



SAFARA

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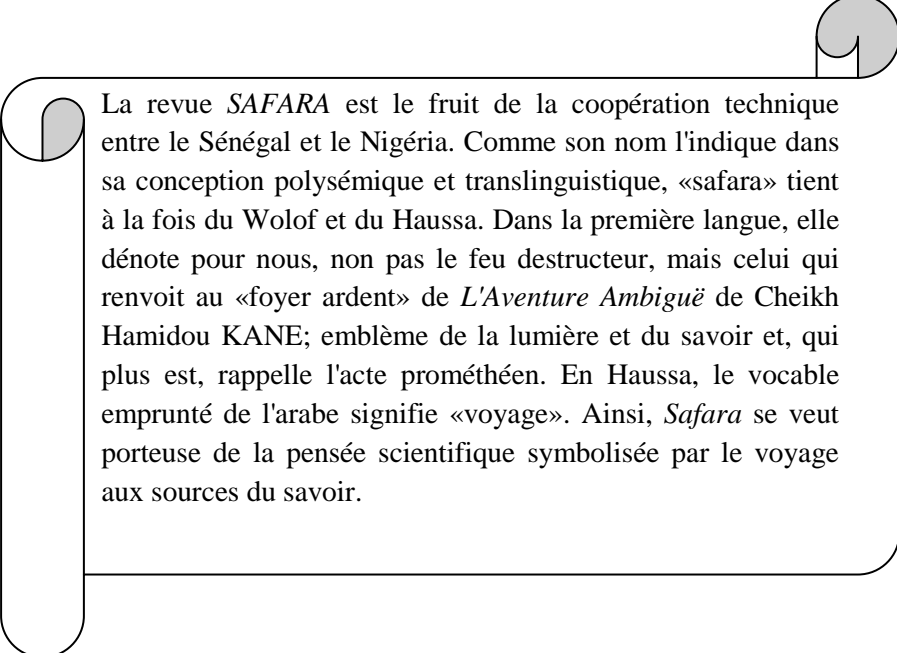
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La revue *SAFARA* est le fruit de la coopération technique entre le Sénégal et le Nigéria. Comme son nom l'indique dans sa conception polysémique et translinguistique, «safara» tient à la fois du Wolof et du Haussa. Dans la première langue, elle dénote pour nous, non pas le feu destructeur, mais celui qui renvoie au «foyer ardent» de *L'Aventure Ambiguë* de Cheikh Hamidou KANE; emblème de la lumière et du savoir et, qui plus est, rappelle l'acte prométhéen. En Haussa, le vocable emprunté de l'arabe signifie «voyage». Ainsi, *Safara* se veut porteuse de la pensée scientifique symbolisée par le voyage aux sources du savoir.

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Misandry In Amma Darko's *The Housemaid*

Célestin GBAGUIDI*

Abstract

Amma Darko's The Housemaid is an attempt to free women from male ascendancy by giving power to the so-called weaker sex. It demolishes the patriarchal social and cultural structures that prevail in literature by male writers. Amma Darko's second novel focuses on female characters taking the lead in society whereas male characters are viewed as grotesque, irresponsible companions. The purpose of this paper is to show how Darko's The Housemaid is a reaction to the social injustice inflicted upon women in literature by male writers.

Keywords: *misandry – male writers – female writers – prejudice – responsibility – self-assertion*

Résumé

Le roman The Housemaid de Amma Darko est une analyse visant à libérer la gente féminine de la domination masculine en responsabilisant la femme. Cette œuvre romanesque bat en brèche le système patriarcal et culturel véhiculé par les romanciers. Dans le deuxième roman d'Amma Darko, les personnages de sexe féminin jouent des rôles prédominants dans la société et ceux masculins se révèlent des compagnons monstrueux et irresponsables.

Cet article vise à démontrer en quoi The Housemaid de Darko est une réplique à l'injustice sociale que subissent les femmes dans les œuvres littéraires écrites par les hommes.

