanaian men and women who travel abroad for greener pastures. Thus she

drew her scenes from her daily experiences and travel experiences abroad where she encountered several people going through various situations. It is important to note that the environment of a writer impacts greatly on her writing. Thus her account of what she experienced in Germany differs from what she experienced in Accra. *Faceless*, one of the three books that the researcher intends to analyze has images that resemble life in some slums in Accra and her job as a revenue officer gives her the opportunity to participate in these life activities of people she comes across. In her review of *Faceless*, Okubule states that Darko enjoys research and spends a lot of time with interviews and in the archives. According to her, she made sure to look like the inhabitants of the suburb 'Sodom and Gomorrah' in order to participate in and observe their everyday activities.

Literary writers meet challenges in their writing careers especially African female authors. Such challenges depend on the background of the author and his or her experiences. So in the case of women, due to their delegation to the private sphere by the society, they were restricted from engaging in public affairs. Women such as Mary Ann Evans, one of the premier English novelists in the 19th century published under the name "George Eliot," a pseudonym, which suggested she was a male author, in order to get her works published. According to Ogunyemi, Aidoo's diagnosis for the African woman writer's disease is that Life for the African woman writer is definitely not without challenges. It is a most peculiar predicament. But women writers also share all, or nearly all, the problems of male African writers. Ogunyemi's elaboration on this pointed to some common problems faced by African female authors. She states:

Sharing experience that white female writers do not have with their male counterparts. For the African man or woman, there are the basic problems of writing in a borrowed language and form; for most blacks, the difficulties in getting published when there

are so few black publishing houses remains a critical issue. Then, too, many African novels are slight or lack the profundity found in many black American ones. The tradition of African art with its simplicity and ephemerality as can be seen in African architecture as well as in oral and performed literature- has been bequeathed to African women writers. Yet, they have to produce novels in a milieu that hankers after the complex and the enduring. At the same time, who will read what they produce when a large proportion of the home audience hates reading or cannot read: a predicament shared by black Americans?" (Ogunyemi 1985, p.69).

Some women writers have to juggle between responsibilities and other jobs in addition to writing. As stated in Odamtten (2007) Darko finds herself having to take care of responsibilities as a mother, a wife, a tax revenue officer and also take care of household duties. Women writers especially, those who engage in multiple roles find it difficult to write on a regular basis hence they have to handle responsibilities concomitantly in addition to fulfilling their dreams.

Odamtten (2007) records as stated by Darko that, she had to cultivate the habit of carrying small notebooks around in case she finds something interesting to jot down and refer to in her writing. Many other factors such as the inability to interact with readers and other writers in the field and the problems of getting one's' work published make it difficult for Darko and African woman writers' on the whole to develop which results in very slim chances of success.

According to Zak in Odamtten (2007), Darko had no writing ambition but decided to write after her visit to Germany which gave her the 'emotional impetus' to begin writing. Unlike Darko, Aidoo had a supportive father who advocated for girl child education. She also dreamt of being a writer from an early stage unlike Darko. Darko's inspiration to write came

to her after her encounter with life elsewhere from her home. Also, her inability to access books especially ones that talked about experiences of ordinary people living in contemporary Ghana while she was growing up propelled her to write.

She told an audience in Germany during a tour about how she discovered her writing skills in the mid-1970s an era in which writing was not acknowledged as something people did and so she had to do it in private for fear of being laughed at. During her stay in Germany, she managed to develop her writing and published her first novel *Beyond the Horizon* published in 1991 although she found it hard to publish because she could not find a publisher. This novel became Germany's best-selling novel by a black African writer in the 1990s. This book helped her establish herself as an international author. According to Darko, the novel was published at a time when exploitation, migration and prostitution which were the themes she explored were on the surge. In 2008 she won the "Ghana Book Award".

As a result of her travel experiences and her occupation as a tax officer, some of the themes she explores in her novels include poverty, migration, the impact of colonialism on women, the patriarchal nature of society which limits the woman, the pressure of urban life and more importantly exploitation among others. In her quest to explore these themes, she centers on the life of the woman by writing through her perspective and dealing with problems of women and Africans on a whole by counteracting the ills produced by culture through society. In addition to this as stated by Zak "...Her educational purpose, prominent in all her works, is to remind the readers of their responsibility toward others who are victims of their societies" (p. 25).

Duckett (2013) states that 'Darko's fiction has generated much commentary for its portrayal of women caught between the traditional values of patriarchal cultures and the desire to

liberate themselves politically, economically and personally.’ Thus it is clear that the utmost concern of Darko is to tell the woman side of the story in all spheres.

What can be deduced from Zak’s interviews and accounts is that what motivates/compels Darko to write is the desire to portray to her audience that solidarity is needed to fight this war of discrimination against women. This, in the researcher’s opinion, is a womanist concern because it aims at bringing the whole African people, in Darko’s case, Ghanaian people, together to fight discrimination against women. This will be elaborated extensively in the following chapters.

A male critic such as Adjei (2009) posits that Darko’s works are radically feminist because they create situations that portray the man in negative ways. In an interview on *Personality Profile* hosted by Patrick K. Muana on 21 July 2003 on Modern Ghana Online Radio, her answer to a question on whether she considers herself a feminist states that:

I am first and foremost a storyteller who feels inspired to create stories out of pertinent issues. As an African woman also, I feel inclined toward working around female issues. I don't know where that places me in the writing world's classifications, but I definitely do have some reservations about carrying the tag of 'feminist writer'. The context in which the Western world perceives the term does not prevail here. Feminism is sort of placed in a tight and narrow square box. One perceived or labeled as a feminist whatever is judged to be this aggressive man-hater who at best is a lesbian and who can be as worse as a butcher of masculinity. I tell stories and comment on situations. I would be completely satisfied to be perceived simply as a voice.

In the above extract from the interview, Darko fails to state the reason why she feels inclined to work on female issues as an African woman. According to Darko, she creates stories out

of issues and within the contexts that she chooses to tell her stories and the characters happen to be whom they are. My stories she stated, most of the time, reflect the reality and male hegemony, a reality which manifests in various ways and forms in different cultures, societies and situations. The writer seems to suggest that feminists in the western context are perceived as people who hate men. She indicates from her answers to the questions asked that men are also human and can, therefore, be victims of society's norms which push them into uncomfortable situations.

In his introduction to Darko's *Faceless* (2003), for instance, Anyidoho honours her creativity and compares her to Efua T. Sutherland and Ama Ata Aidoo when he states that:

Students and scholars of African Literature, who, like me, have often wondered about the apparent absence of any major female Ghanaian writers following the remarkable pioneering work of Efua T. Sutherland and Ama Ata Aidoo, can now rest assured that a worthy successor has emerged in the person of Amma Darko. With the publication of her third novel, Amma Darko has demonstrated a clear commitment to a productive career in creative writing. (*Faceless*, p.9).

Some of the books she has written include *Beyond the Horizon* (1991), *Spinnweben* written in German in 1996, *The Housemaid* written in German and in English in 1998, *Verirrtes Herz* also in German, *Faceless* (2003), *Not Without Flowers* (2007), *Between Two Worlds* (2015) and *Necklace of Tales* also in 2015. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will focus on three books of the author namely: *Beyond the Horizon*, *The housemaid* and *Faceless*. These books are chosen because they form the oeuvre of Darko's works. In addition they present Darko's perception about the Ghanaian female and portray the realities

in the lives of women. They also dwell on the social relationships involving men and women and their roles in contemporary society which is the focus of the study.

Style in literature is said to be a unique way by which an author presents her message through writing to her audience. Writers make use of styles which sometimes differentiate their works from other writers, and Darko is not an exception. This includes her choice of words (diction) that is language which is an important element in writing. Her arrangement of words, use of figurative language, her sentence structures, and switch from English to her mother tongue among others all help to establish the mood she seeks to portray, the image she paints and the meaning of her text. The descriptive ability of the author and use of techniques like dialogue and sarcasm help the reader to understand the message the author tries to convey and how the reader interprets it.

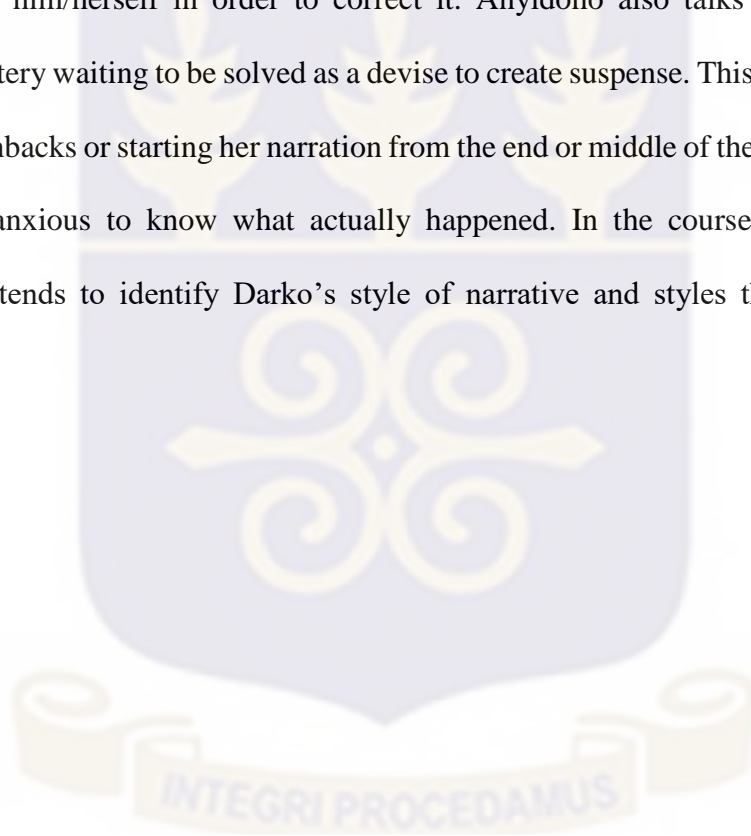
¹Okubule (2016) in her review of Darko's *Faceless* posited that, Darko's 'narrative is straight forward and that her style of writing is simple and easy to understand. In unraveling some mysteries in her story, she builds tension and thus creates suspense and intrigue' (retrieved from <https://lagosbooksclub.wordpress.com> on June 2016). She goes on to state that she uses simple everyday English language with some Ghanaian languages to portray the culture of the people. She supports this by giving examples like 'kayayo' and 'akpeteshie'.

Anyidoho (2003) observes that in Darko's three texts, she creates situations where children think, speak and act above their age. This he explains is because such children grow on the streets and take up responsibilities which their parents have neglected or because of

¹ Okubule's article was retrieved from www.lagosbookclub.wordpress.com. A website that has reviews on books of African authors.

circumstances are incapable of taking up. Thus thinking, acting, and talking like grownups is essential for their survival thus he terms it the 'dual age phenomenon'.

In addition to the above is the style that Anyidoho describes as tragi-comic characterization and hilarious dialogue. He observed that although the episodes constituting the story are daunting and tragic, Darko often includes dialogue that serves as comic reliefs and forces the reader to laugh at situations and themselves. This is a technique commonly used by Wole Soyinka which allows the reader or audience to ridicule some behaviors that he/she could identify with him/herself in order to correct it. Anyidoho also talks about how Darko employs mystery waiting to be solved as a device to create suspense. This she applies mostly by using flashbacks or starting her narration from the end or middle of the story thus keeping her readers anxious to know what actually happened. In the course of the study, the researcher intends to identify Darko's style of narrative and styles that have not been unearthed.



CHAPTER THREE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives a summary of the selected works of Amma Darko's; *Beyond the Horizon*, *the Housemaid and Faceless*. It identifies gendered interrelations (mutual or reciprocal relations) in the text by critically analyzing the roles assigned to major characters in the text and how they cope with circumstances that arise. The above will be done in the framework of womanism. The researcher intends to find out how the author articulates womanist concerns through characters. Description of some major characters and the roles they play will be done and discussion on some common themes that run through Darko's texts. Also, in the cause of analyzing the characters, the researcher intends to unearth how other factors such as power, race and ethnicity among others intersect with gender to worsen the plight of men and women in society.

