

Devirilizing Men through Women's Liberation in Modern African Societies: A Feminist Reading of Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*.

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Abstract: This article focuses on *Beyond the Horizon* (1995) the debut novel of the Ghanaian feminist Amma Darko. In this novel she makes a polemic analysis of patriarchal African traditional systems through the story of the chaotic life of an innocent and green village woman victim of the traditional systems of Naka her village. In this novel, Darko visualizes a certain disempowerment of men as solution against gender inequality and women's subjugation. This article aims at showing the necessity of cultural reconstruction for a peaceful relation between men and women. Examining, a special and valuable representation of female gender in modern African societies, the analysis concerns also the African feminism that articulates African women's sagacity and capacity to turn their oppression into opportunity.

Keywords: Africa, tradition, gender, feminism, changes, autonomy, revaluation, power

Résumé : cet article est basé sur le roman *Beyond the Horizon* de la féministe Ghanéenne Amma Darko. Il vise à montrer la nécessité de la reconstruction des valeurs culturelles en vue de créer la paix et l'harmonie dans les relations entre hommes et femmes en Afrique. Vu qu'il accorde de l'importance à la représentation de la femme dans les sociétés Africaines moderne, l'analyse concerne également le féminisme Africain une théorie qui met à la lumière la capacité et la sagesse des femmes Africaines qui savent se relever et se reconstruire.

Mots clés: Afrique, tradition, genre, féminisme, changement, autonomie, revalorisation, pouvoir

Introduction

Scientifically speaking, the virility is defined as the masculine property of being capable of procreation. In patriarchal African societies men's virility is not only perceived as their fertility, but also as the materialisation of their power, their capability and their responsibilities in both their community and their family. So socially and culturally, manhood is constructed as the status of responsibility, capability and authority. Tenure Ojaide opines about this notion of manhood in these terms:

The notions of manliness, manhood, or masculinity are not limited to being male by gender. Masculinity is a conglomerate of virtues and characteristics built around the traditional expectations of being a man and the glorification of virile values. These qualities, sometimes related to warrior virtues, are not only integral parts of the culture but are also often seen by the people as meeting established rules of behavior/conduct and action of men. (Ojaide, 2012, 123)

To be a man does not take only into account the fact of being biologically different from women. Is regarded as a man or a virile man, he who respects the cultural construction of manhood. The man who knows and fulfils his cultural tasks and responsibilities deserves to be called a virile man.

This masculine virility which is hermetically opposed to the question of gender equality is challenged in modern African societies. Indeed, men are losing their virility in contemporary African societies. Talking about men's devirilisation, I do not refer to their infertility but I rather refer to their disempowerment, their decline and their cultural devaluation. Independent African societies cope with a new challenge which denies men the monopoly of power. Men are losing their cultural attributes for new personality since they are face to new generation of women who reject discriminatory treatment.

As a fighter for justice and equality between men and women, Amma Darko makes a polemic and constructive analysis of gender relationship in *Beyond the Horizon*. She gives an important critic to the nature of the relation between men and women by shaping callous, heartless and rude male characters that become insignificant and weak at the end of the story in front of new born women ready to take control of their destiny. For Darko, the relation between men and women should not be focused on the notion of inferiority and mistreatment but rather on equality and reciprocal respect. Therefore, it is important to explore the following topic: "Devirilising Men and Women's Liberation in Modern African Societies: A Feminist Reading of Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*."