Mots clés : *misandrie – romanciers – romancières – préjugés – responsabilité – affirmation de soi.*

Introduction

Most of societies in Africa South of the Sahara are characterised by a social system in which men are seen as holders of authority in the family and society. In African society, power and possessions are passed on from father to male children. As Jérôme Kra Koffi rightfully puts it,

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if we take time to look closely at the way the community is ruled, we quickly come to the conclusion that it is the male dominated values that prevails. The society is then ruled according to the desires of its male members.¹

In this vein, women and girls are relegated to a position of secondary importance; they are ‘second-class citizens’². Women and girls are assigned such roles as those of housekeepers, wives, child-bearers, and caretakers, to name only a few. In the light of the foregoing, social life is based on “the principle of male success to the detriment of the females”³. Castigating the social injustice inflicted on the female sex, Kra Koffi adds that the woman’s

main activities involve cooking, taking care of the husband and children and on top of it all, bearing children. To send a girl to school is just to give her the necessary tools (reading – writing and counting) to become a good wife and mother.⁴

The fair sex is then subjected to oppression, discrimination, exploitation, and violence, and frequently obliged to swallow the male sex’s diktat or rulings. However, since literature appears as the reflection of what happens in society, Carole B. Davies accurately points out that, in novels by male writers, African women are pigeonholed as “foolish virgin”, the “femme fatale” and the “matron”.⁵ As can be seen, boys are preferred to girls regarding schooling in the African social and structural system.⁶ Facing such a situation, some African female scholars⁷ have

¹ Jérôme Kra Koffi, “The Problematic of Gender and Racial Discrimination in Buchi Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen*,” in *Particip’Action: Revue Interfricain de Littérature, Linguistique et Philosophie* (Lomé: Imprimerie ST. Louis, Volume 5, N°1 Janvier 2013), p. 79.

² To refer to the title of one of Buchi Emecheta’s novels [*Second-Class Citizen*, (London: Allison and Busby, 1976)]

³ Jérôme Kra Koffi, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁵ Carole Boyce Davies, “Maidens, Mistresses and Matrons: Feminine Images in Selected Soyinka Works” in Davies Carole Boyce and Graves A. A. (eds.) *Ngambika Studies of Women in Africa* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 1986), pp. 75-88.

⁶ In Buchi Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen*, the parents of the male character named Boy would rather he went to school than his elder sister Adah. This gender discrimination also prevails in Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God* when Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of Ulu, has to send one of his kids to the white man’s school, he sets his heart on Oduche, his youngest son, to learn the white man’s ways.

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stood up against such a blatant 'social injustice' and thus are changing drastically the socially established order by putting female characters in the forefront of initiatives in their creative writings. In this regard, Jérôme Kra Koffi points out:

Consequently, the social construction of a new reality called gender appeared in many African literary works that reduce these female characters to poor or second-ary [sic.] positions. This conception, which for long stood as the norm got violated recently by some female writers whose approach to the reality of gender is far different from the one pictured in male writers' novels.⁸

Comparing Western feminist literature with African women novelists, Katherine Frank writes that while:

our [Western] heroine slams the door on her domestic prison, journeys out into the great world, slays the dragon of her patriarchal society, and triumphantly discovers the grail of feminism by 'finding herself,' in the African feminist novel, women do not only share responsibilities with men but also engineer 'a destiny of their own ... a destiny of vengeance.'⁹

Mawuli Adjei, a Ghanaian scholar, makes the same point about African feminist writers' commitment when he writes,

A noticeable trend in feminist African literature today appears to be radical separatist feminism. Radical feminism is that branch of feminism which questions why women must adopt certain roles based on their biology, just as it questions why men adopt certain other roles based on theirs.¹⁰

Amma Darko, a Ghanaian female novelist, is among such African feminist scholars who are striving to put right the 'wrong' caused to the female sex by a

⁷ Indeed, Ama Ata Aidoo, Aminata Sow Fall, Mariama Ba, Zeynab Alkali, Amma Darko, Buchi Emecheta, and Calixthe Beyala fall within this category of African women writers presenting the male sex as "*the enemy, the exploiter and oppressor.*" Refer to Katherine Frank, "Women Without Men: The Feminist Novel in Africa" in Durosimi, E., et al. (ed.) *Women in African Literature Today* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 1987), p. 14.

⁸ Jérôme Kra Koffi, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁹ Katherine Frank, "Women Without Men: The Feminist Novel in Africa" in Durosimi, E., et al. (ed.) *Women in African Literature Today* (Trenton, NJ: African World Press, 1987), pp. 14-15.