3.2 GENDERED INTERRELATIONS

BEYOND THE HORIZON (1998)

The story begins with a flashback in what was described as a hotel where Mara sat in front of a mirror, staring deeply at herself and recounting life experiences which led to her current state. Mara was married to Akobi without her consent because of the benefits her father derived from her marriage. She went through abuse in the form of rape and maltreatment when she moved to a slum in the capital to live with her husband. A few years after their marriage, her husband travelled to Germany and asked her to come and join him. However his purpose for inviting Mara over to Germany was not to give her a better life but to exploit her further. Mara became a prostitute, a money making machine for Akobi. After enduring this and other hardships under her husband for some time, she decided to seek justice for herself. She finally gets her freedom from her husband but realizes that she did not belong

home because she thinks herself completely stripped off her moral values and unfit for home.

Mara

Mara is the main character around which the story revolves and through whose perspective the narration is done. She is presented by the author as a wife, a mother and a daughter who lived the earlier part of her life in a village called Naka. Mara as can be deduced from the novel is naïve, innocent and exhibits moral values which were instilled in her by society through her parents. She is given the responsibility of providing meals for the home right after she marries Akobi. She is obliged to sell eggs at the city station in order to earn a living and be able to take care of her unborn child when it finally arrives. In addition she takes up the job of throwing out neighbours' rubbish in order to get foodstuff in return to cook for she and her husband. Mara's responsibilities are those traditionally assigned to her by society thus as a female who is a wife and a mother she is duty-bound to take care of the household. In most cases society sees it as the responsibility of the man to provide 'chop money' as Akobi does initially when his wife arrives in the city. However he stops along the way in order to save money towards preparation to travel abroad. Ekejiuba (1995) acknowledges that the fact that males are considered as heads of the family does not necessarily mean that they provide the daily basic needs of the households they head. In actual cases it is the woman who provides the family with its daily needs as Mara does. Thus she argues for a unit of social analysis that centers on women and their activities and sees their roles and responsibilities as accelerators and beneficiaries of development.

Akobi's income is not enough to cater for all their needs and so Mara is forced to get a source of income as well. Darko seeks to highlight the complementarity of roles of the man and woman and the ability of the woman to have economic independence and not rely entirely on her husband. However, her husband's reason for not providing chop money is

rather for selfish purposes thus it becomes the sole responsibility of Mara to take care of the home.

Meanwhile, Mara suffers physical and emotional abuse in her marriage. Right from the beginning Darko makes the reader aware of how Mara is a victim of societal subjugation of the woman. First she is married off to a man she did not consent to and ends up having to worship him in their marital home. Despite the maltreatment and abuse she still does her wifely duties without hesitation. No matter how she is abused, she tells no one else aside Mama Kiosk, who, unlike her other neighbours think it is not right for a husband not to take care of his wife but batter her all the time for nothing. According to Mara;

...after all, mother had taught me that a wife was there for a man for one thing, and that was to ensure his well-being, which included his pleasure. (p.13).

...I still regarded my suffering as part of being a wife and endured it just like I would menstrual pain. That he had bought me no new clothes and left me still with only those I had come from the village, and that in spite of this he has also forbidden me to sew any of the cloth he had presented me as part of my dowry, I saw also as falling under 'obey and worship your husband' as my parents and family elders stringently repeated to me at the end of the marriage rites. (p.13).

The degree of Mara's naivety and ignorance has caused her to stick to the values instilled in her without compromising even if it is for her own good. She does not heed to Mama Kiosk's advices because she felt that it will destroy her marriage. To Mara keeping her marriage is her ultimate goal because culture demands that she perseveres no matter what. Even after her husband leaves for abroad without saying his final goodbyes before leaving, she decides to spend her time doing something about herself that will make her husband proud when he

returns. Akobi's departure from Mara's life as one would expect should make Mara excited to be free from all the rape and abuse and maltreatment but rather she becomes scared of becoming her own master. As she states:

-unknowingly and unconsciously to my own self, I had grown wholly attached to Akobi, to his unfairness, to his bullying, to the strength he possessed over me. I didn't like what he meted out to me with that strength and yet, at the same time, that same strength made me acknowledge him as the man of the house; as my husband. Or maybe too I was afraid of change, of the unknown, this new situation where I was now to be my own master. (p.44).

From the above excerpt, it is deduced that Mara as a character is idealistic. Instead of facing reality and dealing with her issues head on to earn herself a better life, she sticks to societal laws that limit her in every possible way. Perhaps this is the case of many women who are abused daily and still refuse to come out of their marriages to seek help. They have so long depended on their husbands that it is not easy for them to want to live on their own but would rather prefer to stay and just cope no matter the intensity of the abuse that they go through. In most violence cases, women are afraid to report their husbands because they might be abused more. (Osirim, 2003). According to Ampofo & Aboagye (2005), women who admit that they are being abused are unable to complain publicly because such issues are considered as private matters. In Mara's case the only person she talks to about her abuse is Mama Kiosk and Kaye because they understand her. She dares not complain to her parents and her neighbours lest they blame her rather and convince her to stay in her marriage.

In their analysis, O'Connell and Odamtten compare Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* to Stephen Frears' "*Dirty Pretty things in the main of alien bodies and the economics of invisibility*". They posit that "Mara finds herself in morally ambiguous positions and is given the task of

making profound choices about the direction of her life. Mara as was compared to Okwe and Senay in the initial part of her being alien in a foreign country clung to the moral and ethical behaviours which she was raised with. (p. 51). Hence she (Mara) remained loyal and submissive to her husband Akobi despite all the challenges that confronted her. However, as the days pass and she learns about the life in Germany, she realizes that for an immigrant like her to survive she has to compromise some if not all of her values. Thus according to O'Connell and Odamtten 'each is forced to jettison part of their past either literally or symbolically in order to survive in the new environments to which each has been drawn'. (p.51). However Mara's ability to be resilient strengthens her throughout her experiences in Germany. She resolved after she managed to free herself from her husband's bondage of abuse that she could not go back to Ghana as destroyed as she is but rather work and send money to her family. She has become too rotten to be rejuvenated by any means. Moreover, the only thing the people in her village cherished was receiving money from their relatives or children abroad, it does not matter to them how that money is acquired.

It is undisputed that Mara as the authors compare her to Okwe and Senay were objects of sexual desire for the men who pursued them. Darko gives us scenarios of situations in which African women in the diaspora go through in order to make a living. It is important to note that the mere colour of her skin and her 'Africaness' put her in very uncomfortable situations. Like O'Connell and Odamtten state assertively, Mara's life illustrates how women are dehumanized into mere sexual objects by domineering genders who exert power over them. Thus women as the weaker sex are exploited mostly by male whom society tags as superior to women sexually. Society has made it that the body of the woman has become a commodity that is traded for monetary gain. This can be seen not only in the study of the character of Mara but also other characters such as Gitte who is Akobi's German wife. She is manipulated by Akobi to get whatever he wants which includes becoming a legitimate

citizen through his marriage to Gitte. Akobi's approach to his German wife however, is not violence which in my opinion may be the effect of the environment and the delicate situation in which he finds himself. This means that society plays a major role in either encouraging or discouraging the abuse of women by men. It is important to note that it is not in all cases that men are the abusers. Women also are capable of manipulating men to get what they want. This opposes the image of the subservient woman which is said to be portrayed in feminist works to counter traditional prejudices. For instance a part of Mara's plan to get back at Akobi was to get a new 'pimp' at Munich to whom she would commit in order to get him to hold Osey and Akobi at bay. Another instance is the manner in which Tika slept with men to boost her trade. This makes her a sexual exploiter of men defying the pattern regarded as typical, which is men being sexual exploiters of women. However, in most cases it is the woman who is the victim.

At a point in time in the life of Mara, she meets similar women in her situation, who suffer the brunt of patriarchy in society. This is mostly evident in the relationships women find themselves in with men. Frank (1987) posits that Darko is radical in her writings which lead her to paint pictures of women who seem to find pain in their relationships with men. However, on their own and with other women they find female solidarity, power and independence. In the case of Mara, her solidarity with Mama Kiosk sustained her through her toil with her husband although Mama Kiosk was not in support of how she sees her own situation. To her, she was content as long as she had someone to talk to. However, during her stay in Germany, it was through her solidarity with female friends such as Kaye, that she awakened to the reality of abuse she has endured in her relationship and then decided to get justice and be free from Akobi. Also the idea that women who are into prostitution are perpetually in painful relationships echoes the situation of women in most African societies especially Ghana.

Crowder (1993) as cited by Adjei asserts that Darko panders to lesbian separatist utopias in which men are depicted as “inherently violent, hierarchical, and incapable of humane, or even human, relationships with women, children, the earth, or other men” (p. 237). This I totally disagree with because being feminist does not mean that one espouses lesbian utopias. It is a fact that it seems difficult to separate lesbianism from feminism because most people believe that it is through the advocacy for solidarity that lesbians found a voice. (Collective T.N.F 1988). However, Darko categorically states that she is not a man hater but only narrates what she observes and experiences and expresses it through fiction. On the other hand, it is not all men in Darko’s texts that are portrayed as such. This however does not mean that such types of men do not exist in societies especially Ghanaian societies. Akobi for instance from the text is only abusive and disrespectful and manipulative when it comes to Mara. He treats the secretary he aspired to marry and Gitte differently. This implies that his frustrations that are a result of pressure to become a better and prestigious man in society is what he vents on Mara. Akobi’s inability to convince Comfort to marry her gets him frustrated. Out of this frustration he settles for Mara ‘the village girl’. In my opinion, the reason for the portrayal of men as such by the author is to enable her project the abuse and torture some women go through in reality especially in their marriages.

Another important idea Darko expresses through the character Mara is the need for the woman to get emancipated from abuse and dictate her own terms in a relationship like Mara does. The quest for freedom from male dominance, abuse and sexism begins with self-realization and empowerment. Mara realizes her capacity as a woman and empowers herself to do what she thinks is best for her by putting her husband to justice. Although her new master treats her like an object of sex, she is duly paid for her services and is able to send money to be used to cater for her children. Mara represents a particular category of women in society who are victims of abuse and patriarchy who although are free are not really free.

Mara is a round character in the sense that she changes as the plot develops. She is obedient, submissive, an introvert, dependent and afraid to become autonomous when her husband leaves her for abroad. She becomes strong and independent after her experiences. Most of what she aspires to be and who she actually is can be identified in her thoughts as a person. From her thoughts one can identify her as someone who grew from naivety to maturity. She played a subservient role most of her life. She carries through the values of society hence being a daughter who obeys her father's wishes. She realizes the need to manage her life in order to become independent. Thus she planned her way out of Akobi's exploitation. She continues to work as a prostitute in order to cater for her children. She is illiterate but develops to become confident and courageous to compromise her values and fight back to attain independence economically and from abuse. She is a responsible parent because she provides money for the upkeep of her children back in the village. She respects the traditions of her people but comes to understand that she must reject some in order to survive. She finally attains economic independence through sacrifice and determination which strengthens her position as a woman. Mara knows that after all the struggle there is no hope. What awaits her is not peace, neither is it a new life but abjection and desolation. It is important to note that, gender is not the only factor that worsens the plight of Mara as a woman in a patriarchal society, gender worked together with power, poverty and economic and political constraints. For instance, if at the time of her marriage to Akobi, Mara was economically independent, then she would have acquired some power and authority which might have prevented Akobi from treating her the way he did. This is because she would not have depended on him for everything. However, after she attains economic independence, some of these elements still remained especially the autonomy of the masculine in society.

Akobi

Akobi is Mara's husband in the novel. According to Khoussouhon (2015) the depiction of men in Darko's works counters the existing conventional ideas about gender but concludes that in some of the texts he analyzed, men were portrayed in a negative way. Akobi was a wife batterer who failed to respect and cater well for his wife. There is the account of him raping Mara, making her sleep on a mat when he sleeps on a mattress, not giving chop money, not associating with his wife in public because of her ragged appearance, and asking for profit on money he gives his wife as capital. Mama Kiosk observes that he is a bad husband because he refuses to take care of his wife although his wife 'worships and obeys' him despite all she goes through. Mara and Akobi's father and people from Mara's village obviously do not see Akobi as such. He invites Mara to join him in Germany for the sole purpose of exploiting her sexuality.