Amma Darko is sharp in the demonstration of the new image of genders in her writings. She is not alone in this demonstration of the necessity of gender equality. Ama Ata Aidoo does the same in *Changes* her love story and Tsitsi Dangarembga also shows the importance of gender equality in her debut novel *Nervous Conditions* through Tambu and her arrogant brother Nahmo. In order to be concrete in this analysis, it is important to answer the following questions: how does Darko articulate men's devirilisation in her fictional works? To which extent Darko's writings stand against gender inequality and foresee men's crumbling to women's profit? What does she intend through her drastic critics of patriarchal systems? For the solving of this problematic the analysis will be articulated around the following points: The Reversal of Social Roles, weakening African traditional systems: The end of men's power, Shattering the Wall of subordination and voicelessness and finally The Reconstruction of Cultural Systems. In this article it will be important to use the African feminism the theory that respects African values and stands for harmony and cooperation between men and women. This theory includes different branches that are Ogundipe-Leslie's Stiwanism which advocates for women's co-partnership in the transformation of Africa, Chikwenye Ogunyemi's African Womanism, Catherine Acholonu's Motherism, Obioma Nnaemeka's NegoFeminism and Chioma Opara's Femalism. Although all of these branches develop the same vision which is the revaluation of women's roles and efforts in the development of Africa, and the eradication of gender injustice and inequality in African societies through a deep socio-cultural reconstruction, each of these branches have a particularity. In order to be more accurate in the analysis, we will use Molar Leslie's Stiwanism. Indeed, Stiwanism stands for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa. It advocates the structures that oppress women and the way women react to this situation. By using Stiwanism in this paper we will unveil the great participation of women in the stability of their family and community through the notion of reversal. It will also permit us to point out the importance of cultural reconstruction including women. The aim in this article is to elucidate the necessity of the eradication of gender inequality for a harmonious and peaceful relation between men and women.

1- The Reversal of Social Roles

In many postcolonial African novels, there is a crucial change in gender relationship that reflects undoubtedly the reversal of social roles. As a virtual product of patriarchal systems of Akan tribe in Ghana and as a radical postcolonial feminist, Amma Darko draws our attention to the susceptible reversal of patriarchal roles in modern Ghanaian society. Far

from being an enemy of her traditional systems, she calls her fathers to a reconstruction of the systems. As said by Sanya Osha; “African feminism is not antagonistic to men but challenges them to be aware of those aspects of women’s subjugation which differ from the generalized oppression of all African people” (Osha, 2006, 17). Indeed, African feminism differs from Western feminism that regards the heterosexuality as an obstacle to women’s fulfilment.

Contrary to Western feminists, African feminists like Buchi Emecheta, Ama Ata Aidoo, Amma Darko, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Tsitsi Dangaremba to be short accuse men to be rude and selfish. In the writings of these brave women, there is the philosophy of gender complementarity. They show that men and women cannot be equal since biologically they are different and this natural difference will always exist. But the difference set through the socio-cultural systems should be reconsidered since like men, women can fulfil great tasks and contribute at the same level to the progress and the development of world. Therefore, as “a happy African feminist” (in her own words), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie opines that:

Today, we live in a vastly different world. The person more qualified to lead is not the physically stronger person. It is the more intelligent, the more knowledgeable, the more creative, more innovative. And there are no hormones for those attributes. A man is as likely as a woman to be intelligent, innovative, creative. We have evolved. But our ideas of gender have not evolved very much. (Adichie, 2014, 10)

For Adichie, both men and women have the capacity and competence to achieve important tasks for the development of Africa. So, the physical appearances and the biological differences should not be regarded in labour division or attribution of responsibilities. The most important element that should be taken into account is the intelligence. In other words, a responsibility must be given to a person that can fulfil it regardless gender. This vision of Adichie is the same of Amma Darko in her novel *Beyond the Horizon*. In her relation with Akobi, Mara is the breadwinner and the economic stream. She performs almost all the roles her husband should perform. For Darko, since women and men can perform the same roles, cultural favouritism must stop.

In Amma Darko’s writings, African manhood copes with a challenge that it cannot lift, and that leads it to an inevitable crumbling. In fact, Darko’s politics of women’s empowerment does not reflect the image of conflict resolution, but rather the image of reversal of socio-cultural roles in Ghanaian society. In other words, African manhood represents in Darko’s writings the isotope of irresponsibility, laziness, incompetence and passivity. Darko depicts the notion of changes in connection with women’s emancipation in modern African societies as the end of men’s power and as the era of women’s glorification.

