

VILLAINS, VICTIMS AND VICTORS: A CHARACTER ANALYSIS OF AMMA DARKO'S WOMEN

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Abstract

Studies on Amma Darko's presentation of women suggest a retaliatory and sexist characterization because of the condescending circumstances her female characters find themselves. This critique, however, distorts the novelty she brings to the table with regards to the politics of female emancipation. Thus, drawing on postcolonial feminism, this paper explores the dynamism in character presentation in Darko's first four novels in order to show how she rethinks female subjectivities. Such a reading is important in the ways in which it provides a better appreciation of Darko's vision through character and characterisation and postcolonial feminisms.

Keywords: character, Darko, politics, postcolonial feminism, women

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Introduction

The revolutionary bid for representation in literary works as put forward by the female African writer has resulted in an unhappy romance between male and female characters and has also led to the creation of stereotypical images in the case of the woman. Azuike (2003) supports this claim when he states that the images of women in women's writings are representative of a people who will never amount to anything in a patriarchal society. He posits that early novels of Buchi Emecheta (*Second Class Citizen*, 1975; *The Bride Price*, 1976), Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966), Tsitsi Dagaremba's *Nervous Conditions* (1998), among others, are replete with stories of subjugation of women and their maltreatment. Their female characters are portrayed as victims of patriarchal systems (Chukwuma, 2007). These presentations thus prevent us from seeing the realities of women in African novels.

A look at the Ghanaian literary scene gives an indication of a few women writers and hence, debates about the woman in the Ghanaian context have been limited to Ama Ata Aidoo and Efua Sutherland. The advent of Amma Darko as a writer gives an alternative voice in the advocacy of sexual politics. Darko's novels represent a new way of writing from an existing tradition to new possibilities in themes. This is to say that Darko makes a cautious departure by subverting existing cultural representations of women in male literature.

Darko's novels have attracted lots of critical attention, most of which have focused on themes (Bungaro, 2007; Adjei, 2010; Asempasah & Sam, 2016; Ugwanyi, 2017; Oseghale & Ohiwerei, 2019). Studies on Darko's presentation of female characters suggest a changeless social order which leaves females as perpetual victims (Dako et al., 2006; Higgins, 2006; Awitor, 2013; Idowu, 2017; Nabutanyi, 2017); but there is a possibility that the changing society from pre-colonial times to date could have certain implications on the roles of women. To date, there has been no known comprehensive paper on the roles of women in Amma Darko's four novels: *Beyond the Horizon* (1995), *The Housemaid* (1998), *Faceless* (2003) and *Not Without Flowers* (2007). Such a paper is vital as it would provide an insight for a better appreciation of Darko's vision. Currently, there is the tendency in the literature on Darko that suggests that all her characters are victims of the patriarchal systems in which they find themselves (Adjei, 2010; Dako et al, 2006). Such views prevent us from seeing the complex reality of the women in Darko's novels. While the discourse of victimhood cannot be denied,

this paper will argue that such generalizations inadvertently conceal the differentia in character presentation that permeates the four novels.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate how Amma Darko, through her female characters, speaks against the patriarchal system and its modernized innovations. It also pays attention to the economic, social and cultural exigencies of their life situations; how they seek to exploit resources available to them and the extent to which they succeed or fail in such projects. The paper does an appraisal of the projection of women in a more holistic way, shifting the focus from victimhood to a fuller presentation of women's experiences. The paper is a feminist research that discloses distortions related to women's experiences and taken-for-granted sexist practices as highlighted in Darko's novels. It is also concerned with character and characterisation, and it focuses on the relationship between female characters, their roles in relation to their male counterparts and how they respond to situations. The paper uses four novels of the writer (*Beyond the Horizon* (1995), *Housemaid* (1998), *Faceless* (2003) and *Not Without Flowers* (2007)). The motivation for the selection is to investigate how Amma Darko's novels sustain the issue of sexual differences, gender relations; how they present a realistic picture of the woman and also traces her pattern of progression as a writer in the creation and development of her women. The paper is structured into six parts; the first part looks at the theoretical foundations of the paper while the second to fifth sections deal with the analysis of female characters in the four novels. The final section, which is the conclusion, summarizes the major arguments raised in the paper.