It is observed that Akobi is put in such a situation by Darko to portray what some men go through in the midst of economic hardships and the pressure from society to aspire to a big man position and become prestigious so that he can get what he wants when he wants it. It is undeniable that he makes choices which paint him as a negative character or cruel person but when observed through a different perspective, he is also a victim of society just as Mara. Akobi decides to seek greener pastures abroad as most people are brainwashed to think that life is better abroad than in their own country. This the researcher realizes is not the case at all. He manages to get to Germany but has to struggle to make a living. In the long run he gets arrested, tries to flee but fails. From Akobi's situation, the researcher observes that men are sometimes forced by society's expectation of them to make some choices that put them in uncomfortable situations. Rather than concentrating on Akobi as being portrayed as negative, one should focus on societal problems that push women and men especially to make choices that are detrimental to achieving development through

equality and equity. This echoes the ultimate aim of womanism which is to see to the survival of both men and women thus although issues are projected from the perspective of the woman, Darko also highlights the plight of men who are victims of society. Looking at Akobi's father for instance, he is described as a man who is feared because he carries out his threats pitilessly after issuing them. (p.4). Although some of his acts are considered unscrupulous these acts are what earn him respect. Osey who is a friend to Akobi and a 'business man is described by Mara as unscrupulous and ruthless' (p.115). The kind of man society describes as tough. He is the one who introduces Akobi into the business of exploiting young women sexually for money and power. They make videos of their victims having sex with their 'customers' and used it to blackmail them. The dreams of these men are to gain money and power. These two things are what accords man authority and prestige in the contemporary world.

Adams (2012) states that "masculinity is often more important to the African cultural text when it is apprehended in crisis or failure as part of a negative dialectic of identity" (p. 159). This implies that masculinity gets some form of attention when it is being abused by the male or when a male fails to do something that society expects him to do because he is a man. Thus the desire of everyman to establish himself and acquire power and wealth are indicators of masculinity. Masculinity defines what attitudes and qualities men should have, how they should behave, what they should wear, not to show feminine qualities and what they should succeed at. However when a man begins to show emotion and fails to acquire wealth or attain higher levels in education, the man is considered less of a man. Hence he becomes threatened when women especially his wife acquires wealth and power at his expense. Therefore in order to gain their power back, men resort to violence. As stated by Jewkes et al (2010), "violence is a consequence of gender power inequities, at both a societal and relationship level, and also serves to reproduce power inequities." "...gender inequity

and gender based violence, she posits lie in the patriarchal nature of society, and ideals of masculinity that are based on control of women and that celebrate male strength and toughness” (p.41). This explains why Akobi abuses Mara on most occasions, for no tangible reason. For instance when he slaps Mara for getting pregnant for him.

Society has evolved and is still evolving and in the process there is acculturation, a process where people adopt the behaviour patterns of surrounding cultures. This brings about change of roles and responsibilities and change in the pattern of societal norms. When Akobi goes to Germany, he cooks for Gitte because she expects him to cook. There is no account of Akobi cooking for Mara in Ghana. Darko seems to suggest that the environment also affects the change in roles of men and women. And in order for him to gain that power and respect back, he sexually abuses Mara in Germany in addition to forcing her to become a prostitute against her will. Again he yearned for control over the female in order not to be regarded less of a man. Akobi represents a category of men who strive to make it in life and to whom remaining masculine and retaining male authority is important to.

Akobi is portrayed by Darko as gullible. He is abusive, authoritative and egoistic. In order to assure himself that he is still a man with authority in the midst of his unreachable goals, he subverts his wife to extreme abuse and torture. He is determined to achieve statuses that give him privilege as a man in society. However, the masculine ideals amidst economic and political instability, intersect to worsen Akobi’s situation as a man.

Mama Kiosk

Darko presents Mama Kiosk in the novel as an independent woman who manages her own business and is not dependent on any man. Although her educational background is not revealed, she is able to give good advice to Mara. She can be equated to ‘big women’ in the trading industry who flourish in their businesses. Her economic independence is attained

through successful trading. She becomes Mara's surrogate mother in the city. According to Higgins (2006)

Mama Kiosk, who acts as a surrogate mother to Mara before her departure from Ghana, is Ogunyemi's womanist; she comprehends Mara's struggles and attempts to help her through a keen awareness of local gender politics. She is apprised of traditional resources and discourses that can emancipate Mara – resources that have not been available to Mara through her mother, who accepts a masculinist version of the traditional social order... a woman who thrives in the marketplace and participates in her community, offers Mara an alternative. It is she who helps Mara to become independent economically when Akobi refuses to share his salary (Pp.314-315).

Initially Mara considers Mama Kiosk as a marriage breaker per the advices she gives her and decides to ignore her advises. Akobi sees Mama Kiosk as a threat to destroy a good African woman – good in this sense means obedient, submissive and not questioning the authority of the man, and allowing herself to be abused without reporting to anyone or protesting thus accepting the status quo. He devises a means to destroy the relationship between his wife and her 'mother' (Mama Kiosk) in the city by preventing Mara from leaving home to work together with Mama Kiosk. Even at the time Mara informed Akobi she was pregnant after consulting Mama Kiosk, Akobi asked Mara whether it was she who impregnated her. Mama kiosk was projected by Darko as a threat to Akobi. Although Mara disagrees with Mama Kiosk's advices concerning her marriage, her decision to confide in Kaye echoes sisterhood and solidarity which is no different from what Mama Kiosk espouses. She has been there for Mara right from the beginning of her woes. She helps her in establishing herself in a trade that will earn her money in the absence of financial support

from her husband. She is the one who breaks the news of Mara's pregnancy to her because it was her first time and she was ignorant of it. Although she exposes Mara to the reality of issues and wishes that she comes out of her idealism, she does not force it on her. She allows her to grow at her own pace out of it.

She is assertive mostly because of her economic independence. She is supportive to Mara but tries not to impose her ideas on her. To her it is important that Mara realizes the reality of things on her own.

Faceless (2003)

Faceless gives an account of how street children survive in the slums and on the streets on which they find themselves. It explores the abuse, pain and torture they go through in the hands of street lords. Also the neglect of these children by their parents form an important part of Darko's account on street children. A story is told of a young girl who is forced into prostitution because of the inability of her parents to cater for her because of their poverty situation. Fofu is forced to fend for herself at an early stage because of poverty and eventually gets help from Kabria to solve the murder case of Baby T her elder sister. Several other issues emerge as the story unfolds. However, the situation of every character in the text is equally important thus the street child's predicament demands equal attention as poverty situations and Kabria's marital inadequacies. Darko exposes her readers to the toil of street children through the woman's perspective using gender interrelations and representations as her tool.

Fofu

Most of the story revolves around this character. She is presented by the author as a young lady who flees home in order to avoid being sold into prostitution by her parents. Unfortunately, she has to engage in prostitution and other menial jobs in addition to picking

pockets in order to earn a living. Through Fofu's dialogues with her friends and other characters, the author exposes us to the life of street children in the slums and on the streets and their quest to earn a living. Fofu is raped by a street lord called Poison and decides to report this to her mother. To her dismay she finds out that her mother is involved in this with Poison because Baby T was indirectly sold to him to make a living and that her sister died as a result. Intelligent as she is she disguises herself as a boy to flee from rape and from her persecutors. She coincidentally runs into Kabria who helps her unravel the mystery surrounding Baby T's death. She is presented by the author as the category of children who are forced by society to become adults in order to survive. They tend to speak and act above their ages because of their exposure to the real world. So she is seen suppressing her emotions and struggling not to break down as a child would per the situations she is involved in. She joins a gang on the streets so as to earn an identity and get someone to have her back when she needed it. She takes up the responsibility of taking care of herself which her parents have abandoned. From her actions, she yearns to see her sister's murderer put before justice. Through Fofu, readers are informed about how young girls of her age are exposed to dangers on the street in their quest to survive. They have no place of convenience and residence and are prone to any unexpected disaster that may occur on the streets.

She is an adolescent 14 years of age a daughter to Maa Tsuru and a sister to Baby T who could not continue her education because of the poverty situation of her parents. She finds menial jobs to do in addition to picking pocket in order to survive. Despite threats like poison and his macho men, she persists. She is courageous, determined, kind spirited, intelligent and expresses herself freely. Through her the mystery of her sister's death is solved. She is determined to survive and get justice although she is raped. She has the capacity to forgive her mother despite all she has gone through. Finally she is rehabilitated.

Kabria

She is a mother, a wife and a working woman who can be regarded as independent. She is married to Adade and has three children. She juggles between domestic schedules, office duties and taking care of her children and her husband. From her comments and relationship with her husband it is observed that she is not the Bible- obedient, submissive and passive wife who fails to confront her husband on issues and state her own opinions. From her dialogues with her children, it is observed that she supports the idea that all humans are equal be they men or women. Thus she tells her son that if he were a girl she will still be equally special. This raises a womanist concern that espouses treatment of all humans as equals for a better Africa. Again in a chat with her house help she fantasizes about men helping in house chores.

“Abena, do you know that in a country called Cuba, laws have been enacted to force men to help around the house? So maybe by the time you set up your own dressmaking salon and get married, your husband will be cooking for you sometimes.”
(p.56)

She tries to picture this happen in Africa and concludes that it will result in a gender war and the legislation would be gone as a result of a coup d'état.

Through her encounter with Fofu it can be deduced that Kabria is empathic thus she stops people from beating up Fofu because she thinks he could be her son as she imagines how worried her spirit would be if something happened to Fofu. This trait is what gives Fofu the courage to confide in her. She works tirelessly to see to it that Fofu's case is solved and she is rehabilitated. She wishes that her husband does more than just be a regular husband so that all responsibilities will not be dumped on her in addition to her job. However she does not consider her husband as irresponsible as compared to the stories of irresponsible men

explored by the author. Also it is observed that although she complains and is struggling to keep calm in her marriage, she does not give up. Just like Mara tradition teaches her to persevere because that was the mark of her successful marriage. There is a clash between her generation and that of her children which sometimes makes her surprised at some actions of her children. For instance the ease with which her children talk about things that she at that age could not have told her mother. The reader can infer from this instance and several others the clash of generations between Kabria and her children.

She is a married woman who juggles between work and wifely and motherly responsibilities. She is stuck in a low paid job, educated but endures a relationship in which there is no equity. She is sympathetic, loving and caring. She treats everyone as part of her family even her car 'creamy'. She thinks that women are the stronger sex because of all the responsibilities that they have which makes them work from dawn to dusk. She is also someone who desires that men help at home because all people are equal but believes that its implementation will bring about chaos. She relies mostly on her instincts especially in her field of work. She helps Fofo to solve the mystery behind her sister's death an act of working for the good of society. She also believes that her children are growing in a generation which is different from the one she was raised in and so adjusts her parenting skills in raising them. Although literate, she still believes in some traditional adages.

Maa Tsuru

She is introduced to the reader as a mother to Fofo and the dead girl Baby T in addition to four other children who are boys, whose generation is cursed at her birth by her mother according to Naa Yomo and as a result has not been successful at anything in life. It can be deduced from the text that she is concerned about the wellbeing of her children but is incapable of giving them a better life because poverty has crippled her hence she calls herself

a leper. She condones with her husband to sell their child into prostitution after which he takes off to 'nobody knows where' and leaves her to fend for the children all by herself. She is presented as a victim of poverty and is used and dumped by men when and how they want. She affirms that she would rather maintain an unworthy man than be seen without a man thus she accepts any man into her life who unfortunately for her ends up ruining her life usually by impregnating her and disappearing on her, leaving her to cater for all the children by herself. She is altruistic and overly generous to the men in her life and is blamed for being overly fertile, which is a curse according to society. She is presented by the author as passive and feeble. She sees her failure in life as a result of the curse. She lets herself to be bribed by Onko when he rapes Baby T and sends her off into prostitution. She accepts her situations and exhibits some level of complacency. She is ostracized by society on the grounds of the curse. Thus she considers herself worthless and is used by the men who come into her life. Maa Tsuru represents that category of women who give in to societal subjugation and oppression. Her belief in tradition is evident when she accepts her fate as being cursed which she is reluctant to fight and so just resigns herself to fate.