This radicalism of Darko leads Leonard A. Koussouhon, Patrice A. Akogbeto and Ayodele A. Allagbe to argue that:

The four novels invariably treat women's issues and problems like exploitation, childlessness, womanhood, motherhood, abortion, sexuality, etc. (...). But while she does so, she subtly deconstructs patriarchy and overtly challenges its underlying sexist or androcentric ideologies. (Koussouhon et al, 2005, 321)

Through Koussouhon and his associates' opinion, Darko nourishes an anti-patriarchal ideology in her fiction. For Koussouhon, Darko deconstructs the social construction of manhood and womanhood. African manhood is set with the isotopes of power, courage, virility, resistance, consciousness and honour. But in Darko's writings, every male character is denied these notions of power, consciousness and virility at the beginning or at the end of the story, like the intellectual and irresponsible Akobi. Akobi is shaped at the beginning of the novel as a responsible and authoritarian man. He has got a decent job, he went home for a wife and he showed his wife that he is the indelible master. She works for him, she venerates him and he beats her anytime he wants. But at the end of the story, Akobi is turned into a mere object in women's hands. Darko materialises men's failure and disempowerment through Akobi's deportation in Africa

Leonard A. Koussouhon and his associates Patrice A. Akogbeto, Ayodele A. Allagbe are so intrigued by Darko's radicalism against patriarchal African systems that after the analysis of her four novels, they conclude: "Darko, in her four novels, tells the female side of the stories wherein the African womenfolk is given voice and equally celebrated. But while she does so, she subtly deconstructs patriarchy and overtly challenges its underlying sexist or androcentric ideologies" (Leonard A. Koussouhon, et al, 2005:321). Felicia Anning fosters this opinion by pointing out: "One would allege that *Faceless* lambasts men by hammering only the bad side of them and portrays them in a very bad light" (Anning, 2013, 84).

For these critics, Amma Darko regards men and their social systems as the villains and the responsible of women's suffering and disempowerment. They perceive in Darko's lines her categorical refusal to see any good aspects of manhood in African societies. According To them, Darko judges only one side of the matter and regards her sisters as the victims and the one who need protection. Although she does a hard analysis of gender relation in her works, Darko is not an anti male. She simply shows her indignation against women's oppression. In fact, Darko's fictional works are the symbolic representation of a society rooted in gender inequality and subjectivity. But she is not doing bad deconstruction of patriarchal systems nor

is she an enemy of men. As an African feminist, Darko simply calls men to put an end to their callousness towards women.

Another character that symbolizes the crumbling of man's power in Darko's fictional world is Adade the taciturn husband of Kabria. He is a real breadwinner and responsible as expected from every man in African cultures. But, he is turned into a dummy and passive being by Darko in order to highlight the indelible great social change in gender relationship with regard to women's emancipation. Unlike the historical African man Okonkwo of Chinua Achebe, Adade has no influence on his wife. She always succeeds in manipulating him for her personal profit even through provocation. This opinion about men's disempowerment is elucidated by the following sentence of the narrator:

When Adade saw his wife and her car, he prayed desperately for the earth to open up and swallow him whole. Kabria compounded his embarrassment by deliberately soliciting for more attention with her loud and gay hellos to all of Adade's co-workers (...). Her little coup d'état paid off. Adade came home that night with the required car paint. (Darko, 2003, 39-40)

This statement elucidates the influence or the power Kabria exerts on her husband. Although they are struggling for respect and consideration from their husbands, modern African women use blackmails most of the times to reach their target. They pass through pacific and rigid actions to keep the attention and the esteem of their partners. Kabria's method is the same method used by Comfort to dominate Akobi in *Beyond the Horizon*. And a few differently from Kabria, Comfort dominates Akobi through verbal violence as revealed in this sentence of Gitte: "It wasn't like that with Comfort at all. She had the power. She controls Cobby and shouts at him" (Darko, 1995, 124). Although he is nervous and aggressive, Akobi represents a pet for Comfort his girlfriend. She manipulates him like an object and imposes him her wills. In his relation with Comfort, Akobi is a woman.

