

Research Article

Mara's rising from total submissiveness to absolute emancipation in *Beyond The Horizon* by Amma Darko

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Abstract: Marital life has usually been almost unbearable for women in African fiction. During the last decades, their status has been changing very fast. In *Beyond the Horizon* by Amma Darko, Mara, after having undergone maltreatment, carelessness and domination from her husband Akobi in Africa as well as in Europe, has ended up sending him to prison. This article attempts to explore how some female characters are endowed with the necessary courage to report the ill-treatment they have undergone to the right person or authority in order to take a revenge and have things changed for themselves. As pointed out by the study, Mara has proved that change must originate from her not from anybody else. In order to be able to closely explore how Mara, as the embodiment of empowered women in the contemporary African fiction has improved (herself), it has been thoroughly evidenced such aspects as naivety, illiteracy and most importantly economic dependence of the female characters as the main factors working in an adverse way against them both in fiction and society.

Résumé: La vie conjugale est habituellement presque insupportable pour la femme dans le roman Africain. Les dernières décennies par contre sont le théâtre d'un changement galopant de leur statut. Dans *Beyond the Horizon* de la Ghanéenne Amma Darko, la protagoniste Mara, après sa descente aux enfers à force d'humiliation et de domination par son mari Akobi à Africa (cadre de l'histoire) comme en Europe, a fini par sortir des gongs et à l'envoyer en prison. Cet article essaie d'explorer les ressources dont sont dotés certains personnages féminins qui leur permettent d'avoir le courage nécessaire de rendre de la meilleure manière possible à l'autorité le coup qu'ils ont subi et réussissent à terme à changer leurs conditions. Comme l'indique l'étude, Mara est la preuve que le changement doit procéder de soi et non de quelqu'un d'autre.

Dans le but de lever totalement le voile sur comment Mara, en tant que l'incarnation de la femme émancipée dans la fiction africaine contemporaine, s'est améliorée, il a été passé au peigne fin des aspects tels que la naïveté, l'illettrisme et surtout la dépendance économique des personnages féminins, comme facteurs principaux militant à leur encontre, tant en fiction que dans la société.

Mots-clés : libération ; genre ; dot ; transition ; vie conjugale.

Key words: 1-liberation ; 2-gender ; 3-bride price; 4-transition ; 5-marital life

Introduction

The word woman refers to female human in general. In a more specific or precise way, a woman is a female human of a certain age or an adult female human.

In Africa, mainly traditional Africa, life in general and marital life in particular is difficult for women. But in the last decades, things have started changing though many others are still to be improved. In the general context, even of the recent emancipation fight, man has always had more rights than woman. She still is referred to, in some parts of the world, as the weak sex or second sex.

This article attempts to explore how some female characters are endowed with necessary courage to report the ill-treatments they have undergone to the right person or authority in order to have things changed for themselves. In this study, Mara has proved that women should not wait for change to come from elsewhere than themselves.

The cycle of contradiction, tension and revolution reflected by

Darko's novel is similar to the conflict between classes and the upheaval and revolution that logically ensue are also very close to the groundwork meant by Marxism to be led by the working class in order to compose an equal society. Mara and the other female characters' endeavor to free themselves from the clutches of the male dominance is overtly a clear invitation to work out the downfall of an outdated patriarchy. It is also important to see through the same lenses an attempt to deconstruct the received idea of Europe as the haven of peace and easy social achievement.

Two main parts structure the gist of this paper. The first one displays the woman in her living and working conditions in Africa. The second unveils the lures of Europe and the stanching job opportunities women can be confronted with willynilly.

1- Women's Living and Working Conditions in Africa

African women live both in rural areas and in cities. Whether

in villages or in the cities, most of them experience hard life.

1-1-African women's marital life in rural Africa **1-1-1-Polygamy in traditional Africa**

In traditional Africa, most women experience polygamy. Before Amma Darko, some African authors such as Chinua Achebe and Ngugiwa Thiong'o have dealt with polygamy. Dealing with Okonkwo's household and spiritual life, the narrator says of him in *Things Fall Apart*: "He worshipped them with sacrifices of kola nut, food and palm wine, and offered prayers to them on behalf of himself, his three wives and eight children." (Chinua Achebe, 1984: 10) Achebe describes polygamy in his *A Man of the People*. Odili, the protagonist of the novel, speaks of his father in the following terms: "To begin with he had too many wives and children to take any special notice of me." (Chinua Achebe, 1975: 27) One of Ngugi's polygamist characters is Ngotho.