Theoretical lens

Postcolonial/Third world feminist movement arose from the gender history of colonialism. It is an exploration of issues at the intersection of colonialism and neo-colonialism with gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities in different contexts of women's lives, their subjectivities, work, sexuality and rights. Postcolonial feminists hold the view that feminist movements should address global issues like rape, incest, prostitution among others. They struggle against gender liberation within cultural settings rather than those posed by western colonizers. They contend that the racial, class and ethnic oppression relating to colonial experiences have marginalized women and that the woman suffers double jeopardy because of colonialist

policies and cultural dictates in the postcolonial society. They object to the portrayals of women of non-western societies as passive and voiceless victims as opposed to the portrayal of western women as modern and empowered.

The postcolonial/third world feminists believe that women have been reduced to stereotypes (virgins, whores, wives, homemakers etc.) and have therefore derived an identity by the system that oppresses them (Yew, 2002). This is to say that the identity of the woman, as a postcolonial subject, is constructed by her 'masters' (Habib, 2015). The postcolonial/third world feminist is thus concerned with the politics of othering, marginalization, subordinated subjectivity, colonialism and patriarchy.

More specifically, Spivak (2003) has argued that the everyday lives of many 'Third World' women are so complex and unsystematic that they cannot be known or represented in any straightforward way by the vocabulary of western critical theory. In this respect, the lived experiences of such women can be seen to present a crisis in the knowledge and understanding of Western women's critical theory (Hitchcock, 1999). For Spivak (2003), this crisis in knowledge highlights the ethical risks at stake when privileged intellectuals make political claims on behalf of oppressed groups. These risks include the danger that the voices, lives and struggles of 'Third world' women will be silenced and contained within the technical vocabulary of western critical theory. Such an awareness of the ethical risks involved in postcolonial theory is not merely self-defeating. Another crucial contribution to feminist thought that Spivak has made is the critique of western feminism, especially in the universalizing claim to speak for all women, regardless of differences in class, religion, culture, language or nationality. She insists that we must first unlearn the privileged systems of western knowledge that have indirectly served the interests of colonialism and neo-colonialism (Morton, 2003).

The postcolonial/third world feminist perspective seeks to carve out space for personal identity and political actions beyond the influence of sexist and Eurocentric ideologies, to underscore the double oppression suffered by women and how these ideologies devalue the idea of the woman. As a tool for interpretation, Postcolonial feminist theory deals with the woman as a 'cultural product' in time and space. It analyses injustices in every aspect of society regardless of the agents (Rukundwa, 2008). Postcolonial feminists do not engage in a discourse

of historical accusations, but a committed search and struggle for decolonization and liberation of the oppressed woman (Dube, 1997). The postcolonial feminist theory thus allows the paper to address the collective tragedies of women resulting from a multiplicity of factors ranging from socio-economic inequality, neocolonial exploitation and exploitative patriarchal systems that give rise to gendered relations (Dako et al., 2006).

Amma Darko's Women: Villains, Victims and Victors

This section illustrates the emerging pattern in Darko's style of character role assignments and how this pattern defeats the discourse of victimhood. A closer look at the roles Darko assigns her women reveal that her women fall into three categories: women who remain in the traditional scope of feminine roles (victims), women who are self-made; employers, owners (villains) and women who transcend their traditional roles to achieve self-accomplishment (victors).

Victims - Women Who Remain in the Traditional Scope

Traditionally, the woman is seen as a caregiver and a housewife who is primarily concerned with domestic roles: cooking, washing and cleaning. The experiences of marriage and motherhood are made to dominate the life and identity of women in Africa and therefore, women are left behind to man the home and children. African women and for that matter female characters in male African writings are modelled along these lines. Darko's craft seems to reveal that defining femininity in relation to marriage and motherhood is a way of domesticating the female body and also that such restrictions affect the self-worth of women. Thus, to rebel against these created lives, Darko artistically groups her women to show the progress that has come in the light of resistance.