Moreover, the devaluation of African manhood is not only set in men's association with illicit jobs and prostitution, but also in their dependence on women. Far from being the complete men who assume fully their responsibility in their community and in their household, some African men are the shame of masculinity. They hide their weakness in their aggressive attitudes towards women. Instead of being the breadwinners and protectors of their family as recommended in the cultural codes, men want women to take care of them. Darko decries this debasement of African manhood in *Beyond the Horizon* through the personality of Akobi. The narrator testifies Akobi's irresponsibility in this utterance:

Now listen to me, he resumed, from now on you will throw Mama Kiosk's rubbish away for her and she will pay you with foodstuffs and vegetables. And since that means you

need not go to the market often, I can also save by cutting down on the daily chop money I give you, you understand? (Darko, 1995, 11)

It is evident that instead of being a protector for his wife, Akobi flees his responsibilities and leaves them in Mara's hands. He compels. His attitude translates his irresponsibility and incapability to take care of his family. Mara is informed by her so called husband that she will never get his protection and sympathy as expected from a good husband. Akobi willingly rejects his attributes as African man by expecting Mara to work for other women and use the income of her services to take care of him.

In Darko's works, African men's attitudes no more work with their cultural attributes. Her first novel shows that challenge of African men through their union with Western women. According to Darko, Western women represent in the Diaspora the outlets for African men who are looking for protection and salvation. In their union with these women, African men lose their status of master and decision-making body. They share every role equally with them, even cooking, washing, and dressing of the bed. This sentence of the narrator elucidates African men's flexibility with the women of other country:

So Akobi, this my own dear husband Akobi who back home used to reproach me if I was a minute late with his food; who many a time landed me knocks on my forehead with his knuckles if I fetched him too little or too much water in the bowl for him to wash his hands before and after eating; this my very own Akobi it was who, upon his white wife's commands, trotted into the kitchen. Seconds later, the clattering of pans and spoons told me that he had commenced his assigned task. (Darko, 1995, 97)

In African culture, domestic chores are consigned to women. Cooking, washing clothes and dishes, dressing the bed, tidying the house and taking care of the children are culturally and traditionally women affair. Women are educated with this conception of job division and Akobi and Mara know this reality of their society. But, in Germany, for Gittes Akobi performs these women roles perfectly without any harm and without complaint. Thus, the tasks assigned to women somewhere are not natural since they are for both men and women in other areas.

Throughout Mara's personality, Darko translates the sad message of men's disempowerment. They have lost their identity in Africa and in Western lands since in the two spaces African men are all but responsible, masters, or breadwinners. Through this painting of African men, Darko denounces men's intolerable andocentric attitudes towards women. For Darko, men should regard women as their partners with whom they should be tender, conciliate and friendly. Contrary to Mawuli Adjei, I think that Darko is not an enemy of patriarchal systems but rather a resolutionary of the setbacks of these systems too starchy. She

can be regarded as a radical feminist, but I can say that she is a positive radical feminist since she just denounces injustice, favouritism and exploitation against female gender. A woman does not deserve to live Mara's life. It is heartless and selfish for a man to sell his wife to prostitution agencies for his personal projects. To be a man does not mean to be monster.