As a matter of fact, Ngotho has two wives namely Njoroge's mother and the Mau Mau fighter Boro's mother.

Mara describes her father as a true polygamist who has even married a new wife with dowry Akobi has paid for her. She relates:

I arrived in the village next day but met with very little sympathy, as I had always feared. My father was not even interested to see me because he had taken on yet another wife, a young hot blooded widow who had so filled his head that mother even cried to me that she was certain that their youngest rival had done ju-ju on father to cause him to forget and disregard his other wives.

... Father had used the goats and cows to remarry, and definitely was not going to agree to my wish" (pp. 28-29)

Before dealing with African women's lots through Mara's, let's say a few things about Mara's marriage.

1-1-2-Mara's marriage

In *Beyond The Horizon*, the reader can notice that Mara is not involved in the process which leads her to the marriage with Akobi. It is usually what happens in traditional Africa. As a matter of fact, it is her prospective father-in-law, Akobi's father and her own father who have negotiated the conditions of her marriage. Since Akobi's father is a wealthy man, at least in their area, and his son is living in the city, holding a primary school certificate on the one hand and being also a civil servant on the other, Mara's father is aware that he will be paid the requested dowry, even more. Moreover, his daughter will be a distinguished married woman, proud of her husband by living in the city. He has already decided who will marry his daughter before informing his wife, Mara's mother. The extract below shows well how parents marry their daughters.

I remember the day clearly. I returned from the village well with my fourth bucket of water of the day when mother excitedly beckoned to me in all my wetness and muddiness, dragged me into her hut and breathlessly told me the "good news".

'Your father has found a husband for you,' she gasped, 'a

good man!'

All I did was grin helplessly because I clearly remembered the same good news as this that mother had given my older sister two years before. Found too, by father. And my sister was now a wreck. Naturally, not all husbands made wrecks of their wives. Many women in Naka were extremely content with their marriages and their husbands and wouldn't exchange them for anything in the world. And some such good men still existed in Naka. But father, it appeared, had a different formula for choosing or accepting husbands for his daughters, which took more into consideration the number of cows coming as the bride price than the character of the man.

'Who is he?' I asked mother, 'father's choice for me?'

'Oh dear child, mother said,' you know your father would consider it rude if I disclosed him to you before he did. Dress up,' she urged me, 'I am certain he will send for you soon.

And he did. And make known to me that my chosen husband was the man named Akobi. And it astounded me, first that this man had settled on me as his wife, and second, that father had had the guts to approach his father to offer him his daughter. But I soon learnt that, yes, Akobi chose me as his wife, but it was his father who had had the guts to approach mine and not vice versa.' (pp. 3-4)

A father has found a husband for his daughter taking into account only his own interests. It is Mara's father's case here. He only informs his wife who knows that she is not even allowed to inform her daughter before him as he assumed to be the right person to do it. Mara's mother even agrees upon it or seems to. She doesn't mind. For her, it is the normal course of things that her husband finds or chooses a husband for their daughter and informs her of the fact. She is so obedient, tolerant and submissive that she doesn't dare give their daughter the name of this man, her prospective husband. For that, she says "you know your father could consider it rude if I disclosed him to you before he did." (p.4). This is the way men or husbands are revered by their wives in traditional Africa.

Worse still, when Mara's mother decides to inform their daughter of her engagement negotiated by her father, the daughter points out that she has "dragged her into her hut and breathlessly told" her 'the good news' (p. 3-4). The verb "dragged" and the adverb "breathlessly" show that the woman is happy and wants to share her happiness with her daughter being forced into an engagement which should be her own business because she must handle it for the rest of her life. In some other areas, Mara's mother should get angry and protest. Here, on the contrary, (paradoxically) she behaves otherwise. This is an illustration of African women's submissiveness to their husbands.

Mara reports what her mother has told her about such a difficult situation she has been experiencing: "...mother even cried to me that their youngest rival had done ju-ju on father to cause him forget and disregard his other wives." (p. 28) This is another illustration, among many others, which shows the suffering endured by women in most African homes.

The narrator informs us about women's lots in the rural areas as well as in the city. After highlighting women's life in the

rural areas, there is a need to shed light on their lives in the city.

1-2- African women's conditions in African cities

In *Beyond The Horizon*, AmmaDarko describes some African women's lives in the city. Among these women are Mara, Akobi's wife, Mama Kiosk, Comfort, to name only a few in the African city on the one hand, and Mara, Comfort, Vivian and Kaye in Europe, on the other.