¹⁰ Mawuli Adjei, "Male-bashing and Narrative Subjectivity in Amma Darko's First Three Novels" in *SKASE Journal of Literary Studies* [online], 2009, vol. 1 n° 1, p. 47.

misogynistic society to such an extent that some African feminist writers appear misandrous in their novels. In this wake, Mawuli Adjei rightfully points out that Amma Darko endeavours to “present and contest the culture of patriarchy. In her works, women are victims of rape, battery, betrayal, abandonment by irresponsible husbands, economic exploitation and obnoxious cultural practices”.¹¹ Likewise, Louise Zak points out that Amma Darko’s novels tackle “the injustices of patriarchal society...”¹²

This paper investigates how Amma Darko emphatically draws such a bleak picture of most male characters in her novel *The Housemaid* that she may elicit anger from the male readership. In an analysis of male bashing in literature, Allan Johnson points out :

Accusations of male bashing and man hating work to discredit feminism because people often confuse men as individuals with men as a dominant and privileged category of people. Given the reality of women's oppression, male privilege, and some men's enforcement of both, it's hardly surprising that EVERY woman should have moments when she resents or even 'hates' men.¹³

1. Spurious accusation against male characters

In the *Oxford Dictionaries*, one can read that ‘misandry’ is a “dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against men (i.e. the male sex)”.¹⁴ Seen from that point of view, most of the female characters in Amma Darko’s *The Housemaid* (1998) show blatant hatred toward the male sex. In this regard, Darko’s writing falls into radical feminism, which is “that brand of feminism which questions why women must adopt certain roles based on their biology, just as it questions why

¹¹ *Idem.*

¹² Louise Allen Zak, “Amma Darko: Writing Her Own Way, Creating a New Life” in Vincent O. Odamtten (ed.), *Broadening the Horizon: Critical Introductions to Amma Darko* (Banbury: Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited, 2007), p. 12.

¹³ Allan Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling our Patriarchal Legacy*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), p. 107

¹⁴ *Oxford Dictionaries: The World's Most Trusted Dictionaries*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2013.

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men adopt certain other roles based on theirs".¹⁵ Undoubtedly, there is some sort of "male-bashing"¹⁶ in Darko's *The Housemaid*.

Indeed, the woman, who delivers her baby only to get rid of it into the rubbish heap, must be severely punished no matter her motivating force. It is clear as daylight that a woman who keeps a foetus, then a baby for nine months, is bound to develop motherly love toward her newborn baby. In other words, because the baby has stayed in the womb of its mother for quite a time, there is a tender intimacy between it and the mother. The umbilical cord that links the foetus to the mother generates a very tight relationship between the mother and the 'coming into being'. Hence, it is beyond all understanding that a woman who has gone through all this should end up dumping the 'fruit of love' in the bush and sometimes in the rainwater channels. To direct a scathing attack on such a gruesome attitude from some women, a nameless taxi driver in Darko's *The Housemaid*, rightfully wonders: "The issue is why she should deliver a baby and dump her in the thicket".¹⁷ It stands to reason that the woman, who has committed such an infanticide, should face a murder charge.

Unfortunately, some misandrous female characters, in Amma Darko's second novel, turn a blind eye to the horrifying crime committed by their female peers laying all the blame on the male sex. The misandrous attitude of a woman tomato-seller in *The Housemaid*, sounds as follows:

I can see you two young men turning out just like the irresponsible man who impregnated the poor woman in the first place You holy fool! ... You think the mother just sat there, opened her legs, and God above pushed the baby into her or what? Why do you men always try to make nonsense of issues, just to escape blame? (pp. 6-7)

It appears that the woman tomato seller buries her head in the sand instead of blaming the offender as the latter belong to the female sex, that is hers. The woman

¹⁵ Mawuli Adjei, "Male-bashing and Narrative Subjectivity in Amma Darko's First Three Novels" in *SKASE Journal of Literary Studies* [online], 2009, vol. 1 n° 1

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁷ Amma Darko, *The Housemaid* (Edinburg: Heinemann, 1998) p. 7. Further page references to the same edition will be made directly in the text.

tomato seller is not the only one to show hatred toward men, only on a genotypic basis, in Amma Darko's novel. As a matter of fact, to the question: "Who committed the world's first sin"? (p. 8), a nineteen-year-old girl, a tiger-nut seller, eagerly responds:

It's the man! ... Go and look at my sister. She is only sixteen and already pregnant with her second child. The man responsible for the first one disappeared as soon as he was told of it. And this second one too, he was a really nice man, till this pregnancy came. Then come and see! He too started talking strange talk. 'Ah! Didn't I do it with you all the way only once?'... 'All the other times, didn't I remove my thing before the milk came?' Then declared that no, no, no, it sure was not him responsible. So tell me – sixteen, two children, no husband, no job. I tell you. A fine reason to abandon your baby... (p. 8)

For sure, the sixteen-year-old 'mother' on the one hand, and her two lovers on the other, should be held responsible for her sexual precocity. In this respect Mawuli Adjei accurately writes,

However, from the author's [Amma Darko's] point of view, while it appears on the surface that both boys and girls are giving vent to their teenage sex drive, Darko's focus is on the irresponsible boys who are always on the prowl, callously and indiscriminately displaying their manhood all over the place.¹⁸

From this biased point of view, Darko writes, "Occasionally, some [boys] were booted out, on the chief's orders, for gross misdemeanour"(p. 30).¹⁹

Similarly, to back up the authoress' partiality regarding the fate she reserves for male characters, Mawuli Adjei writes,

the problem with Darko's position with regard to the sexuality of her male characters is that she ignores sexuality as a natural biological urge involving both males and females, as a shared passion and, consequently, a shared responsibility. To always impute bestiality to the male sex drive is to deny the whole process of being.²⁰

¹⁸ Mawuli Adjei, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁹ It is noteworthy that Kofi Akorti is Darko's scapegoat here. Indeed, Kofi Akorti is accused of impregnating a fourteen-year old girl, bringing to twelve the number of girls he has impregnated. The village chief thinks that in the best interest of Kataso, "*Akorti carries his willful and undisciplined penis away before he impregnates another.*" (30)

²⁰ Mawuli Adjei, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

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Nevertheless, any knowledgeable reader will agree with us that the loose attitude from the sexually precocious teenager may largely lie in the education she gets from her parents since at the age of sixteen she has already had two kids. This simply implies that she starts her sexual activity probably at the age of fourteen or worse still before, knowing that a pregnancy lasts nine good months. Even if the 'irresponsible' male sexual partner does not take on his responsibility toward his sexual female partner, does the mother have the right to abandon or kill the baby she has kept for nine months in her womb? To Justify such a sordid and criminal deed might border on sadism.

The narrator in Amma Darko's *The Housemaid* also seems to lay all the blame on the male sex inasmuch as there is a denunciation of the 'irresponsibility' of Mami Korkor's husband, a character in the novel. For the misandrous narrator, after being abandoned by her 'irresponsible' lover, Mami Korkor has been obliged to cope alone with the regrettable aftermaths of their unconsidered sexual deeds. This is how the narrator lays tooth and nail into Mami Korkor's husband: "she [Mami Korkor] had to hawk fish from dawn to dusk to earn just enough to feed herself and her four children. They all depended on her. Not a pesewa came from their father" (p. 11).

The emphatic use of the personal pronoun "she" simply implies that in the couple, the man shirks his responsibility as spouse and father and the 'responsible and conscientious' wife fills the gap by compensating for the glaring irresponsibility of her husband; thus she toils to feed her children. Of course, Mami Korkor's husband is to be blamed for not assuming his duty as husband and father, but Mami Korkor has also her share of the responsibility as she has kept their love affair going long enough to have four children with the 'irresponsible' husband! Mami Korkor's child, Bibio, proves the point when she blames her 'willing' mother as follows: "Why, after making Nereley with him [our daddy], when you realised how irresponsible he was, did you go ahead to make Akai, me and Nii Boi as well"? (p. 11) It appears from this edifying remark that there is fault on both sides – the husband's and his wife's.

2. Physical and Psychological Violence upon Male Characters

Amma Darko creates a world in which female characters commit acts of physical abuse against male characters. Male characters' domination and battery by women in Darko's imaginary world occurs with Sekyiwa, a female character, who constantly assaults her 'good-for-nothing' husband. As a matter of fact, at the age of twenty-two, Sekyiwa has a secret love affair with a married man who is twenty-four years her senior. The man's first and legal wife is barren. Sekyiwa becomes pregnant and her lover adores her as he has been childless with his first and legal wife. Extremely joyous, he sets a business up for Sekyiwa and she soon happens to be one of the most prosperous market women in her area. Sekyiwa then becomes the idol of young, good-looking male gold-diggers. Sekyiwa takes to prostitution as her husband's libido begins to wane. Worse still, considering her him worthless, too old and sexually inactive, she constantly beats the poor husband of hers, which traumatises little Tika. This is how the narrator in *The Housemaid* conveys what little Tika witnesses in her childhood:

Little Tika remembered the fights and arguments she had witnessed between her parents. All the screaming and yelling had come from her mother; the imploring and pleading from her father. She remembered her mother's hands flying at her father's face in time with her insults. It was her father who had wept. After one such argument, her mother had stormed past her and out of the house, without so much as a glance, as Tika leaned confused against the corridor wall. She had gone to find her father and ask why he was weeping. He had cuddled her, managed a weak smile and assured her that he had not been crying, but she knew that he was not telling her the truth. (p. 19)

This long but telling quotation exemplifies Darko's female characters' misandrous attitude toward the male sex, as the 'sexually inactive' man suffers physical assault and trauma from his 'vigorous' sexual companion until death. Misandry in Amma Darko's *The Housemaid* often urges female characters to pre-empt events or quite simply to play the part of the head of the household. The reader of Darko's *The Housemaid* sees the character Sekyiwa play a key part in her household, which often leads her to prostitution. It is worth saying that Sekyiwa usurps the title of the head of the family not because of the husband's financial incapability toward her, but oddly enough because the aged man can no longer assuage her sexual desires. This is how the man's sexual disability leads Sekyiwa to be unfaithful to him:

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Young, good-looking male gold-diggers began to vie for her [Sekyiwa's] attention. Her husband's libido was waning anyway, so she gave in. She gave them good money; they gave her good sex. Life's satisfaction shone in her eyes. Her husband mistook it for love; his heart was bursting with affection for his young wife. (p. 18)

The straw that breaks the camel's back is the 'clumsy' remark that Sekyiwa's her loving husband innocently makes to please his ladylove: "Now that we have achieved what we set out to ..., we can begin to really enjoy life" (p. 18). Oddly enough, Sekyiwa is rather infuriated by her companion's 'lovely' words: "Enjoy what life? What life is there to enjoy with a dead penis" (p. 18)? It appears that, a man's worth, according to the female character Sekyiwa, is assessed depending on his virility no matter his wealth.

3. Misrepresentation of Male Characters in Amma's *The Housemaid*

'Hatred' toward male characters in Amma Darko's second novel seems obvious since they are assigned wicked roles in the story. Male characters are taken as useless and irresponsible partners. In this vein, Mawuli Adjei points out "the condescending manner in which Darko treats her male characters."²¹ Indeed, other instances of misandrous representations and male-bashing are present in Darko's novel. Efi's father is quite often presented as a tippler. Whenever an important decision is to be taken in his household, he is always seen on the leaving streak. As a matter of fact, at any time Efi's father appears in the narration, the reader sees him senseless and addicted to the local spirit, called akpeteshie, he consumes in his den the 'Kill-Me-Quick' bar. Indeed, one might say that it is to prove men's worthlessness or uselessness that the narrator in Darko's literary work shows Efi's father drunk while the fate of his daughter is at stake. In fact, a foreigner – named Tika, a city dweller – has come to bring Efi to the city as a housekeeper. But at that moment, Efi's father is inebriated and unable to give his own opinion in the on-going discussion. One can read,

²¹ Mawuli Adjei, "Male-bashing and Narrative Subjectivity in Amma Darko's First Three Novels" in *SKASE Journal of Literary Studies* [online], 2009, vol. 1 n° 1, p. 48.

At Kataso on the appointed day, even though it was not even approaching noon, Efia's father was already drunk and fast asleep on a wicker mat inside the hut... He was lying spreadeagled on the floor, oblivious to the flies buzzing in and out of his open mouth, and snoring as if tomorrow were doomsday. (pp. 40-41)

It is obvious that Darko's characters dwell in a female-dominated society in which the mother is in the command while Efia's father is dead drunk. Such a description highlights women's contempt for men in Amma Darko's fiction. To justify the fate reserved for male characters in her writings, Amma Darko, in an interview with Raymond Ayinne, says:

We've started writing from our point of view because, for a while, you [men writers] were writing for us [...]. So [...] if we [women writers] are writing, probably there is some pain that has to come out. And I think rather than take it as male-bashing, you must take it as a means to better understand the women folk of Africa [...]. You were always portraying us as all-enduring, all-giving mothers and that is the attitude we find in males [...] but I don't want to be all-giving all the time, I don't want to be all-enduring. I want to be angry, I want to react.²² (Emphasis mine)