In African cultures, the complete man is he who performs the crucial roles for the running of the family. He is the indisputable owner of the house and able to take on his responsibilities. Any time a man fails his duties, he is automatically referred to as a woman like Okonkwo's father in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. This conception of maleness gives credence to Tanure Ojaide who asserts that:

The notions of manliness, manhood, or masculinity are not limited to being male by gender. Masculinity is a conglomerate of virtues and characteristics built around the traditional expectations of being a man and the glorification of virile values. These qualities, sometimes related to warrior virtues, are not only integral parts of the culture but are also often seen by the people as meeting established rules of behavior/conduct and action of men. (Ojaide, 2012, 123)

Thus, even in traditional systems, it is not sufficient to have the physical appearance of a man to be considered as such. One must be virile, strong, hard worker and capable to move beyond every challenge to make the difference between he and the presumed weak sex. However, that charisma is denied to male characters like Akobi in *Beyond the Horizon*.

The reversal of social roles that Darko develops in her works is not resumed to show the crisis of African man's identity, but it is extended to the materialization of women's power to take back their full corporal and psychological independence from men. In this situation of reversal, women are regarded as the only responsible for their destiny. They take care of themselves and of men also. They are not only the breadwinners but also the owners of the residences where they live with the family. To be short African manhood is all but dignity and responsibility in Darko's works. In addition to the reversal of social roles, *Beyond the Horizon* is opened to another point that is the target of the following point of this paper.

2- Weakening African traditional systems: The End of Men's power

In African societies, the core values of tradition are the traditional believes, the respect of elders and the sacredness of the family and community. There are many codes to be cited but to be short I prefer to mention the three elements above. These traditional values are crucial and represent the cornerstones of traditional systems. They were fully respected and protected by African people in the past. Indeed, the respect and the love people had for tradition were transmitted from generation to generation. But this transmission has virtually

lost its essence since for most of the modern Africans, these systems are just “Extravagant superstitions” (Darko, 1995, 102).

The traditional gods are the spirits of the ancestors and they are regarded as the intermediaries between God and human beings in African cultures. Regarded as such, everybody venerated them and testified them an unconditional love. However, these spirits are desecrated by modern Africans as shown by Amma Darko in her writings. They are portrayed and addressed by some characters as mere objects without importance. They think that their tradition cannot protect them nor can it permit them to take the right decision for their life. Darko unveils this blasphemy through the character of Mara. In fact, Mara’s refusal to behave decently as a real African woman deciphers the limit of the credibility of African gods for modern Africans. After embracing foreign values with their vices, Mara who venerated her gods, changes and starts regarding them as irrelevant believes.

For Mara the sad and shameful situation she lives in is due to the incapacity of her traditional gods to protect her. She unveils her indignation in this term: “As for the morals of life my mother brought me up by, I have cemented them with coal tar in my conscience. If the gods of Naka intended me to live by them, they should have made sure I was married to a man who loved me and who appreciated the values I was brought up with. I lived by these values until I could no longer do so” (Darko, 1995, 131). Mara has no consideration for her values now and she definitely rejects them for her full independence. Talking about traditional values here I refer to education, the respect of the sacredness of the body and the respect of the elders and the family. Mara does not care now with holiness of her body. All she wants now is to find her own way forever. This profanation of the traditional values by Mara not only shows the crumbling of African traditional values but also men’s debasement since the power of African manhood is set in traditional systems.

Darko is so drastic in her struggle of African women’s empowerment that her novels are perceived as a site of cultural depravation. Her characters move from verbal challenges and sexual blasphemy to demystification of their traditional gods. Her female characters except Naa Yomo and Kwei’s mother have no consideration for traditional values. In *Faceless* a novel published at a period of economic and political instability in Ghana, there is a fierce devaluation of Ghanaian gods and ancestors. And that devaluation is one of the most provocative for it is done through the voice of the old woman Naa Yomo a presumed cultural reproducer. In fact, the role of old women in African cultures includes many responsibilities such as the function of cultural instructors of the new generation. But here, Naa Yomo is in a

position that nearly denies her this responsibility. The following statement of the old woman elucidates her position about some traditional beliefs:

When the seed of a curse finds a fertile ground in a human mind, it spreads with the destructive speed of a creeping plant. And while it does, it nurtures superstition, which in turn eats into all reasoning abilities and the capability of facing responsibilities. The only reason why my six living children are all living in their bungalows is because, after the death of our fifth child, my husband, God bless his soul, stopped nurturing his superstitious mind and focused more on facing up to his responsibilities. (Darko, 1995, 120)

This statement shows clearly that Yomo does not believe in the power of curse in the life of a human being like Maa Tsuru. She rather regards this notion in African culture as a mere superstition and a pretext used by lazy people to flee their responsibility. For Yomo, curse is a mere invention and it can prevent no courageous and conscious being to work as hard and offer a stable and suitable living condition to his offspring. Through the voice of Naa Yomo, the cultural crumbling in modern African societies is shown as a real threat. Thus, if the speech of a dying woman or the words of ancestors have no effect then the ancestors themselves are turned into useless spirits on modern African lands.

Moreover, the failure of the appeasement of Baby T's soul, in spite of the perpetual sacrifices of fowls given to the ancestors by her killers, is another strategy used by Darko to show the crumbling of African gods. Indeed, socially constructed as powerful and competent elements in helping and protecting African people, ancestors' spirits are object of veneration and fulfilment of one's personality in Africa. Anytime they were called for help, they react by satisfying the demands done as denoted in *Things Fall Apart* through Ani the goddess of Yam that Igbo people worship for satisfactory harvest every year. But, in this era of modernization, incapacity and irrationality are the attributes of these gods in African literature. Their strategic inefficacy is perceptible in the incapacity of jujumen who are shaped in *Faceless* as crooks through the following remark of the narrator:

Jujumen are very crafty people. When they know very well they can't solve a particular problem, they simply slip into their list of demands, one demand almost impossible to obtain, not even with their intervention, and which they will almost certainly tell you that that was one item the gods will be offended to have converted to cash. You have to get it pronto in its original form! Period! (Darko, 2003, 215)

It concretizes the inexistence or the manipulation of holy spirits commonly called gods by African people. They are defined through the sentence as mere superstition that crooks use to swindle hopeless people. Darko goes forward in her belittlement of African gods by emphasizing their incapacity to liberate Maa Tsuru from her presumed curse in spite of the intervention of a redoubtable medicine man consulted by Kwei her husband. Thus, men are

not the unique characters that are disempowered in Darko's fiction. African gods that were recognized for their power are turned into ridiculous spirits incapable to protect their own children in danger. And this neutrality of gods' power is the manifestation of men's falling.

3- Shattering the Wall of Subordination and Voicelessness

In Amma Darko's writings, one of the main elements that are object of serious attacks is women's silence. Darko tackles this situation through Mara the main character in *Beyond the Horizon*. As an uneducated woman brought in town by Akobi a rude and so-called man of the ministry, Mara lives in the snare of silence. In such situation, she is identical to a prisoner in her body.

But according to Darko, this imprisonment of women engenders the raise of their consciousness. The demonstration of women's awakening from their nightmare is shown by Darko through their determination to claim their right to speak. Darko's female characters are determined to reverse the old situation and get the control of their own destiny. Mara's refusal to keep on whoring herself for Akobi and her decision to denounce him, are the strategic plan of her empowerment by the author. With her own voice Mara contributes to the change occurred in her life and becomes responsible of her destiny despite her uneducated status.

With her book *The Little Black Book of Success* Elaine Meryl Brown encourages women's to stand up and claim their liberty. This book is an ultimatum against silence and domination. The author shows her position in these utterances: "What you have to say is just as important as what others have to say. So speak up". This sentence gives self-reliance to women and encourages them to take the floor anytime the opportunity is given to them. She goes forward by saying that: "Stop mumbling. Open your mouth and speak (...). Don't let the cat get your tongue" (Brown, 2010, 25).