The narrative in *Beyond the Horizon* gives an indication of the endemic nature of patriarchal conditioning in postcolonial Ghana. In *Beyond the Horizon*, Darko presents a female character, Mara, who transitions slowly from a naïve village girl to a vicious independent woman. The novel recounts Mara's ordeal as a woman who has been reduced to a mere slave. Despite Mara's complicity in her own predicament (Asempasah & Sam, 2016), the crux of her troubles is because of her socialisation beginning with the role played by her mother.

Mara's mother is an example of women who have internalized toxic patriarchal norms to a point where they are presumed to be conventional and have come to accept female denigration as true and natural. Mara's mother sees nothing illicit about arranged marriages, intimate partner abuses and other related subordinations. Her interactions with Mara show no hope of transformation as far as women's emancipation is concerned. Her firm belief in male dominance and her dubious conviction that a woman's primary purpose is to ensure a man's well-being attest to the fact that she is a victim of an age-long patriarchal history that continues to incapacitate any possibility of change. In fact, she considers them "good news" (4) which is an indication of no hope of conversion as far as women emancipation is concerned.

The experiences of Bibio, Tika and Efia in *The Housemaid* are also worth noting. *The Housemaid* is a story about two female protagonists; Tika and Efia who are represented as victims of sexist exploitations and abuse. Although some scholars argue that one of Darko's concern in *The Housemaid* is to emphasize the stereotype of women being their own enemies, citing the greedy plot of Efia's grandmother to dispossess Tika of her wealth (Ugwanyi, 2017), the paper argues that like Mara's mother in *Beyond the Horizon*, Efia's grandmother is an irreparable patriarchal product. She has internalized the backwardness of patriarchal oppression. Thus, she has almost become like the perpetrator which is why her malicious attempts at laying hands on Tika's money should be considered as the effects of patriarchal ideology.

It is also important to recognize that her perceptions about womanhood have been carefully re-shaped by her long-standing contact with patriarchy. She tells her granddaughter that "the woman you are going to live with is a rich but a wasted woman" (46). In other words, for Efia's grandmother, the woman is simply a womb and her worth defined by the productiveness or otherwise of it. It is therefore not surprising how she attempts to commercialize her granddaughter's womb for her selfish gains. Efia and her mother thus, become victims of the already victimized mother and grandmother.

Darko's *Faceless* illustrates the social ills that continue to rob women of their dignity and self-worth. Like the horror in the biblical and modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah, the women in Darko's *Faceless* are mostly vulnerable, emotionless and prejudiced due to the unequal economic distributions and social discrimination. Maa Tsuru and her children are

always at the mercy of street lords and they become shackled by their self-defeating convictions to remain silent in the face of oppression.

In *Not without Flowers*, Mena Penyin and Mena Kakra do not outgrow their traditional roles of having to stay at home. These co-wives together with Pesewa's wives were accustomed to a life of subservience since they consider childbearing crucial to female existence. Darko seems to suggest that although polygamy appears to mitigate the frustrations of childless women, the complexities as the crisis with Pesewa's wives show, succeed in devaluing female autonomy and independence. She stresses the painful need to recognize and accept polygamy and its related practices as a failed project in an HIV- prone African society today.

Villains-Self-Made Women

The term 'self-made' has been operationalized in this discussion to refer to women who are independent, self-employed and "capable" of determining what goes on in their everyday lives. An exploration of the characters in Darko's debut novel, *Beyond the Horizon*, reveals that Mama Kiosk, Madam Anaba, Gitte and Comfort are women who control their own affairs. In the case of Mama Kiosk, it is realized that she is very much aware of the inequalities that exist between the sexes and therefore makes a conscious effort to assert her individuality in the face of such discriminations. Her conversations with Mara indicate that every cultural demand made on the woman demands a reciprocal gain. In other words, for her, it is not so much the act of obedience to culture but the associative mutual deference that comes with it. Thus, her association with Mara stirs up self-consciousness on the part of the latter leading to her (Mara's) eventual freedom. The ministries woman, Comfort, is revealed as a character who is confident and someone with a forceful personality. Although we do not get to hear her voice in any interaction, we find that she is very scheming and will possibly not subject herself to any male-checks.