She is complacent and gullible and does little to make sure her children do not end up on the streets. She is believed to be cursed by her mother during her birth. She sells her daughter Baby T into prostitution after accepting bribe from Onko to keep quiet about raping Baby T. She is not a literate. Due to her curse, she is ostracized by those living on the same compound with her. She is remorseful when she finds out she could have done better for her children.

Naa Yomo

She is presented by the author as a woman who has knowledge of historical facts about her generation and the land on which she lives which is according to Kabria can be documented.

She is also presented as a cultural agent who transmits cultural values into the younger generation and represents wisdom because of her lived experiences and knowledge on issues. She hardly comments on issues unless it is very necessary. She represents the grandmother figure in most Ghanaian stories. It is she who convinces Maa Tsuru to allow Kabria talk to her about Fofu and Baby T's case. She observes all happenings and knows so much about everything. She is an epitome of peace, sanity and care for one's' neighbours despite their predicaments.

ADADE, KPAKPO, KWEI

ADADE

Adade is Kabria's husband who although is responsible is required by Kabria to help in taking care of the children and other household duties. He is presented as the regular traditional man who expects to meet his wife at home when he returns from work and also see his food ready on his arrival from work. He loves his wife but hardly expresses his emotions. He feels uncomfortable on one occasion when Kabria leaves him alone with the children to attend to work. Although he stays up late to wait for her to get home before he sleeps, he feigns sleep on her arrival. He expects Kabria to take care of her own needs such as fixing 'Creamy' her car because she works just like him and is paid. His relationship with the children appears not to be as cordial as Kabria's.

As a husband and father, he is loving and caring. Society teaches the man not to show emotions in the presence of people because that makes him look feeble. So by societal standards, Kpakpo is a strong man who accepts that his wife is independent and so should take care of her car by herself. He is embarrassed when his wife drives her car to his workplace, a strategy to get him to spray creamy.

KWEI

Kwei is introduced as the first husband of Tsuru who despite his mother's disapproval goes ahead to impregnate Tsuru. He exhibits a sense of responsibility by setting off to look for greener pastures in order to take care of the child Tsuru is expecting. He returns worse than he left and takes off one day leaving the responsibility of catering for the children on their mother. He represents men who but for poverty would not abandon their responsibilities.

KPAKPO

Introduced as the second man in Tsuru's life, Kpakpo plays on the gullibility and naivety of Tsuru and gets free lunch after deceiving her that he was laid off at work and will get his job back while in actual sense he was unemployed for a long time ago. He is a drunk and a man who rents apartment to tenants and shares that apartment with them. He is the father who raped his step daughter. According to Baby T he was going to do it but something stopped him. One would believe that Baby T said this to protect her sister from the trauma. He intercepts the envelopes that came from Baby T's employers to Maa Tsuru. He is met with the news of Baby T's death and leaves unceremoniously leaving Tsuru with their two young sons. He like Kwei although are victims of poverty and societal pressure make no effort to continue taking responsibility of their children when things went bad. Rather they flee tagging them as irresponsible fathers who only took advantage of Tsuru to gratify their sexual and financial needs. According to ²Okubule (2016) Kpakpo is abusive, dubious, jobless and unscrupulous. He orchestrated Baby T's sale into prostitution and aided Onko's

² Okubule's article was retrieved from a blog that discusses African literature books. <https://lagosbooksclub.wordpress.com/2016/06/08/faceless-by-amma-darko-characterscharacterization-for-69waecnecojamb-exams/...> <http://reyliterature.blogspot.com.ng/2014/08/commentary-on-faceless.html>

visit to Baby T leading to the latter's death. **Onko** is also presented as a man who preys on innocent girls in society.

Although Darko does not explore these men further, they have been assigned gendered roles which include taking responsibility of their children and providing for their families. However, with the exception of Kabria's husband, the men in the novel fail to fulfil these responsibilities because of selfish gains and in some cases poverty. What seems to be their ultimate aim is to attain sexual pleasure through force or seduction from females of all ages. When compared to men in *Beyond the Horizon* such as Akobi and Osey, who strive to acquire wealth and power and think ahead into the future, Kpakpo and Kwei end up unaccomplished. Thus they are not able to get out of their poverty situations. Unlike these two, the former men do not mind compromising their values to acquire wealth and power. However, society does not criticize their strategies in the same way as women in such positions are criticized about their choices.

The Housemaid (1998)

This is a story of a young girl Efia, who becomes a victim to her grandmother's exploitative ideas about gaining wealth through foul means. The story begins with the news of Efia's dead baby's story being judged by all categories of people who the news reached. Men and women gave various perspectives on the issue. She was sent to live with Tika to help her and be trained into a trade that would benefit her in the future. It turns out she was a tool used by her grandmother, mother and father to eradicate poverty in their family. She gets caught after getting pregnant by another man which she tries to pin on one of Tika's customers. Tika apparently has to sleep her way through in order to reach the peak of her trade. Efia ends up escaping and aborting the baby which does not end well. It is on her way to give the baby a befitting burial that the stench from the dead baby gets worse and she has

to get down from the bus and bury her somewhere to avoid being exposed. Darko portrays in this text how women as well as men can be victims and accomplices of oppression. She portrays men in the text as passive, drunks and lovers and most of them oppressors mainly by taking advantage of circumstances to get sexual gratification from the women. However, she does not seem to be against women using their body to get what they want be it material gain or emotional gain. The female has now adopted the tools used by men who oppress them. This is as a result of the idea that every relationship has become commercialized in this contemporary era for personal gain. The quest for power and wealth has caused women to sell anything including their body, conscience and dignity in order to become successful. Thus Darko portrays female characters in the novel not as helpless victims who are exploited by male but also users of men.

Tika

She is introduced as a child who grows up in the care of a house help because her mother is never available throughout her childhood. Tika is a business woman who sleeps with men in order to get favours from them to flourish her trade. She was often left in the care of a house help while her mother is out doing business. She grows up without a good relationship with her mother and blames her mother for the death of her father. She is a victim of a broken home. She fails her exams and so could not continue her education unlike her boyfriend. So she accepts to venture into a business her mother introduces her into. From Tika's thoughts and dialogues it can be deduced that she hates her mother for not being there for her when she needs her at a younger age. She is established and economically independent and is able to take care of herself but still holds this grudge against her mother. According to Bungaro, this aggression that daughters exert on their mothers is as a result of

their frustration on the social system, patriarchal and neo colonial limitations that affect their struggles to become better people.

Tika at the age of thirty-five is still single and childless because of her wealth and independence. What worsens her case is the idea by society that women who are successful have traded their fertility for wealth. She is obsessed with proving that although she failed in academics, she must succeed in her business. Thus she invests her intelligence, dignity and energy in her business. One would expect that she be ashamed of this but rather she gets defensive and seems to suggest that money is good no matter the price it comes with. She exhibits intelligence and is able to find a way out of Efia and her grandmother's plan to trick her into becoming their means of income and wealth.

Sekyiwa

She is presented as Tika's mother who blackmails Tika's father into marrying her by intentionally getting pregnant for him because of his wealth. Thus she exploits him to strengthen her economically. When she achieves what she wants, she discards him and goes for younger and energetic men to satisfy her sexual needs. Her excuse for this act is that her husband's libido has waned which makes him incapable of satisfying her sexual desires. According to Marfo, C. O., Yeboah, P. A., & Bonku, L. (2015) Darko challenges existing traditional motherhood perspectives. Thus Sekyiwa is not caring and disciplined as is expected of mothers in African societies. She rather is concerned about wealth and power and devises the means of acquiring these by exploiting her exploiter. She seeks reconciliation from her only child but to no avail which implies that at some point she realizes that all she has acquired is for nothing unless her daughter inherits them. She is blamed by Efia's grandmother for stealing the fortune of their family by marrying Tika's father. Despite the fact that she is not available for her child during her childhood moments when she needs her, she never fails to provide her with material things. This is to say she

cared about her daughter but was not willing to sacrifice her business for her. To her, economic power is the ultimate thing.

Sekyiwa defies all societal feminine attributes. First she is manipulative and exploitative, not ashamed of her multiple sexual partners and is courageous to seek better sex outside her marriage. According to her there is no life to enjoy with a 'dead penis'. (p.18). She does not follow societal way of being a mother staying home to nurture her child and sacrificing her happiness for her child. On the contrary, she chases after her dream and succeeding in her business and being happy. She is a nonconformist who does not let her illiteracy stand in her way of becoming wealthy.

Efia

She is a young girl who is sent to the city to stay with Tika and help out for the price of learning a trade. She eventually learns that her madam's other job is servicing men sexually and so she also gains experience in that field. She is played by her grandmother and mother into duping Tika but gets caught. She gets pregnant and pins it on one of Tika's customers' who is impotent resulting in the backfiring of their whole plan. She flees with stolen money from Tika and a pregnancy which she tries to abort. To honour the dead baby she decides to take her back to the village and give her a befitting burial but the stench from the dead baby almost exposes her so she buries the baby in a nearby bush on the way to her village. She is presented by Darko as an innocent young lady who gets caught in the middle of irresponsible grandparents who are thirsty for wealth and do not mind giving her (Efia) in exchange for it. She becomes the victim of society and economic pressure.

Efia's grandmother and mother represent the category of women who are illiterate, ignorant and poor. This category of women as presented by the author are well grounded in their traditions but have the courage to resist them if necessary. Efia's grandmother including all women according to tradition and the laws of the society Darko projects, are not allowed to

pour libation because society and culture presumes that they are unclean to do that due to their reproductive responsibilities. However, she pours libation in the absence of Efia's drunken uncle who she claims is in no good state of mind to do that. The author portrays her as a woman who is courageous enough to defy societal laws that put limitations on her. Efia's mother on the other hand is presented by the author as ignorant and passive and gullible and so she easily gives in to her mother's plan. As illiterates and because of their state of poverty and low level of exposure, they are ignorant of a technology which leads to the failure of their plan. Darko portrays another category of women in the characters of Efia's mother and grandmother who fight the system by being accomplices to oppression. In their quest to fight poverty, they destroy the life of their child and exploit their fellow woman (Tika).

Efia is gullible because she allows herself to be deceived into a plan that she does not rethink carefully after she is confronted with it. Efia is inquisitive in the sense that she desires to know what goes behind the closed doors in which her madam and her customers hold their discussions. Unlike Mara, Efia is not naive. She manages to hide the man she has an affair with from her madam. She is also nicknamed 'cheap chop' because she easily gives in to any man who approaches her for sex. However after the plan she is manipulated into blows up in her face, she is remorseful and seeks forgiveness from Tika. Tika thinks of Efia as a victim of manipulation just like she also is. Thus Darko presents another situation in which the choices that characters make, come with matching consequences. What would have happened if Efia failed to go along with her grandmother's plan?

Tika's father, Efia's father/uncle, Nsorhwe

The men presented by the author in the story are not all irresponsible and passive. Nsorhwe and Tika's father take up their responsibilities as fathers by taking care of their families

especially their children although things do not seem to be working out well in their marriages. Even when Nsorwhe is accused of impregnating Efiya, knowing well he could not have, he accepts to take full responsibility on the condition that a DNA test is done and the unborn child confirmed to be his. On the other side are the irresponsible men comprising Efiya's father and uncle whose concern for their child is based on what they could benefit out of them. They take to drinking instead of striving hard to make earnings meet and provide a better life for their children.