These statements of Elaine Meryl Brown are an encouragement to challenge the destructive African patriarchal norms that deny all rights of leadership to women. For Brown, like men, women must be given the liberty to speak anytime it is necessary. We can quote Helene Cixous the French radical feminist who has no sympathy for male power in her criticism. Amma Darko, Cixous and Brown have the same conception of women's empowerment. According to them, women's autonomy should be achieved through participation and self-reliance. The following sentence draws the link between Brown's vision, Cixous' and Amma Darko's vision: "Women should break out of the snare of silence. They shouldn't be connected into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem" (Cixous, 1975, 1094).

Cixous's argument stipulates the consciousness of some women who still accept to be reduced to mere object like Mara the main character and narrator in *Beyond the Horizon*. Mara is in Akobi's life as a breathing parcel. She has been given into marriage without her consent. And she didn't know Akobi before their union. For Cixous, silence is the first enemy of women, since it denies them their liberty and blossoming. Men use it to dominate women and prevent them to be decision making beings.

Another strategy Amma Darko uses to subvert men and give strength to her female characters in their struggle against voicelessness is narration. In *Beyond the Horizon*, the story is told by Mara a metamorphosed woman. Darko gives her the power to control the story and to express fully her opinion and feelings. In the system of the first-person narration, Mara leads the reader and exerts some effects or influence on him through the way she narrates the story. That is what Philomena Yeboah sustains when she says:

In *Beyond the Horizon*, the first-person narrative point of view is employed. Through the use of the first-person point of view, readers are made to view circumstances and events through the eyes and perceptions of Mara. (...). The constant use of personal pronouns such as 'I' and 'me' reinforces Mara's claim as the owner of the story. (Yeboah, 2012, 96)

In fact, through the first-person narration, Mara is shaped as the only controller of the story. She is given the power to control and manipulate both the story and the reader, since the reader cannot know the other elements of the story if Mara decides to silence them. In that position of the owner of the story, Mara is not a simple character that is participating to the story, but rather an autonomous character that controls the story.

Mawuli Adjei agrees with that opinion. Accordingly, he says: "Thus, within the framework of the first-person narrative, everything is seen subjectively through the eye of the 'I': the object, concepts, conceits, perception and beliefs which pass through the lenses of that eye are filtered through the idiosyncrasies of the 'I' " (Adjei, 2009, 49). Indeed, for Mawuli in the politic of the first-person narrative there is a question of centralization of power that is at the favour of the narrator.

With the politic of the first-person narration, Mara is released from her psychological torture caused by Akobi her husband. She no more feels any external or male authority like when she was married with Akobi. She is put at a position of great influence. The ways she uses, Kaye, the private detective and also Gitte the German wife of Akobi in her revenge against Akobi and Comfort elucidate her power and determination to take the control of her

life. Thus, beyond the ability to control the story and fulfil one's subjectivity, the role of first-person narration empowers the narrator.

4- Reconsidering The African Cultural systems

The traditional systems are at the genesis of gender conflict in patriarchal African societies. For a peaceful and harmonious gender relation, these traditional systems should be reconstructed by giving great interest to equality. For sure men and women are different, but this difference is simply biological. Apart from the biological difference, men and women have the same capacity and intelligence to assume great responsibility such as leading the family or the country. That is what Amma Darko shows in *Beyond the Horizon* through the personality of Mara who works hard to run her family in Ghana and who still assume parental responsibilities for her children in Germany. Contrary to Akobi who is culturally designed as the responsible of the family because he is a man, Mara has the charisma to take care of her family. She is as strong as a man and she is as intelligent as a man. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie opines about this difference between men and women in these terms: “A man is as likely as a woman to be intelligent, innovative, creative.” (Adichie, 2014, 10). Indeed, men and women are both human beings so they should have the same privileges and opportunities. Men and women are only biologically different but this difference should not be exaggerated to the extent to create disdain and inferiority in gender relation.