In *The Housemaid*, Darko attempts to reverse the patriarchal status of men by creating women who become co-opted in oppressive acts. The experiences of Sekyiwa and her daughter, Tika, Teacher and the grandmother indicate women who have control over their own lives and over the lives of their men as well. As the plot advances, we learn that:

Sekyiwa had become one of the wealthy market mummies. Young-looking male old-diggers began to vie for her attention. Her husband's libido was waning anyway, so she gave them good money; and they gave her good sex (18).

Sekyiwa's attitude of paying men for good sex is uncharacteristic of a traditional African woman. She more or less takes revenge on behalf of all sexually abused women by sexually exploiting the men in her life. Kabria and her colleagues at MUTE (*Faceless* and *Not Without Flowers*) provide a potential social support to the uncared for in the society. Although their life stories are not without issues, these women assist their fellows to interrogate the foundations of their subservience and through the use of radio-broadcasting, empower women to speak up for their liberation. To them, as Destine explains:

I feel that there is a gradual and persistent loss and erosion of our core self as a people, through the constant and consistent diminishing of the retention of our views about us. Our truth about our own selves is deliberately downplayed and made not to matter. These truths have been submerged and suffocated and taken over by the diluted versions of others about us. We are increasingly being made to psychologically view ourselves, as others want us to. Their truth about increasing becoming our versions of the truth about ourselves too... (216).

The aim of these women regarding the above extract is to affect and influence womenfolk into asserting their individuality in the face of oppressive acts in contemporary African cultures. These women oversee their very own lives; they disabuse their minds of any psychological toll that dogmatism could have on them and stand up to any ensuing challenge. Despite the difficulty in reconciling the pressures of work and family, Kabria and her colleagues are strategically self-motivated to face these challenges.

Victors - Women Who Transcend the Traditional Scope to Self –Accomplishment

The woman in the 21st century is not without challenges although she is perceived to have risen above certain cultural restrictions. In Darko's novels, we discover a traceable development of her women from a state of naivety to a state of self-awareness; the women graduate from their

hopelessness and misery to be self-assertive and free individuals who are no longer under the grips of male and cultural manipulations. This section of the paper analyses the transformations that manifest in the lives of Darko's women. In *Beyond the Horizon* (BH), Mara tries very hard to play a good wife to her husband, Akobi. Even though Mara knew that not all men made wrecks of their wives, she obediently submitted herself to the inhuman treatment given to her by her husband and the passive role she has to assume in the home. As a wife, it was all about total submissiveness. Mara could not stage any resistance against her husband's orders or in the least of all engage him in confrontations.

I stared at him. 'I refused to work for Mama Kiosk? I asked.

Shut up!' he roared, landing me a slap on one cheek. I scurried into one corner and slumped on the floor ...I understood the world no more. '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...I can save by cutting down on the daily chop money I give you, you understand?

Yes, I replied shaking all over (11).

In another instance, we find Mara still playing 'Yes- Sir –Boss'.

Mara', he called me one afternoon, 'from now on I don't want you to leave in the mornings for the station together with Mama Kiosk. I protested feebly 'why?'

'Because I say so', he replied with a cool defiance, 'and who taught you to put whys to my orders?' anxious to avoid another quarrel, I replied weakly, 'all right (24).

Mara was unable to challenge and confront the source of her humiliations; she refuses to see blue as red and therefore played along for the sake of 'peace'. Her primary concern was for the sustenance of her marriage and, therefore she deliberately refused to outgrow her 'greenness' in spite of the role played by Mama Kiosk. Nonetheless, Mara begins to appreciate Mama Kiosk's concerns when she finds herself in the German brothel with the presence of Kaye. Apparently, Mara's gradual arrival at self-consciousness may be largely attributed to the geographical change. Back in the city, Mara could not reconcile Mama Kiosk's concern with her realities.

Perhaps, it was difficult for her because Mama Kiosk was without a husband and therefore was possibly imagining things.

That notwithstanding, Mara eventually wakes up from her slumber:

Initially, I kept these thoughts to myself, but one morning I made them known to Kaye. To my surprise, she exclaimed, 'at last, Mara! You have woken up. I have been waiting for you to wake 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 by yourself...' It means you are a fool and now are less a fool. Get me? (119)

Mara, Vivian and Kaye come to terms with the essence of self-priority. These women are transformed from their traditional roles into broadminded or mature individuals who are able to see and appreciate the dynamics of modern-day womanhood. While it is true that the geographical or spatial change is metamorphic for Mara's growth in awareness and consciousness, it will be wrong to assume that her metamorphosis entails total positivity considering her eventual loss of dignity as an African woman.