FINDINGS

3.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF WOMEN AND MEN IN THE TEXTS

Bungaro in Emenyonu (2006) posits that fiction reflects tensions and preoccupations in society which include the dynamics of power, a major issue expressed by most contemporary African women writers. Motherhood according to Bungaro to a large extent defines the identities of females in most societies. In most societies, motherhood is the responsibility of the woman thus she is defined by her ability to procreate. Mothers take up the role of nurturing their children right from birth till they become adults. Darko portrays this in her texts when a close look is taken at the fundamental roles assigned to female characters in the texts. Mara becomes her mother's sole responsibility as she grows. Even after marriage when she is expecting her first child, her mother is who she runs to for help during and after delivery. It is her mother who takes care of her children while she is away in Germany. Also Mama Kiosk plays the role of Mara's mother by seeing to her welfare in the city. In the case of Efia of *The Housemaid*, the role of nurturing lay in the hands of her mother and grandmother who sought a better future for her by sending her to the city to be taken care of and to learn a trade. Sekyiwa although she is not always around for her daughter Tika, makes sure she employs a house help to take care of her. She is the one who introduces the idea of venturing into trade in order to establish herself since she failed her exams. Meanwhile all the children that Maa Tsuru produces with two different men have become her sole responsibility because the men who impregnated her abandoned her and the children. In the case where the fathers of the children are absent and the woman sinks in poverty, it becomes the mother's sole responsibility to play the role of the provider. Maa Tsuru for instance helps her sister in her kenkey business in order to put food on the table. However, the children as they grow see the need to find jobs on the street to help their mother take care of them. Mami Korkor works from dawn to dusk to take care of Bibio and

her brothers and Efi's grandmother and mother come up with a plan for a better future for her. Kabria also is the one who takes up the responsibility of nurturing her children and taking care of their day to day needs. It can be deduced from the three novels under study, that is, *Beyond the Horizon*, *The Housemaid*, and *Faceless*, that Darko lays emphasis on how society confers the role of motherhood and the role of taking care of the children right from their birth on the women. The mother is the one who sees to the growth of the children be it physical, emotional, social and sometimes financial growth. What the responsible father does is mainly seeing to the financial needs of the child such as paying school fees and providing money for the upkeep of the family as portrayed by the author. According to the author, Kabria aside from her job at MUTE single handedly takes up domestic chores.

...because from dawn to dusk, domestic schedules gobbled her up; office duties ate her alive; her three children devoured her with sometimes realistic and many times unrealistic demands; while the icing on the cake, their father needed do no more than simply be her regular husband, and she was in perpetual quandary. (*Faceless*, 10)

Darko challenges the role of nurturing being perpetually the mother's duty as she points out its ability to destroy the family especially when the mother is a victim of poverty and subjugation, and how it can morally corrupt the child.. She portrays the mother as a failure in most cases because the mother's victimization as a result of patriarchy does not only humiliate her, but also destroys the children. In the end Mara has no morals, Efi has an abortion and Baby T dies. The importance of this portrayal by Darko is that the social system operates to destroy the woman and by destroying her, the children are affected. Thus

nurturing the child should not only be the responsibility of the woman but the man's as well making it a collective and mutual responsibility.

From the three texts, it is expected of the man to take care of the household by providing money for the upkeep of the home. Akobi at the initial part of his marriage made sure to give Mara part of his income for housekeeping until he decided not to. Adade made sure to provide money for the upkeep of the children and the household. Kwei strives to get a job in order to take care of his unborn child and Tsuru. The role of the man is spelled out clearly in this scenarios; it is to provide and cater for his family. The woman on the other hand is responsible for household duties such as cooking, cleaning and seeing to the children's needs among several others. Society has defined this roles based on the biological makeup of the man and woman. However, Darko seems to suggest that society has overburdened the woman and in most cases they are forced to take up the responsibilities of the man when they fail to do it thus becoming providers of the family. That is not to say that the woman cannot be the provider but it is to emphasize the need for both men and women to complement their responsibilities. Nevertheless this hardly happens due to several factors including gender ascriptions.

According to Yitah et al. in Odamtten (2007), "Darko's pre-occupation is her portrayal of the body as a site where relentless and often brutal gendered struggles take place" (p.85). This struggles she states take various forms but the ultimate is the power play thus who has power over who. This in my opinion is where gender interrelations are evident through the constructions of masculinity and femininity. Who wields more authority on the other the man or woman and how does it affect human interaction? In the case of Mara, her husband has power over her as far as he can abuse her and keep her quiet and subservient. She is beaten by her husband and is further exploited and sold into prostitution during her stay in

Germany with her husband. After all this the only form of freedom she gets is becoming a sex slave to her pawn and master. The reality of women using sex to get what they want runs through two of her novels thus *Beyond the Horizon* and *The Housemaid*. Efia is forced to use what she possesses as a woman to trick Tika. Tika uses sex to boost her trade just like her mother and Baby T and Fofo have no means of survival than to engage in theft and prostitution. Thus their roles always revolved around their biological make up in one way or the other.

Kabria although she is economically independent, struggles through her marriage because of her overburdening responsibilities as a mother, wife and a worker. Like all the other female characters in the three texts, they have the responsibility of taking care of their children and doing household chores. In cases where their work does not afford them enough time, they employ extra hands to help in the chores. In no case are the men in the texts volunteering to take up these chores. Again, the roles society assigns to the woman over burdens her, and in most cases they wished like Kabria, that men also made the effort to help in executing these roles. She complains that all her husband does is wake up in the morning , be served breakfast, go to work expecting her to prepare and take the children to school and come back from work expecting to meet his wife and his food ready. And this she says is no justification for referring to the woman as the weaker sex because in reality she is stronger. Mara on the other hand fulfils her traditional roles as a daughter who obeys her parents decisions, a wife who is at the beck and call of her husband and remains subordinate no matter what and finally a mother who is altruistic enough to use her body to earn money to send to her parents for the upkeep of her children.

It is observed that unlike Aidoo, who portrays in her works that education is the one solution to the eradication of inequalities and curbing of the subordination of women, Darko's works

portray that economic independence is the key. Thus most of her female characters are created to attain economic independence and this in the long run makes them achieve their goal of eradicating inequality. However, she suggests that the solution to the problems women face will not be solved only by curbing gender inequalities among men and women.

Society and culture determine what constitutes maleness and femaleness. This brings differences between roles assigned to male and female and the privileges and constraints that come with it. However, Darko portrays that anybody be it male or female can be exploited by anyone. Women exploit fellow women as in the case of Efiya's grandmother, mother and Tika. Also Mami Broni's exploits young girls by introducing them into prostitution and profiting from them. Men also exploit women and fellow men although the latter is not commonly portrayed in most of the texts since the focus is on women. In most cases the men especially in *The Housemaid* are used by women to get what they want. It can be deduced from the texts that they are used by women as a commodity to satisfy themselves sexually in the case of Sekyiwa, Tika's mother who paid men for sex. Tika sleeps with men to boost her business and get more opportunities and favours and Fofu like Odarley and Baby T sleep with men to make a living. Thus society pushes the woman to adopt the same exploitative strategies as their oppressors to attain power and wealth.

The above implies that Darko does not categorically blame men for what they do but blames society and culture for situations that arise and lead to inequality. Inequality even in assigning of roles and responsibilities might occur because of society's privileges it accords men. However, in the case where the woman has money which transcends into power, she is no longer unequal to the man except through her body and the fact that she possesses a vagina and not a penis. It is important to Darko that in the long run the woman is liberated. In most of the cases the women do not work in isolation to attain their autonomy which is

to say that Darko encourages the cooperative spirit which is solidarity among women. However, she does not offer solutions to the problems she explores but rather describes the anxiety in contemporary Ghanaian society.

3.4 ISSUES THAT CHARACTERIZE DARKO'S TEXTS AS WOMANIST

In this section, the researcher's findings based on womanist ideas of autonomy, self-realization, audaciousness and solidarity are discussed. The womanist quest for self-empowerment and freedom from patriarchy and highlighting the plight of the woman, and freedom from abuse, all boil down to survival of the male and female will also form the basis my analysis.

Solidarity/sisterhood is one important idea expressed in Darko's texts that forms part of the elements of womanism. The union of interests among women going through the same circumstances and making the effort to associate or compare their situations to one another's, creates the platform for women to question their fixed identities, images and roles and come together to find strength to fight patriarchy. Meanwhile it is deduced from some scenarios in the text that it is only when there is solidarity among the women that they can survive patriarchy so some go to the extent of telling lies to gain that solidarity. For instance when Kabria wanted information from the hairdresser who she presumed to witness the activities surrounding the dumping of Baby T's body, she tells her a lie that she also is a single mother like her whose husband had abandoned her and her children. This union of interests is what earned Kabria her information. This suggests that even among women, there exists different kinds of sisterhood based on their classes/social stratification. Mara on the other hand could only confide in Kaye before she attains justice because her story is similar to that of Kaye's. This to a large degree implies that women as portrayed by the author believe that it is only women who have been in similar situations who are capable of well understanding each other's experiences. Therefore women write to make their

situations known to other women seeking for solidarity. However justice and rectification of wrong is impossible without the inclusion of men. Otherwise Darko could have created all her characters to be females. The likes of Sylve Po and Detective Gerhardt play significant roles in bringing justice to the victims in their various cases.

Moreover as implied by Darko, it is important to highlight the plight of the woman in the society in which they are oppressed. This is what she does in the three stories that the researcher studied. She portrays the struggle of the woman amidst political, economic and patriarchal chaos especially in the Ghanaian societies and its effect on the woman and the marginalized/poor. She echoes this through the female characters especially. For instance, Mara is forced into marriage to clear her father's debt and is abused by her husband but society sees nothing wrong with this. Society expects her to be a good, humble and respectful wife to her husband no matter what even when he maltreats her, abuses and treats her less of a human. No account is given in the text of Akobi sending money to his children but Mara made sure she sent money to be used to cater for her children. In addition self-realization occurs when she joins her husband abroad and is introduced to her husband's wife to be (Gitte) as a sister and is forced into prostitution at her expense. At this point she realizes that she needed to fight to be free from Akobi's bondage, that she was stronger than she thought. In the end she is free from Akobi but not from societal limitations.

Darko through Mara portrays marriage as a form of trade in which the woman becomes the man's commodity and so must be at the beck and call of her husband. She is asked by Akobi to collect rubbish from neighbours in exchange for foodstuff for the house. She fetches water for Akobi to bath and waits on him to finish bathing so she could hand him his towel and put the bucket back. She is beaten because she gets pregnant for her husband. She takes up a job to earn enough to cater for her baby about to be born. She does not want to be seen in

the company of her husband by her husband and is 'commanded' not to be seen in the company of Mama Kiosk. Mama kiosk on the other hand runs her own shop and lives on her own. She represents the woman who is autonomous and independent but who is a threat to men. These are the woeful situations of women Darko highlights.

In *The Housemaid*, the articulation of womanist concern through highlighting of women's plight is also evident. Taking Tika for instance, Darko projects her toil of having to sexually gratify males who are in charge of customs, bank managers and shop owners in order to flourish in business. Society is not bothered about it as far as it benefits the people involved. Owuraku, Tika's boyfriend is influenced on the basis that if he allows her woman to become his provider, 'she could be hijacking your manhood' (p.22) while he has no control over her womanhood. This also highlights masculinist anxieties which manifest in such features as sexual control and economic power over the weaker sex. She suffers heartbreak and loses her moral values in order to survive. Efia another victim of poverty is sent by her grandmother and mother to stay with Tika as a ploy to regain all the wealth Tika's mother supposedly steals from them. She ends up getting pregnant and aborting the baby and getting society to prescribe what should be done to the mother of the abandoned baby. One interesting thing about society Darko portrays in Efia's case is how society is quick to judge and blame the mother of the abandoned baby rather than blame both parents and even the circumstances that lead to it. Most people tagged her as wicked for deciding to abort the baby. Considering the situation Efia was in, the choice she made to do away with the baby may be due to the fact that she was poor and foresaw no future for her baby or otherwise was simply afraid of what the future held for her. Bibio's mother Mami Korkor works from dawn to dusk to take care of her children because her husband abandons them. Kabria although married, has not got a very supportive husband, she has to carry out her traditional responsibilities as a woman after a hectic day in addition to seeing to the welfare of the

children. Fofu and Baby T's lives on the street also highlight the struggles females go through in contemporary Ghana to survive. Maa Tsuru's case is another instance. Darko portrays various categories of women and the plights they go through in the midst of patriarchal chaos that worsens their predicaments. These categories of women deal with their particular issues differently. However, even those who get freedom are not really free because the problem of inequity cannot be totally resolved until society changes. This change must be geared towards achieving the aim of reforming human interaction and working for the survival of both men and women in society. As the conflicts resolve in the three texts, it is realized that some of the weak, passive obedient and traditional women became fearless, daring, independent and courageous. They realize that they are more capable than society teaches them and so they grow through their experiences by the choices they make and through this their strengths are revealed through their weaknesses.