In West African societies, women's full integration in the social activities and their right to participate in decisions-making like men is at the centre of intellectual debates. Even the elders who have the responsibility to transmit the traditional values to the young generation are aware that things must change now. Nana Esi's grandmother in Aidoo's *Changes* claims changes when she says that: “Life on this earth needs not always be some human being gods and others being sacrificial animals” (Aidoo, 1995, 134). Indeed, men with their privileges and condescension are regarded as the gods that deserve respect, veneration and submission and women are the inferior beings or the animals that can be used to make an offering to a god. Through this assertion, the old woman denounces a great injustice set in gender relation and she claims a reorganization of traditional systems in African societies.

Like Aidoo who proposes a social reorganization through the voice of Nana, Darko demands equality and justice between men and women in *Beyond the Horizon*. For this reason, mama Kiosk an old woman who is aware of cultural values points out: “Your husband neglects you and yet demands respect and complete worship from you. That is not normal” (Darko, 1995, 13).

The necessity of a reorganization of African cultural systems is fully shared by the prolific Nigerian feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Therefore, in her essay ‘We Should All Be Feminist’, she asserts that:

“Gender matters everywhere in the world. And I would like today to ask that we should begin to dream about and plan for a different world. A fairer world. A world of happier men and happier women who are truer to themselves. And this is how to start: we must raise our daughters differently. We must also raise our sons differently” (Adichie, 2014, 13).

For Adichie, the solutions of gender conflicts reside in education one of the important cultural systems. She thinks that the social education of boys and girls should change. As she sustains in her essay, men and women should have the same treatment and privileges since they are equal beings in spite the biological difference. We should stop telling boys that they are the warriors and stronger than girls. We should stop telling boys that they are the masters and the protectors of the family. Girls also don’t need to see themselves as the weak sex and men’s servants. The old ways of education should change for a better life. That change is not impossible since “Culture does not make people. People make culture” (Adichie, 2014, 21). Since people make culture, it is great time people reconsider the social codes for justice and equality.

This is the point in *Beyond the Horizon*, people make culture. There is no culture without people therefore like races and ethnic groups there are many different cultures in world. The things that are considered as cultural values are the principles set by people and taught to their children from generation to generation. These principles become normal and natural at the end for people as they go through all of them without appeal. Darko denounces this cultural injustice through the reaction of the main character that thinks her husband Akobi is her god and the mistreatment and subordination she suffers from are natural and normal. At the beginning of the story, Mara thinks that her roles as Akobi’s wife and servant are normal simply because she has been taught to think so. African girls and boys should work and play together. They should be told to see each other as equal beings and accomplices.

Social reconstruction and gender equality for a harmonious and peaceful world is the message Amma Darko conveys through her debut novel *Beyond the Horizon*. She denounces the bestiality of some cruel men like Akobi and his friend Osey towards women. Far from being an enemy of her traditional values, she formally decries the way some men treat women as sacrificial goats. Even if she is radical in the stories, Darko still a committed writer for the solving of gender matters.

Conclusion

This paper was focused on the demeaning of African manhood in modern Ghanaian society. It examines three important points that reveal the collapse of men's supremacy. Indeed, in her fictional world, Amma Darko is in war against men and their egocentric systems that she regards as an obstacle to women's blossoming. For the Ghanaian woman feminist, African men are losing their identity by taking the place that is traditionally shaped to women's personality.

The reversal of social roles in Ghanaian society testifies the birth of new generation of African women who are committed to challenge the stereotypical image assigned to them by their fathers. In their families modern women are assigned many responsibilities today. The traditional code such as spirituality that fosters men's power in African societies is turned into derision. This bridge between humans and God is shaped as nonsense. This new situation in gender relationship gives women the opportunity to break the silence and raise their voice for equality. They are now on the breadwinners, the decision makers and the backbone of the family. This paper concludes that gender relationship can be better in African societies if the traditional codes are reconstructed since what men can do, women can do better.

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