In *The Housemaid*, we see young Tika, who is innocently robbed of any motherly care simply because her mother needed to make more money. At a ripe age of 35 years, Tika is unexpectedly single and barren due to the reckless life she led in her youth. Tika was brought up to believe that money is everything, that marriage is fundamental in a woman's life and that a woman's success is by far dependent on her ability to reproduce. Tika tries to fit into such 'idealized' descriptions of womanhood. The idea of getting a housemaid, holding business meetings in her bedroom and getting increasingly money-minded was for her a way of escaping societal criticism. However, the unfolding event of the conspiracy against her by Efi's family compels her to gradually outgrow her frustrations.

Like the business discussions I used to hold in my bedroom!' and she burst out laughing and crying at the same time. Teacher joined in and, together, they laughed and cried, laughing and crying away their pain, their disappointment, their anger, their fear. And laughing with hope. (107)

The semantics of 'hope' as used in the above extract gives us a sense of growth and possibility of arriving at a set goal. Efia and Tika may grandly qualify as victims of some parental manipulations. However, the recognition of their apparent flaws and failures and their attempts to make amends suggest an obvious development in their character. Although these women were viewed as second-class citizens, their ambition to rise up was neither dimmed by motherhood nor childbearing. These women used their bodies to fight against their abusers and deployed their corporeality to reconstitute their subjectivity in the aftermath of the violence in the novels. It is worth noting that the search for personhood for these women becomes very vital.

The Development of Darko's Women

This section explores the techniques Darko employs in growing her characters. It discusses among other things, Darko's use of dialogue, space and occupation to suggest a possible growth from naivety to self-awareness. To draw attention to the apparent growth of her female characters, Darko employs the use of dialogue in her novels. When we first meet Mara and Mama Kiosk (in BH) and the latter is apparently looking for someone to assist her throw her rubbish away:

'You are the new tenant here?' she said. Yes, I replied

'.... You want work now? 'Yes, if there is work? Now? Are you going to the rubbish dump?

'Yes', I replied she was standing where I left her when I returned. I gave her, her baggage can and turned to go.

'Hey,' she called, surprised, 'you are truly a greenhorn, you know.' ...do you work for free in the village? She asked derisively. But I still could not get what she was hinting at and continued to stare at her.' (10)

Mara's innocence of city life and her apparent naivety of the hard circumstances that abound in the city is evident. At this point, she made no meaning of being referred to as a 'greenhorn' and probably did not understand the cues Mama Kiosk intended. After Akobi manhandles her for

earning an income (gaining foodstuffs for throwing away rubbish) to run the home, Mara practically begins to see Mama Kiosk's presence as a negative intrusion:

Hey, I saw your ministries man in a new embroidery shirt,' she said once. 'Yes, he bought it yesterday. Isn't it beautiful?' I replied with pride.

'And what did he buy for you? Mama Kiosk asked. 'Nothing,' I replied. 'Should he have?

... Because he is man, but a bad husband ... 'Men buy for themselves, Mara, there's no law that says they shouldn't. But they buy for their wives too, Mara. And there's no law that says they must. You have never peeled these clothes off since you came here, except on Saturdays to wash them. And you call that normal? 'I must say that Mama Kiosk nearly convinced me at this point ...but still I wasn't going to let Mama Kiosk spoil my marriage for me so I said, 'Mama Kiosk, I probably have eyes to blue where you see red. But I would still not exchange my eyes for yours. I like my eyes as they are. (BH, 13-14, emphasis mine)

Despite Mara's initial unwillingness to fully commit to the idea of self-independence, she later acknowledges this need when she encounters Kaye in Germany. While their relationship (Mara and Mama Kiosk) begins to breed some degree of consciousness in Mara's dealings with Akobi; the marked difference between these two characters as is communicated by their conversations helps us to trace the gradual development of Mara; a woman who must create and express herself and her thought in order to feel fulfilled. The relationship between Mama Kiosk and Mara becomes a means of re-orientation, re-education and re-awakening of the ideals of womanhood and wifeness. It is worth noting that before Kaye's concluding role with regard to Mara's development, her association with Gitte and Vivian was also very instrumental in her eventual awakening. Mara finally wakes up to reality - she no longer had reason to remain obstinate.