3.5 COMMON THEMES THAT RUN THROUGH THE TEXTS

Theme refers to recurrent ideas in a piece of work. Some common themes have been identified in the three works of Darko under study. They include poverty, exploitation, migration, moral degeneration and streetism. The researcher will examine these themes within the framework of womanism. Womanism negotiates a common ground between the man and the female in society. It has been made clear that Darko's representation of male characters is not done deliberately to 'hate' men but rather to expose the vices that men engage in as a result of patriarchal hegemony in society. Though her concentration is on Ghanaian women, she seeks to represent women of different nationalities such as Gitte and Kaye who are victims of abuse and patriarchy.

To begin with, poverty can simply be defined as a state of not having money and material possessions. According to the World Health Organization, "poverty is associated with the undermining of a range of key human attributes, including health. The poor are exposed to

greater personal and environmental risks.” Darko portrays this as a part of the major problems in Ghana that drive most people including men and women to engage in activities that will bring them wealth and better living. Poverty situations are evident first and foremost in the manner of description given in her texts about where people live. Firstly she describes the slum in which Mara moved to when she marries Akobi as:

... A cluster of shabbily-constructed corrugated iron sheet shelters that looked like chicken houses, while all about and between them shallow, open gutters wound their way. In these gutters due to the lack of any drainage system, all the water from washing and bathing, and urine too, collected and stayed until it evaporated. And since the rate of evaporation was slower than the rate at which the waste waters collected, the resulting standing water not only stunk but also bred nasty shades of algae and generations of large mosquitoes that greedily fed on our blood at night.there was an unhygienic public toilet beside which was the areas only public rubbish dump (which was collected once a year) which brought in swarms of flies in their thousands and polluted the surrounding air so that one hardly ever woke up in the morning without a splitting headache. – (Darko: 1998: 8).

The village of Kataso was also described by Darko in her book *The Housemaid* as quoted below:

Kataso a village in the Eastern hills had no flowing water, no electricity, no entertainment center, nothing. Only the chief owned a television set – old, black and white, and 100 percent out of order. There would have been no power to run it even if it had worked. It stood in the place for decoration. A privileged few who could occasionally afford batteries, owned pre-set radios, the kind imported from china in the

1960's; they were set permanently to the only radio station that had been available at the time which therefore led sex as the only really affordable entertainment in Kataso. Everyone – young, old, mature and immature – indulged in it freely making the two midwives the busiest of the village professionals. (p.29).

Meanwhile in *Faceless*, several descriptions are given about the slums poor people lived in.

“In every corner stood a crudely constructed wooden structure that looked about to give way any time soon under the weight of loud music and strong scent of akpeteshie. ...the drains were all fully choked with filth and discarded plastic bags. (p.84). ...the doors of its twelve rooms were closed, but the entrance was shielded with a curtain, which by themselves gave clues to the economic status of its occupants...old faded ones torn haphazardly in places and others were neither good nor bad. (p.86).

In *Faceless* Darko describes the environment in which some of her characters live as suffocating, unhealthy and unhygienic. Fofu and her friends lived amidst huge piles of rubbish, strong stench from the gutters due to poor drainage systems and most of all they had to resort to easing themselves at the refuse dump because of the long queues at the public toilet. There was lack of water since the girls hardly took their bath and also Fofu especially lived on bread for breakfast, lunch and supper because of lack of money.

The detailed description of the living conditions in the environments created by the author suggests extreme poverty which is not based on economic conditions alone but lack/inadequacy of social amenities thereby putting pressure on existing ones, poor sanitation and lack of health facilities for this category of poor people represented in her texts. Lack of employment actually worsens the case. Through the images she paints about

poverty which are mostly realities when one visits the markets and slums in Accra, Darko suggests that measures are put in place to improve the living conditions of people who live in such environments. Thus it is not only about the altering of thoughts on gender roles but the healing of society at large. This idea of change affects the whole society and thus subtly articulates the element of womanism that encourages the survival of both sexes.

In addition to the above theme is the issue of exploitation which echoes through the three texts that form the oeuvre of Darko's works. Exploitation is simply understood as the act of using someone or something unfairly for one's own advantage. From the three texts under study, it can be deduced that everyone is exploited by someone. It does not matter the biological or social identification of the person. In *The Housemaid*, Tika is exploited by Efia and her family for her money in order to end their poverty. Efia is exploited by her grandmother and family by being the one to execute their plan. However she ends up becoming a victim. Sekyiwa and Tika exploit men sexually for pleasure and to boost their businesses. In *Beyond the Horizon*, Mara is exploited by her father as she is used to clear his debts with Akobi's father. She is further exploited by Akobi as he forces her into prostitution and gets paid for her services. Akobi emotionally exploits Gitte in order to get married to her and become a citizen of Germany. Like Mara, Kaye's husband also exploits her sexually by forcing her into prostitution and then blackmailing her with her nude pictures. In *Faceless*, Baby T is exploited by her parents because they forced her under the care of Mami Broni who also exploits her through prostitution. Her parents receive money for the services she offers Mami Broni and Poison's customers. The trend that can be established after studying exploitation in Darko's three texts is that she presents the woman's body as a tool for sexual exploitation. However it is not only the women that are exploited sexually, the men are also exploited. What is important then is that the harshness and instability of the economy pushes people especially the 'haves' and the 'have nots' to

exploit each other thereby making women and men victims and accomplices of exploitation. However it is undeniable that cultural subjugation of women forms the basis of the exploitation of the woman's body.

One other important theme that is apparent and specific in *Beyond the Horizon*, and which featured as a result of the era of writing is migration. It can be deduced from the author's biography that at the text was written during her stay in Germany in the 1990's. According to her, the issue of unemployment at the time of graduation and the unstable economy caused a lot of youth to move abroad in search of greener pastures. Through her account it is observed that the promising abroad that everyone is brainwashed to think is not the reality. This she does by portraying how women especially African women in the diaspora hardly get decent jobs to do other than prostitution. She explores this theme further in the Ghanaian context where rural urban migration made it that a lot of people moved from rural areas to urban areas in search of better opportunities. The end result as portrayed in *Faceless* is pressure on social amenities, slums, environmental degradation, moral degeneration and above all 'streetism'.

'Street Children' according to the Department of Social welfare, is used to describe children for whom the street is a reference point and has a central role in their lives. Streetism has become a global phenomenon and urban streets are flooded with street children. Within Ghana it is estimated that there are around 90,000 street children in the greater Accra region alone. (Department of social welfare, 2016, p.1). Darko portrays that the major cause of proliferation of street children is poverty. Most parents who are financially incapable send their children to the streets to either bring money home or fend for themselves. In the case of Maa Tsuru, she kept producing more children without a good and permanent source of income hence the responsibility of having to cater for a large family. Her elder sons took up

menial jobs so that there can be food on the table every day. The older her children got the more prone they were to becoming street children. Also irresponsible parenting on the side of Ordaley, Fofu's friend's parents causes her to move and live on the streets in order to earn a living. Their lives on the street constitute pick pocketing, begging, hawking, and carrying of people's loads (kayayei) in order to earn a living. They like Fofu and her gang suffer the pain of having to pass excreta in the open on the refuse dump and bare the risk of street lords having to chase them away and sometimes losing their weekly earnings in the process of escape. They slept in uncompleted buildings and sometimes in front of kiosks. What the author ascertains is the risk these children are prone to in their quest to survive. Fofu for instance suffers abuse physically through severe beatings and in the form of rape. Their risk of getting infected with sexually transmitted infections and diseases and the deadly HIV/AIDS is very high. From her perspective, it is the responsibility of NGO's such as MUTE to help this children out of the streets by giving them alternative safe and descent jobs. In addition she suggests that the idea of a peer to peer counseling among street children should be explored further by humanitarian organizations.

Moral degeneration is one central idea that runs through the texts under study. The degradation of moral standards of a group of people in a society is what is termed moral degeneration. Several instances of this is reflected through the characters in Darko's texts. For instance Mara held on to being faithful and obedient to her husband until she got to Germany where in order to survive, she had to compromise some of her moral values. She states;

As for myself, there's nothing dignified and decent left for me to give them (her children). (p140). I am staring painfully at an image. My image? No! – what is left of what once used to be my image...a soul grown old from too much use of its

shelter (p.1) ... this bit of garbage that once used to be me.
(p3).

The above words that form the extract are what Mara employs to describe herself out of the disgust she feels for how morally eroded she has become. Although prostitution has become a commercial job, most African societies still perceive it as deviating from societal values. Darko's perspective on prostitution is that it is an abuse of the woman's being and the exploitation of her body for sexual gratification. However she sees nothing wrong with women sexually exploiting men as men do women to attain power and wealth. She also projects that women have resorted to satisfying men sexually in order to earn a living. Moral degeneration has brought about violence and rise in crimes on the streets. People as portrayed through Darko's characters engage in immoral acts just to earn a living. Those values of society that prevent the child from promiscuity, violence, rape, theft and murder have all been wiped away because of various social problems. Men abuse women physically and sexually and society sees nothing wrong with it. Darko affirms through this that the moral consciousness of the society has been destroyed and this has led to the upsurge in vices. This is a national concern and so cannot just be limited to gender inequities. In fact it is these problems that worsen the inequities between the genders.

In the three texts analyzed by the researcher, it is observed that Darko repeatedly explores the theme of sexual exploitation of women and men. This lays emphasis on the need for this issue to be addressed in order to protect young girls. This is because despite civilization and education, women are continually confronted with issues of sex daily. In this contemporary era, there are cases where although they are qualified, women are expected by their bosses to give sex before they get a job. Therefore, Darko uses sexuality to examine the values of the Ghanaian society. The researcher observes that, the commodification of the female body is validation that Ghana has lost its moral values. In addition, she suggests that until the

issue of sexual exploitation which is violation of the female body is addressed, women's personal development will be inhibited.



CHAPTER FOUR

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter identifies the techniques and style of the author under study. This will be done by drawing instances from the texts where necessary to explain the techniques that have been identified by the researcher. The style includes the structure of her texts, the narrative form and techniques that the author employs in developing her stories. Through the study of the author's style the researcher will be able to identify her trend.

4.2 NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES

Amma Darko is a Ghanaian female writer who tells her experiences from the female perspective. Although her texts revolve around the female, the concerns she raises are just about the woman as it is about the man because it affects everybody if society is destroyed. Darko employs the third person narrative technique in telling her stories. This technique allows the narrator to be uninvolved in the story and not a character in the story. However, the fact that she is not referred to as a character in the story does not mean that she does not influence the characters in the texts. Darko's narrative style can be considered as based on the subjectivity/ objectivity axis. Thus some of her ideas are based on individual opinions and others are based on reality of issues in society. The narrator is omniscient and can tell the thoughts of every character in her texts.

Narrative techniques help provide deeper meaning to the reader who uses his or her imagination to visualize situations presented by the narrator. Darko also employs nonlinear form of arranging her events in her texts. Darko's nonlinear arrangement of events is as a result of the flash forward technique she uses at the beginning of her texts where she allows us to see a section of the future of events. This is usually experienced by the main character

on which the story is based. This technique creates suspense in the texts and catches the interest of the reader after reading the first page or chapter of the text. The reader is eager to know what events lead to the particular event occurring on the first page.

4.3 MODE OF EXPRESSION

Darko uses English language in the narration of her stories. Where necessary she refers to some things in their indigenous terms. For instance Kenkey (food made from corn dough), wawa (light tropical wood) and kill me quick a jargon used to represent local gin. Also the use of names such as Fofu, Maa Tsuru and Odarley to list a few portray the kind of geographical location the story is set in. In this case, the Ga community in Ghana. In *Faceless* for instance, the researcher observed that such names as Vickie, Aggie and Dina portray a category of people who are not bound to cultural norms but are emancipated and are free to make any choice concerning their lives. Dina founder of MUTE a non - governmental organization is a graduate of University of Ghana. She married but got a divorce because of childlessness. Vickie is not married and is sworn to celibacy. Aggie from the conversation of the four sisters is neither married nor has ever been married. Kabria on the other hand although emancipated, she is still married and struggling to keep it. Darko's pattern of naming her characters especially in this text portrays class differences between the characters. The use of simple English and her local language helps give vivid imagery to her works and also helps readers to easily relate to the situations presented in her work. To some extent also, it validates her experiences in the sense that for Darko to have enough knowledge on the realities of the street children and poverty situations, she has actually participated in such experiences. Otherwise she must have a good sense of imagination to be able to create these realities.