Furthermore, to get Tika not to send Efia back to Kataso, because she utterly disappoints her foster mother by getting pregnant, a man has to pour libations to ask their gods and ancestors to speak in their favour. As a matter of fact, in defiance of tradition and mainly because of the misandry rampant in the narration, Efia's grandmother scornfully tells Efia's father, "Go and pour your libation. Who says the gods will favour a drunkard over a woman?" (p. 73). Considering this event, Mawuli Adjei rightly points out,

Her actually pouring the libation, and in so doing breaching the custom of libation as a male preserve, is a way of having women take over gendered male roles in a world in which men have become irresponsible, worthless, dispensable and irrelevant. That the old woman, who in the African feminist discourse usually symbolises tradition, prevails in the end shows that Darko

²² Raymond Akolbine Ayinne, "Emerging Issues in Amma Darko's Novels: Beyond the Horizon, The Housemaid and Faceless," Undergraduate Long Essay, (Legon: University of Ghana, 2004).

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approves of the conscious shattering of the status quo as a mark of female assertion and independence.²³

4. Women's Supremacy

For Barthélémy Kotchi, a literary piece of work always reflects the social, historical, as well as the institutional context from which it comes out. In other words, in his opinion, there is a tight relationship between the literary text and the community.²⁴ We are fully in line with Kotchi as the attitude of some successful female characters in Darko's *The Housemaid* is a quintessence of the behaviour of most women who have reached the summits of fame in true-to-life African societies. The idea of the submissive African woman in her role as wife and housekeeper is now something of a remote past. African female writers depict the new posture adopted by some African women in their fiction where hatred of the male sex is prevalent.

Indeed, in the misandrous society created by Amma Darko in her novel, female characters rule society so much so that male characters, like Sekyiwa's companion, are petrified with fear at the sight of their female partner. In this wake, Mawuli Adjei writes that Amma Darko, in her novel, strives to "present and contest the culture of patriarchy"²⁵ which prevails in most African societies. The reader gets to know the highly charged or strained atmosphere in which Tika's father lives. Indeed, alone with his beloved daughter and only child, one can notice that the man is in bliss when playing with her. Nevertheless, this relaxed atmosphere suddenly turns sour once Madam Sekyiwa appears. This is what one learns when little Tika happens not to go to market with her mother but stays home with her loving father:

It had been even more glaringly clear on those free Saturdays when her mother had not taken her to the shop. On such days her father had become a completely different person, playing and laughing with her. All it had taken

²³ Mawuli Adjei, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

²⁴ Barthélémy Kotchi, *Méthodologie et Idéologie* (Abidjan : CEDA, 1989), p. 66.

²⁵ Mawuli Adjei, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

was the sound of her mother's arrival for the gaiety to halt abruptly, as if the light of her father's life had been extinguished by the flick of a switch. (p. 19)

It appears from this edifying citation that the character Madam Sekyiwa exerts her superiority over her 'husband' as if she were the head of the family, so much so that the miserable other half withdraws into his shell, very frightened, at the very sight of the chauvinistic 'torturer'. In other words, the cheerfulness of Sekyiwa's companion fades into scare as soon as his very young spouse sets foot on their dwelling place. In this woman-dominated universe wanted by the female writer Amma Darko, one learns that Tika, despite her failure at school, has been Owuraku's financial prop in the completion of his study at university. One can clearly guess Darko's intention here as she wants to demonstrate that women play a key part in men's prosperity or bloom better still, women are as worthy as men or even worthier. Darko has written this to her incredulous readers, as for the paramount part of the fair sex in conjugal life: "By the time Owuraku had finished with the sixth form and was going on to university Tika was providing for all his needs" (p. 22). It is worth mentioning that Tika and Owuraku have been going out together for quite a long time. Knowing that she is Owuraku's financial provider, Tika utterly keeps control over him to such an extent that she has an affair with other men behind Owuraku's back. Mockingly, this is what the narrator in Amma Darko's *The Housemaid* says about the strange relationship between Tika and Owuraku:

Then it reached the ears of Owuraku's friends that Owuraku was unknowingly paying a price for his good luck [being financed by a richer sexual partner, Tika]. He was having to share Tika with other men, something they were certain he had no idea about. (p. 22)