At last, Mara! You have woken up. I have been waiting for you to wake up by yourself. I could have woken you 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 by yourself' (BH, 119, emphasis mine)

In *The Housemaid*, we again witness the effective use of dialogue in character development. Efia, Maame Amoakona's daughter, is engaged in a conversation with her mother and grandmother. In this interaction, Efia has been imbued with toxic beliefs about ideal womanhood:

The old lady seemed to be proving how mad she was. She turned to Efia, listen!

The woman you are going to stay with is rich but wasted woman.'

'Mother!

'A very wasted woman' 'mother please!'

'An unproductive womb is bad enough. But no womb at all? And this is what she is. (46)

Efia is being taught to think of womanhood and motherhood as synonymous, which is why Tika's childlessness is considered a great failure. Back at Tika's home, we realize that Efia stops at nothing to achieve her aim and that of her family's. She cleverly lures her madam's men and yet pretends to be very resourceful. We notice also how the turn of events complicates her worldview as she finally abandons what should have been her gold mine (baby) when the diabolic scheme fails. Teacher's contribution to Efia's development cannot be overemphasized:

Teacher digested what she had heard and explained to Efia that she had to give herself up. Efia agreed.

And as soon as dawn breaks, I'll also go and see Tika, tell her everything and beg her to forgive you.

Efia smiled skeptically, 'Would she? (104)

In *Not Without Flowers*, Aggie is able to settle the happenings in her life. Earlier in the novel, we realize that she felt hunted by the nemesis game until the story of her father's plagued leg. She begins to trace the root of her problems; she realizes that Teacher who came to her parents as a tutor had an intended mission other than helping Pa to Christ. Her conversation with Cora also revealed the parallel in her past life and that of the present and consequently suggesting the growth that has come to her.

... Aggie landed. 'What do you want with me?' She asked Cora, 'what do you want from my mother? Do you want something from my father?'

Cora replied lowly, 'yes.' And smiled wryly. '... What? She asked Cora

... Cora had apparently returned and begun following her quietly while she headed toward the gate and her mind on the story of the unfaithful husband. Fear gripped her. She hadn't even sensed Cora behind her. '... You will hear from me sooner than later. Don't worry. I know you love your father. I love mine too. But he died. Did I tell that?'

Aggie's spine froze. 'No!' (315).

This interaction helps Aggie to know the source of her stress and frustrations. The use of dialogue between these female characters helps to illuminate the growth that comes to them in their search for personhood. It also helps to give the voiceless a voice (in the case of Mara). Dialogue is thus a technique that Darko uses to enable the subaltern to speak.

Another way Darko ensures the growth of her female characters is through the use of occupation or character vocation/profession. In the beginning, Mara gets strictly tied to her traditional gender roles; as a wife, Mara tried everything in her power to meet the social expectations of what she had been called into and thinking little of her self-worth. Her job as a boiled egg hawker does not give her the means to stand up to her husband's beatings even though it allowed her to put food on his table. Mara's new job as a prostitute is however liberating. Although Mara, Kaye, Vivian (in *Beyond the Horizon*), Efia and the remaining returnees in *The Housemaid*, become willing victims as they take to prostitution to assert their individuality, it is important to note that the choice to be in prostitution becomes a choice for freedom. Here, no room is made for any sexual manipulations. This is because the vagina becomes more or less an economic resource for these women and therefore issues of erotic pleasure are dismissed. Her job as a prostitute equips her with the needed tools which enable her to get back at her oppressor (her husband) and finally becomes independent.