One technique Darko employs is the insertion of ‘incorrect English to show the education level of some characters. During Sylv Po’s session on the radio, a call comes through and this is what the caller says:

“*yes I have talk with you one time already at dat your FM station. Have you hear at all dat what I talk you last time? I not think so. Because today too, you have come with this woman who talk plenty plenty nonsensical talk and talk the same talk again....*” (p.113).

The excerpt above indicates that the character talking has no command over the English language but however tries to communicate with it although she conveys the message she intends to. This is to say that Darko uses language to distinguish between the characters and their social standing in society. What language the character speaks, how he/she speaks it and the strategies adopted by the character to deal with circumstances, tells the reader what classification the character is in. Also she does not narrate this section of the text but projects it in the form of a dialogue where she allows the characters to communicate on their own so as to allow the reader to compare the two characters. In addition to this she presents herself at some points in the texts as the omniscient narrator who is present with the characters at all times and who knows what they are thinking and planning. The use of dialogue helps the author to present the reality of situations as it is through the characters own mouths. She makes the reader feel like an observer and at the same time a participator.

Personification refers to the act of giving human attributes to inanimate objects. Darko uses this technique at some point in her text *Faceless*. For instance Kabria refers to her car as Creamy. She gives name to an inanimate object which accords the object a human attribute. Also there are examples of simile such as “I howled like a wolf” (BTH p.35), ‘...looked like chicken houses, Metaphorical expressions such as ...if suddenly ‘I was stink-bomb scheduled to go off soon’ (BTH p.25) were used by the author. In addition, the researcher

has observed that the author uses speeches that are full of grammatical errors to identify the illiterate characters. For instance, “*Dat morning, I am goes to the Agboghloshie market. So I too I goes dere to look some. I see dat true true somebody dyings dere. ..*”(Faceless, p.114).

4.4 SENSE OF DESCRIPTION

Darko’s sense of description is very prominent in her texts. She describes situations in the text to an extent where the reader feels like she is there with the characters. She is evocative in her description of thoughts and situations. For instance the way in which she describes the abuse of Mara by her husband and the filth in the slums creates strong mental pictures in the reader’s mind. This technique unearths the reader’s emotions towards the activities in the text and to some degree the reader feels empathy for the victim characters in the text. It takes the reader to the world of the writer in which case the writer is able to connect with her readers hence they are reminded by similar experiences as what the author narrates. For instance the manner in which Kabria describes a woman who has bleached her skin: “...so she ended up fair from the face to ankle, dark at the feet which refused to succumb to the dictates of her bleaching soaps and creams, purplish around her eyes and cheeks and underarms. She was a multi-colored parody of nature’s original handiwork.” (p.60).

In the above excerpt, the author describes in a manner that appeals to the sense of sight. Other descriptions in the text appeal to the senses of smell and taste like how she describes the stench from the gutters and rubbish in Mara’s husband’s house that gave her a splitting headache every morning. Aside arousing the interest of the readers she tells us the extent of damage to our society through her descriptive power.

4.5 COINCIDENCE

In the process of bringing resolution to problems or issues that arise in the texts, Darko employs the technique of coincidence. Coincidence simply refers to an event that looks

accidental but in this case it is actually arranged by the author. In *Beyond the Horizon*, it was a coincidence that Mara met Kaye who went through the same situation as her and who she is able to confide in. It is through Kaye that she is able to escape and get justice although she did not entirely get out of the bondage of her sexuality. Also in *The Housemaid*, it is a planned accident that Efia chose Nsorwhe of all the men, who is impotent to blame for her pregnancy. As a result of this coincidence, an end is brought to Efia's grandmother's plot and an outcome brought to a complex sequence of events. The coincidence in *Faceless* that helped in developing the plot is the event where Kabria meets Fofu in the *agboghloshie* market and Fofu's decision to confide in Kabria. It could have been any other street child and not Fofu but the author created the event to include not just any street girl but Fofu in the incident. This incident helped in the resolution of Baby T's death because if it were not for how Kabria became attached to Fofu, this issue would have not been pursued further. Other pieces of coincidence occur within the texts in order to keep the interest of the reader and also serve the purpose of suspense. The researcher also observed that the author does this as a kind of *deus ex machina* to resolve her conflicts. The *deus ex machina* according to Pavis (1998) is a technique used by writers to find a resolution to a difficult contradiction or conflict in a work. Thus for instance Efia's selection of Nsorwhe the impotent man brings a logical resolution to the conflict between the characters at that particular time.

4.6 STRUCTURE OF DARKO'S NARRATIVES

Narrative structure is generally described as the organizational arrangement in which a narrative is presented to a reader. It usually centers on the setting and the arrangement of the plot of a piece of work. Most sequences in a plot are arranged in a chronological order. Although not in all cases, most stories begin with introduction to characters and their characterization, then there is a rising action where conflicts build up. Usually this is what drives the story. After this is the climax of the actions and then the resolution where conflicts

are resolved and the story comes to an end. This form of narrative is what is referred to as the lineal narrative. Darko however does not employ the lineal narrative technique. She uses the non-lineal narrative technique where the beginning of the story is actually the end or the middle. In *Beyond the Horizon*, we are introduced to the Mara who is in Germany in a hotel where she examines her body in front of the mirror. It is in the course of narrating to the reader why she is in that state at the time and place that the story actually begins. *The Housemaid* also begins with the end of the story which is an abandoned baby's story whose investigation leads to the beginning of narration of events that led to the abandoning of a baby who we found out belonged to Efia. In *Faceless* the reader is introduced to the life of Fofu on the street and in a slum and how she gets raped by a street Lord Poison. In the course to report this to her mother she finds out that her rape was linked to her mother. Events that followed sought to explain Fofu's reason for being on the street and the information on her sister Baby T's murder. Other events that followed helped develop the plot. Darko uses this technique to create suspense in her stories. A reader becomes inquisitive and is captivated to read further on into the story to know what events actually led to the current situation presented at the beginning of the story. This is what Anyidoho referred to as the 'device of a mystery waiting to be solved'.

Darko's first two texts; *The Housemaid* and *Beyond the Horizon* are divided into chapters and the chapters into events and scenes. *Faceless* on the other hand is divided into three books which is further divided into chapters, events and scenes.

One element that is explored in Darko's stories is traditional beliefs of the people she represents. It can be inferred that although in contemporary times such beliefs have no significance, people of older generations find it relevant to some events that occur because they help in the explanation and understanding of such events. For instance Kabria's thought

on some adages that Darko surfaces in *Faceless*. According to Kabria, she does not dispute the adage that all God's creations have souls and so even the soul of a tree is pacified before it is cut. Baby T's soul according to Mami Broni needs to be pacified due to the circumstances surrounding her death. So she employs the help of a 'juju man' (traditional occultist) to make sacrifices in order to free her soul. In Onko's case because he defiled Baby T, he believed he was being punished by the gods when his business was collapsing and so he contacts a juju man in order to atone for his sins. His suicide is regarded as a taboo because societal laws do not permit man to take his own life. Meanwhile, Maa Tsuru is believed to be cursed so whoever comes into contact with her would be affected and her over fertility is even considered as a curse. Examples of traditional beliefs in *The Housemaid* include the belief that an old woman whose children have abandoned her is a witch who has been eating up her grandchildren. Also is the idea that because abortion is an abomination, Efia must send the dead baby to the village for some rites to be performed. In addition is the belief that a woman is not allowed to pour libation because of her reproductive abilities and so if she defies this bad things will happen. In *Beyond the Horizon*, Darko presents beliefs such as warning from the traditional priest that he must not shake anyone at the airport because someone is planning to plant bad medicine in his palm so that he cannot prosper in Europe. The traditional beliefs identified by the researcher as presented by the author has embedded in it a womanist concern. This concern is raised by not condemning all these beliefs as primitive but echoing their significance to the situations that they come with. This implies that Africans must not discard all beliefs because they are not accepted by the Western ideology. What needs to be done is to accept the ones that are relevant and give meaning to our lives. However, the beliefs that are based on patriarchy such as all old women being potential witches and midnight 'borns' growing up with their feet everywhere

but firmly on the grounds should be scrutinized and rejected since it will only continue to oppress people especially women.

4.7 UNFAIR TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN THE TEXTS

In the three texts that the researcher studied, the author portrays how women are treated unfairly due to their biological make up. In *Beyond the Horizon*, Mara is treated as a commodity by her own father as he gives her out to Akobi to atone for his debts without even seeking the consent of his daughter. Even after marriage, Akobi maltreats her by physically abusing her, raping her and pushing her into prostitution for his own benefit. In the text, we are introduced to women who are in similar situations like Mara whose husbands control their lives by pushing them into prostitution. In *Faceless*, Darko portrays that all street children who are girls just like Fofo are treated as objects of sex rather than humans. In the first place, poverty pushes them to engage in prostitution in order to be able to survive. Fofo is raped by the street lord in a manner in which the author describes as disgusting and helpless against her will. She was defenseless and exposed to all kinds of danger as a young girl. Baby T is also not treated unfairly and ends up dead after being forced to provide sexual services to customers and Onko, a man who ever raped her. Maa Tsuru their mother is also used and dumped by men who see her as vulnerable and seeking love. She is abandoned by her husband and is left alone to cater for her children. Even the subsequent men who came after her husband left, got her pregnant and abandoned her. She is used by these men as a tool for producing babies. Kabria's unfair treatment is evident when she alone has to take care of the children and her husband after work without her husband offering to help. She must be home before to get her husband's food ready before he comes back meanwhile both of them work during the day. Unlike *Faceless* and *Beyond the horizon*, women in *The housemaid* fight for economic liberation in the midst of poverty. Thus although they are forced to engage in prostitution, they are not seen to be treated unfairly by men. They are

portrayed as accomplices of abuse rather than victims. Efia who is the victim is the only character who is treated unfairly by her grandmother and mother. Men were used as tools to boost businesses by women and as sex objects. Sekyiwa for instance married Tika's father because of his wealth. Thus the trend of portraying women changed from being victims to being accomplices of abuse.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY

In chapter one, the researcher gave a background to the study by giving an account of women writers and the schools of thought concerning their works. Due to colonialism and the imposition of Eurocentric values on the African, the women were late in getting education hence their late arrival on the literary scene. Unlike men who were able to write and give their thoughts on social issues in society, they were restricted from writing and so those who even wrote at the time wrote with pseudo names. For so long till women began writing, they were written about mostly by men and so were given stereotypical identifications which only subjugated them to the background. Women writing became prevalent through the actions of movements whose aim was to fight for equal opportunities for the woman. Due to this most women writers are assumed to write with feminist consciousness women writers are writing based on their own perspectives and experiences. This does not imply that they do not write about problems in society which are not necessarily women centered and which are of paramount importance to the growth and well-being of people in a society and country at large. The problem therefore is that most of women's works are assessed based on the fact that they always advocate for better and equal opportunities for the woman and so other important aspects of the messages the texts carry that talk about issues of nationalism and governance are mostly ignored. The aim of the research was to critically examine selected texts of Darko based on womanist ideas which is to state that she transcends writing about just women to concentrate on societal ills, economic problems and political realities which affect both the man and the woman in society specifically Ghana.

The research was done using the qualitative method which involves the critical reading and examination of the texts and other journal materials which were of relevance to the topic. Particular attention was paid to the main characters especially the female characters whose behaviours, images, utterances, activities and attitudes all came together to convey womanist ideas of the author. The womanist theory is based on a social change perspective established on everyday problems and experiences of African women and the minority. Its aim is to find ways and means to eradicate inequalities for all marginalized people which includes children, men and women. It characterizes women as willful and capable which brings about empowerment and the courage to defy stereotypical traditional definitions of womanhood. It was employed as the framework to this study because it is devoid of Eurocentric implications. It also questions existing structures such as sexual identity and promotes the idea of the survival of everyone in society thus not only the survival of the woman but of the man, woman and child. Sexual identity leads to unequal distribution of power and resources. Womanism addresses issues of power among the sexes which is believed to result from the larger unequal distribution of power among the continents through neocolonialism.