One might put forward that Owuraku becomes Tika's hostage and his friends' laughing stock basically because Tika is the breadwinner in their marital life. It is worth mentioning that there is nothing wrong with having a supportive wife in the household; but it becomes a matter of concern when on account of this, the wife grows disrespectful and unfaithful. This is how one of Owuraku's friends derides him: "The way your woman has become your provider, she could be hijacking your manhood, while you have no control over her womanhood at all"! (p. 22). Tika takes such the liberty to bed "shop owners,

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bank managers, custom officers" (p. 23) while, oddly enough, Owuraku and she are living together as husband and wife. It is clear that Tika takes Owuraku as a puppet as she is quite convinced that Owuraku does not carry much weight financially.

One might think that Owuraku, financially impotent, deliberately bears Tika's intrigues; yet, he will not surrender. The narrator in *The Housemaid* says this about Owuraku's sudden awareness:

But Owuraku was not like these other men [those who turn a blind eye to their spouses' loose living]. He was a university undergraduate with pride and prospects. For Owuraku, money was good, but not at any price. And that was a point Tika had missed."(p. 24)

Fortunately, Owuraku is dignified unlike some deceived husbands, who because of the financial power of their wives, pretend not to be aware of their wives' deception lest they should lose them or lose the wives' financial liberties. Owuraku regains his lost dignity in the sense that when he decides to part with Tika, he finds a poorer sexual partner to show Tika that his love for her is not self-interested or better still, he is not money-conscious. This is what the reader learns about Owuraku's U-turn or sudden awareness:

Owuraku decided on an exit plan. In his heart [sic.] he was finished with Tika, but he decided that he would not tell her immediately. He would leave her to think the affair was still on, and continue to benefit from her financially for as long as it would take her to realise that it was over between them. Next, he picked a girlfriend from campus. When Tika heard about it, she refused to believe it and confronted Owuraku. He did not deny it. But Tika still would not give up. It was a reaction against the pain she had caused him, she told herself. She initiated an investigation into her rival's background, learnt that she was from a poor family, and convinced herself even more that things would sort themselves out given time. Owuraku would realise that the girl had nothing to offer him. (pp. 23-24)

It appears that Tika relies on her financial base to two-time Owuraku and she is entangled in her loose life deluding herself about Owuraku. Now that he has become aware about Tika's well-orchestrated deceptions, Owuraku's stratagem is to spin-dry his financial provider as much as possible and to move out with a student as an alternative. But stunned at Owuraku's decision to move out with a

destitute student to make her see sense, Tika boasts this way, counting on her financial base: “How can she [the student Owuraku is moving out with now] even try to step into my shoes? What has she to offer Owuraku? Money is the power word. Not books” (p. 24). It is clear that prosperity has made Tika bigheaded and condescending to the extent that she looks down on her scholarly rival who is trying to snatch her partner from her. To keep Owuraku for herself, Tika showers him with more cash and gifts; nevertheless, Owuraku will not listen to reason. To cap it all, Tika suggests that she should “provide the cash” (p. 24) to “perform the marriages rites” (p. 24). She jilts Owuraku for four good men because he proves not to collaborate. The narrator in Amma Darko’s *The Housemaid* ironically highlights such an attitude when he points out:

Other women’s husbands just closed their ears and minds to it [their wives’ prostitution]. Business was business ... For what would happen if they interfered and the women stopped their antics, the business went down and the cash stopped flowing”? (p. 23)

It appears that those men bear the unbearable owing to their wives’ financial supremacy over them, by allowing them to sell their body so that the entire household can make both ends meet. Such men are nothing but doormats being manipulated by their ‘powerful’, lecherous and adulterous wives who buy their silence over their promiscuous conduct. As can be seen, Tika is among such women. Indeed, in the mind of Tika she can reach all her dishonest aim with her wealth including buying her companion’s conscience, not to mention Owuraku’s regained determination to get back prestige after a long time’s dormancy.

Conclusion

In *The Housemaid*, Amma Darko demolishes the privilege that society tacitly grants the male sex because of their gender. Indeed, the Ghanaian authoress creates in her novel a society in which female characters are at the forefront of agency. They take the lead and are breadwinners of the family. In this prospect, Amma Darko draws a despicable picture of male characters in which they are shown as failures, nonentities, and irresponsible partners. Amma Darko’s second novel seems to create the social divide between men and women with the latter accusing the former of being a victimiser.

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