A newfound tool for unravelling mysteries and telling the untold stories of yet an 'unreached' people is the importance of the media. The media is used in Darko's novels to reveal the progress of women's liberation as women exploit this medium to prove their

innocence in the light of the growing cultural accusations. MUTE is an acronym of a Non-Governmental Organization whose mandate is to gather and document fringe information and distorted images of womanhood and femininity. The women who work with MUTE have the desire to mediate the gradual and persistent loss and erosion of the core of womanhood. The point to note is that these women are not without challenges; Aggie is childless after many years of marriage, Dina, the founder, is divorced and so is Vicky (spinster) and Kabria (married with four children) but the choice to stand up against these challenges through the power of the radio is a signification of development. The acronym, MUTE (which means silence, voiceless, unspeaking, speechless, quiet among others) is thus, a paradox which is intended to alert society of the new times as far as breaking norms and stereotypes are concerned. It also a medium of re-orienting women to confront, rather boldly, their life circumstances without recourse to cultural conventions. In *The Housemaid*, Teacher is modelled as 'a connection woman' who brings girls from the village to experience city life. The idea of 'a teacher' as a person who enlightens people by bringing them to a certain truth or awareness is Amma Darko's way of raising female consciousness and creating opportunities for them to rise above inferiorities and this is reflected in the improved lifestyles of the returnees.

Another way through which Darko establishes the growth of her women is through the use of space. Space in the context of this paper has a dual reference—geographical space and mental space. Geographical space is realized when there is a migration from one environment/location to another and mental space, on the other hand, refers to domains of 'backstage cognition' and abstract mental construct that are generally set up on basis of scenarios (Fauconnier, 1994). They are mental constructs of potential realities dynamically prompted as a person listens to a string of speeches or reads a text. The peculiarity of mental spaces lies in the fact that they construct potential realities rather than perfect mirrors of the world. They are also selective cognitive configurations of domains of existence. In other words, the individual is able to appreciate a certain truth in relation to a particular scenario as perceived, imagined, remembered, or otherwise understood.

In *Beyond the Horizon*, Mara is not able to appreciate the concerns of Mama Kiosk despite the continued dialogue that ensued between them. However, after Mara finds herself in

Germany where she is required to pretend to be the sister of her own husband, she is forewarned by her past interactions with Mama Kiosk which was been reiterated in Vivian words:

You are green, Mara, she said at last.

Mama Kiosk said that too, I replied sarcastically. And Oseytoo. (88)

Darko exploits the use of such mental spaces in terms of changes in attitude and consciousness to bring her heroine to appreciate herself-worth. These moments of epiphany are also to register growth. In *Not Without Flowers*, Aggie, Idan's wife, is also able to resolve her supposed 'karma' as she is led to unravel the truth with the help of Destine and Cora in the game of Nemesis. Drawing closer to the end of the story, Aggie is able to play back her exploits with Pa and how her excessive demands on Pa breaks the foundations of his family. Until the arrival of Destine at MUTE, Aggie could not think of any possible consequence that could catch up with her.

Aggie was nervous and daunted. 'Did my children tell you what I was looking for?' Ma asked suddenly.

'No', Aggie replied lowly. Ma smiled a little. 'I should think they wouldn't because they also don't know. How is your marriage?'

A pained look crept into Aggie's eyes. '... The footprints you left on my family and on this household were flagrant and treacherous. I shed so many tears over you and uttered a prayer to every force out there every night. Do you know the prayer I prayed? That wherever you were, should the Lord one day show mercy on you and bless you with a man who would desire to make a wife of...' 'Aggie began to tremble'. 'Flower,' Ma called when Aggie was almost in the doorway.

'Aggie nearly toppled over. She began to cry (165-7).

The picture Ma paints on Aggie's mind shows the gravity of the effect her association with Pa might have caused his family and as well reconciled Idan's infidelity as a pay back.

Conclusion

The paper sought to show the differentia in character presentation that permeates the four novels of Amma Darko. It has shown that Darko's women are not always victims; that they

starve off victimization by becoming co-opted in oppressive acts. Her female characters assert their individuality and recreate their identities in a complex society through the pragmatics of dialogue, character vocation (power of the media) and character associations. The paper has also discussed the roles that are assigned women in each of the four novels and has exemplified how this character role assignment differs from novel to novel. This paper paid attention to the ways in which Darko develops her women as well as how the emerging pattern in her style of creating characters differ from the perceived order.

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