Chapter two consists of reviewed literature on the approaches used by earlier women writers in the literary field. The researcher reviewed some of the general approaches used by female literary writers and scholars. Most works of these scholars identify with the predicaments of the African women. Their approaches highlight the situations women find themselves in and then create characters that grow out of such situations to independence. This they do by conveying their thoughts on issues of women. The kind of images and messages they convey is made clear to the reader through the way they use the language. Language helps the author to assert her own culture and themes towards the alternative representation of the woman.

Most female authors tackle issues of gender with different approaches. Gender which is a social construction of what constitutes femininity and masculinity has become an issue of concern in the works of most female writers over the years. This is because the story of the woman has been told for them for far too long by men who have misrepresented the life experiences of women in society. Thus women writers in their quest to correct the misrepresentations, write in resistance to these stereotypes by creating characters who come out of the shadow and who transcend the identity created for them by society. Carole Boyce Davies proposes an exercise termed *writing off marginality* which rejects the subordinations imposed on women and recognizes that women do not see themselves as marginalized but as fundamental to their societies. This implies that western ideas about the woman's marginality in Africa are incorrect because they categorize the woman as marginalized. Thus the redefinition of the woman's identity by the female writer is not just to correct the idea that the woman is not marginalized because before colonialism women such as Yaa Asantewa and queen mothers played vital roles in the political domain. They were not only relegated to the domestic sphere but were engaged in the governance and decision making processes which after independence was dominated mainly by the men. This is why it is inappropriate to analyze the works of women with the idea that it emanates from feminist consciousness. This forms the basis of argument for this research, that the woman writes beyond the domestic and transcends into the national thus raises womanist concerns which aims at the survival of all people and not just the woman. Thus the focus is on creating prosperous societies that will guarantee the thriving of the African man and woman.

Andrade (2002), proposed an alternative approach to studying women's work which suggests that the work of the woman be read as a part of the whole approach to the national issues. Thus their works are alternative narratives which deal with the same issues as the pre-existing narratives. Other approaches used by women writers to address issues of the

national take the form of engaging with the tradition thus they discuss the past in order to empower themselves in the present. Another approach is giving voice to the woman through their characters thus allowing them to make choices which society is not in support of but which makes them happy. They also resist challenges in marriage such as childbearing and other social practices such as widowhood rites and female genital mutilation which are detrimental to their health. In addition, they create the willful, strong, intelligent, independent and capable woman who fights laws of subordination and who fail their culture in order to be happy. This suggests that that for so long the woman has been unhappy due to subordination and limitations of society. When freed, society has a better chance of survival because the woman as deduced from the authors, has a lot to offer in building a better society, country and continent at large. What is important to the writers with the way they tackle societal issues is the need to liberate the woman from societal oppression so that she will be given equal opportunities to help in addressing the ills of society that retard development.

Darko is a female Ghanaian writer who feels inclined to write about the problems in her society, one of which is patriarchy and about its effect on the woman as an individual. She does not espouse the feminist title and states that it is inadequate to describe and address the issues of the African woman. Her experiences in and out of Ghana equip her to write. As compared to Ama Ata Aidoo, who is born into a family who supported her writing ambition from childhood, Darko realized her own desire to write while away from home. She juggles between traditional wifely duties and work to make time for writing. Her texts project the problems in society including poverty, streetism, migration, patriarchal oppressions of the woman and economic difficulties among others. Her aim is to empower the woman economically in order to liberate her from the shackles of oppression society put her in. Authors such as Aidoo and Emecheta portray education as the means through which the

woman can be liberated from oppression. Darko's texts propose economic independence as the means to liberate the woman. This she portrayed in the three texts studied through creating female protagonists such as Sekyiwa who tricked her husband by getting pregnant for him and leaving him no choice but to marry her. Through her husband she became financially established and powerful because of her money. Tika also became financially independent through her business by sleeping with the men in charge for favours to boost her business. Darko seems to suggest that it does not matter how morally unacceptable the means of acquiring wealth for the woman is, after all society does not accuse the man of moral deviance when he sleeps with so many women. What is important is what power she possesses by becoming economically independent. Which means not relying on the man for daily survival and that is enough.

By elucidating the problems in society such as poverty, streetism, environmental pollution and moral degeneration among others, Darko raises womanist concerns. Such problems raised affect not just the woman but the men and children as well. Humanity is bound to become extinct when these issues are not tackled. Poverty can lead to death just as how environmental degradation can cause an outbreak of diseases which might lead to death. By presenting these issues aside gender inequality in her texts, she causes readers to question and debate on such issues which raise awareness among her audience. Thus the issue of gender inequality cannot be tackled in isolation of these societal problems.

Moreover, in describing herself as a story teller who is inspired to write stories based on pertinent issues and who simply wants to be perceived as a voice, Darko allows her works to be qualified as raising womanist concerns. She distanced herself from radical feminism by stating that she has some reservations with regard to the use of feminism because it does not prevail in Africa. Nevertheless she portrays her belief in the ability of the woman to rise

to the highest level possible through education and gaining of economic independence. She deals with issues such as sexual inequality and oppression in the Ghanaian society. Darko's protagonists are females who fight for change and freedom from patriarchal oppressions in the midst of economic and social pressure. They possess such qualities as being fearless, capable of being independent and the courage to defy or compromise cultural values in order to rise to the top or achieve their aims.

The first idea created by Darko about women in her texts suggests that they do not take education seriously. Thus they do not invest in education for themselves or for their children in exception of Kabria. The images created by the author of the women in her texts show that the woman goes through a double fold of what the man goes through during economic crisis, war or political turmoil. Darko's characters act in accordance with her womanist aims. Thus they triumph challenges and change in their quest to survive in the patriarchal societies they find themselves in amidst economic and political instabilities. She projects her ideas of womanism mainly through the protagonists who are usually females in the three texts. However, it is important to state that the story of every helping character is as important as the main characters' story. Efia is the protagonist in *The Housemaid* who is projected as a victim to her grandmother and mother's plan to acquire wealth back into their family. She is introduced as an innocent and timid young girl who because of poverty has not been able to get education to a high level. The poverty situation in Kataso made going to the city and engaging in anything that brought money a great achievement. She is sent to Tika to help her out and get training in sewing/fashion. She realizes after she was caught by her madam Tika that she was lying about the father of her unborn child being Nsorwhe's, things will no longer hold. She flees with stolen money from Tika and sets off to abort her baby. She realized that she could no longer rely on her grandmother's plan to make it and so makes her own plan. She grows into a fearless woman who now makes decisions to her benefit.

Tika also matures to understand the situations surrounding the growth and maturity of a woman in a patriarchal society. Soaring higher meant compromising on your values especially on your sexuality and she, Tika could do nothing to change it. In Mara's case, she grows from an obedient, passive and timid person to an audacious and concerned person who is not afraid to seek help after all the abuse she went through with her husband and who becomes interested in change for the better. Mara's realization that the body Akobi was exploiting for money was hers and so she thought about turning the situation around to her benefit since it was proving impossible to come out of it. She made this known to Kaye and the response Kaye gives her in my opinion is the author's message to all those women who are still being subordinated by tradition and patriarchy. According to Kaye:

At last, Mara! You have woken up. I have been waiting for you to wake up by yourself. I could have woken you up, of course, but in this business, which operates in a world of its own and is far colder than the cold world outside, it is always better to wake up by yourself. Only then do you fight to remain awake because you know how difficult that waking up has been and what a long time and a lot of thinking it takes.
(p. 1119)

Thus it is important for the woman to wake up from the slumber of subordination but it is more important for her to wake up on her own and not through force or coercion. Mara seized the chance to free herself and she does this at the expense of her health and life since servicing more men than usual could have destroyed her 'capital'. She defied cultural impositions of a good and ideal wife which included persevering in marriage even if things were not working out, and which she held on to for all this while to become independent.

Kabria was presented as a wife and a mother who was working and overburdened with house duties and taking care of the family. However, unlike Mara she does not grow into womanist ideas, she was already independent and is not abused physically or exploited by her husband. She remains in her marriage and carries out her traditional responsibilities but is not passive as compared to Mara. Darko portrays the different categories of women in the various classes/statuses and how they react to societal subjugation. One category tries to accept it and find a way to adjust to it (the Kabrias) and the other category actively rejects and protests it usually after a long time of tolerance (the Maras). Also she portrays women such as Maa Tsuru who uses her curse as an excuse for all her misfortunes rather than taking charge of her own life and striving to make it better. These are the categories of women presented by the author. One common factor identified in these categories is the need for survival and being at peace with oneself. Also the indication of the intention to counteract patriarchal authority is evident in the characters of the female protagonists. For instance Mara uses prostitution as a means of acquiring independence from Akobi by wising up and not letting all the money she makes go to Akobi alone.

Darko fails to explore her male characters further as individuals beyond their traditional roles. Male characters in the texts have been portrayed as agents who perpetrate the patriarchal nature of things in society. Akobi is presented as a husband who beats his wife for no apparent reason and who exploits her to acquire money. The author projects some male characters as irresponsible and capable of inflicting pain on the woman. Kwei shows the concern to find work in order to be able to take care of Tsuru and her baby but got frustrated by the system of poverty in which he found himself. Kpakpo on the other hand shows no concern but rather exploits her and even convinces her to sell her daughter into prostitution after which he intercepts the envelopes which contain part of the money that Baby T earned out of prostitution. Adade unlike the other men does everything society

expects from a man who has a family but according to Kabria, he needs to be more than just a regular husband.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Darko is one of the Ghanaian female writers who rejects the term feminism, on the contrary, it is evident in her novels that she exhibits to some extent, features of a feminist which include radical advocacy for equal rights for the woman and portraying her as capable as the man. Thus in the end it is important to her that the woman be recognized as capable of succeeding in life. Also by allowing characters to speak for themselves and make decisions concerning their lives, she suggests that choices are what control our lives and not necessarily the fact that we are men or women. She criticizes the cultural system in the Ghanaian society. Traditionally, women are tasked with the role of nurturing children; however they have been enticed into exploitation by the desire for money and power. Thus they cannot be defined by the feminine features assigned to them by society. She creates a world of women that is dependent on material things to the extent that everything is commoditized for individual gain. Thus females have adopted the tools of their male oppressors in order to make life better. Darko's portrayal of women is in contradiction with the image created of the ideal African woman. However society is bound break down in this web of exploitation. What Darko suggests is establishing balance between self- fulfillment and concern for oneself on the one hand and interest for the woman through economic independence on the other.

Darko portrays mothers in the three novels as unable to easily attain independence from men. Thus Tika is economically independent but in order to keep her business running she must rely on men to do that. Mara although has attained independence from her husband, she must continue being another man's pawn in order to make a living. All these women lack education which make them unable to totally be free from men and poverty. Per her

conclusions, Darko suggests that the individuals welfare ought to be society's welfare thus she echoes the womanist idea that advocates for survival of the man, woman and child in all societies.

Darko's type of feminism when compared to other ideas of feminisms such as radical feminism has no political implications but deals with the dynamics of power relationships in gender. That is the quality of relationship between the man and woman in contemporary society amidst economic and political chaos. Her texts show the gendered relationships between men and women but goes beyond it to portray a womanist idea which supports the survival of men, women and children.

The researcher tried to establish the fact that the relationships among male and female characters in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*, *Faceless* and *The Housemaid* are gendered in the sense that the roles assigned to them are based on societal constructions of what constitutes femininity and masculinity. Also the researcher tried to establish that Darko raises womanist concerns by highlighting women's plight and ensuring the survival of men, women and children in society through solidarity. This is evident in the social concerns raised by Darko which includes moral degeneration, streetism, rape, migration and economic constraints that are important to the nation. Thus in the process of articulating her perspectives on women's issues she highlights the relationships between men and women and national issues.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Further studies should be conducted into African women writers. A womanist analysis could also be done of the major Ghanaian female authors to find out if they subscribe to the ethics of womanism. It is indisputable that most emerging feminism theories largely reflect womanist ideas. Hence further studies can be conducted to examine why this is so and how

womanism has influenced these ‘feminisms’. Also a comparative study of two or more female authors can be carried out to see the similarities and differences in how they raise womanist concerns in the works and the approaches they employ in doing so. In addition, more attention should be paid to the issue of intersectionality as a useful theory in examining the ways in which gender acts with other limitations in society to exacerbate the plight of women and men. Further studies may also concentrate on toxic masculinities in society which hinder the development of the entire society.



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