Akobi has not attended the "customs and traditional rites" of the wedding. He has been in the city and after the rites has come back and returned with Mara ready to live with him as a wife like one forming an alliance with a parcel. All these have taken place within twenty four hours. The narrator (Mara) says:

But like I said, Akobi returned to the city to work, the customs and traditional rites were got over and done with on his behalf. Three weeks later he came straight from work on a Friday evening, arriving in Naka on Saturday, and left for the city on the same Saturday with me as his wife... and property!" (p.07)

Akobi is so busy that he can't even take part in "the customs and traditional rites" of his own wedding with his wife. One should not blame him for that certainly because their traditions allow things to go this way. But what is not understandable is his behaviour when he comes to take his wife to the city. He comes to his village and within a few hours goes back with her. Normally and mainly in African tradition, Akobi should spend a few days in his village in order to have time to thank some members of his family in-law; he should also find some time to thank his own parents and relatives, and some other people who have been useful for the wedding. Unfortunately, AkobiAjaman, the ministries man, with "his big flat nose", has not had time for these things which seem useless for him. This is a way to show that she does not count for him. Mara herself specifies that "he arrives in Naka on Saturday and left for the city on the same Saturday with me as his wife...and property!" (p. 07) It is a way for the writer to show how African women are taken in some cases as chattels.

The rush with which everything is organised to get rid of Mara and entrust her to Akobi doesn't preclude from the bad omen awaiting the bride in the city.

1-2-1-Mara's living conditions in the city

Mara's first disappointment stems from the place where to live with her husband. Her discovery of the dwelling place in the city has been a great deception as illustrated through the narrator's crude description:

...a cluster of shabbily- constructed corrugated-iron sheet shelters that looked like chicken houses, while all about and between them shallow, open gutters wound their way. In these gutters; due to the lack of any drainage system, all the water from dirty washing and bathing, and urine too, collected and stayed until it evaporated. And since the rate of evaporation was slower than the rate at which the waste waters collected, the resulting standing water not only stank

but also bred nasty shades of algae and generations of large fat mosquitoes that greedily fed on our blood at night. As if that wasn't enough, barely fifty yards away there was an unhygienic public toilet beside which was the area's only public rubbish dump. I was soon to learn that the rubbish was collected only once every two months or so. And so this also not only brought in swarms of flies in their thousands but polluted the surrounding air so intensely that one hardly ever woke up in the morning without either a splitting headache or a bleeding nose". (p....)

A woman who has freshly come from a village thinks that the houses in her dwelling place in the city including hers are not suitable for human beings in a way that she compares them with chicken houses. A human being can't be expected to live in such an environment. Mara says that between the houses there are "shallow, open gutters."

1-2-2- Violence on a pregnant woman: Mara's case

When Mara gets pregnant, she can't say clearly what has happened. She is not aware of her new state. She has just noticed that things have changed in her. To be sure of what is happening to her, she confides (herself) in Mama Kiosk. The latter reveals to her that she is pregnant. The unfortunate lady informs her husband of her new state and how she has happened to be aware of it. He gets angry with his wife because, in actual fact, he does not want to have children with Mara. For this reason, during their sexual intercourses, he practises withdrawal, consisting in removing or withdrawing his penis before ejaculating. Mara describes to Mama Kiosk such a situation in the following term

The first time he slept with me, when he started moving quicker and panting louder and sweating more, he suddenly at one stage removed himself very quickly from inside me and wetted me all over with this strange milk-white liquid coming from his manhood. At first I thought that he was sick and was throwing up through his manhood. But then he told me that it was to avoid something." (p. 16)

The 'something' that Akobi wants to avoid is having a child or children with Mara. This is neither known nor clear to her. So, once again this is the reason why Akobi has beaten his wife when she informs him that she is pregnant. The sin the innocent woman has committed is her getting pregnant. While some married people and non-married people are looking for a child or children, others like Akobi don't want and even beat their wives because of their pregnancy

He is trying to be smart. He doesn't want people to know that Mara is his wife. He has just wanted to use Mara as his housewife and sex tool in order to prepare his journey to Europe and then leave her behind once in Europe. He needs so much sex that even after beating her, he has sexual intercourse with her. Here, Mara describes, how it happens to her husband to have sex with her even after a misunderstanding:

He was lying on the mattress, face up, looking thoughtfully at the ceiling when I entered. Tool, composed and

authoritative, he indicated with part of his hand on the space beside him that I should lie down beside him. I did so, more out of apprehension of starting another fight than anything else. Wordlessly, he stripped off my clothes, stripped off his trousers, turned my back to him and entered me. Then he ordered me off the mattress to go and lay out my mat because he wanted to sleep alone'' (p.22)

For Akobi, Mara is hardly a human being, not a woman that can spend a whole night with him on a mattress. Only a mattress, not even a bed, is for Akobi something that must be slept in by special people that his wife Mara is not. She is good only for her sex because definitely beautiful as she is. Mara says "I was sleeping on the mat on the floor. I didn't dare to sleep on the mattress." (p. 17) No responsible and respectful man can prevent his wife from sleeping on a mattress with himself. Akobi is a special husband; a bad one indeed. No responsible and sensitive person can agree with him. Mama Kiosk disagrees and blames his behaviour. She tells Mara: "... this ministries man, he is not only a bad man and bad husband, he has also got something inside his head. I only hope that he won't destroy you with it before you too start seeing red with your eyes like I do." (p.17) Mara herself wonders "what African man gets angry because his wife was carrying a baby? And the first baby at that." (p.17)

1-3-Mara, an exceptionally hard-working, open-minded and tolerant woman

1-3-1-She provides food for the household

Mara has come to the city as a village girl who has neither been to school nor learned any job or trade. During the very first months of her stay with Akobi in Africa, Mara has no job. She just does house work, taking care of her husband, cleaning the house, cooking food. In this framework, she has some time to devote to other people's household rubbish for them. She has started doing it for her neighbour and friend Mama Kiosk. The latter behaves towards her like a mother, giving her some instructions and food too. Mara informs the reader about how Mama Kiosk has instructed her about city life. She does the same thing about the kindheartedness she has expressed giving her some food:

You are in the city", she said emphatically, and in the city nothing is for free, you get me? Come. She beckoned and I followed her into her house. Minutes later I emerged with a paper bag filled with a piece of yam, two cassavas, some okras and a handful of garden eggs. 'For throwing my rubbish away for me, she added at the door. I thanked her warmly and left(pp. 10-11)

Mara is rewarded by Mama Kiosk for throwing her household waste. She seizes the same opportunity to put her on the way of individualism which prevails in the city and how money and material goods rule the modern life incarnated by the city.

Mara renders the same service she has rendered to Mama Kiosk to other people because they ask her to do so as a gullible and naïve young lady. This gullibility and naivety

bring Mama Kiosk to confess her that she is truly a greenhorn. (p.10) But Mara is getting emancipated as she has grown to be aware of the fact that nothing is free in the city. Throwing people's rubbish twice a week will hence entice some specific ingredients:

I wasn't taking from him for our daily meals again. I had bought myself a pair of car tire slippers and Mama Kiosk had presented me with an old set of clothes which I was now alternating weekly with my own old one. I was still throwing away people's rubbish for them twice a week but this time, as Mama Kiosk would say, no one does nothing for free in the city. I wasn't waiting for them to pay me with just any foodstuffs but was demanding specific ingredients that went into making my full meals without me having to do extra shopping. Yam from here, plantain from there, garden eggs and pepper from here, tomatoes and smoked fish from there; and I had my full meal for the day and even extra for the next morning." (p. 24)

Mara has learned the good lesson of individualism and how interest rules the world. She does housework including cooking food for Akobi with the foodstuffs collected from other people; and Akobi doing nothing as a husband to deserve that care taking.

1-3-2-Mara's financial empowerment

Mara has undertaken three different types of trade as a whole at different moments. A few weeks after the launching of her first trade, Mara has been able to save as much money as to pay back the capital her husband Akobi has lent to her and continue on her own as it has been agreed upon between the two of them. The money has been lent to her under the condition that she must pay back if not she will drown and she has even sworn for that. The submissive and faithful Mara repays back her husband for whom she is bearing a child. Neither their coming child nor she herself count for Akobi. His only concern is his "more important plans."⁽¹⁹⁾ Amma Darko, *Ibidem*, p. 17. Mara says:

I was always calculating my money to see when I could pay Akobi back his capital and still be left with something after I had also deducted the cost of my next quantity of eggs. And this goal is reached after eleven weeks...

...late evening, when he was sitting before our door, seemingly in deep thought as I had often seen him, I approached him with the money. He didn't take it immediately. He smiled, just smiled, then got up wordlessly and led the way into the room, carefully closing the door behind him.

We were in there alone now and the air about us was heavy. Then he returned and faced me and studied me briefly, cynically, and I sweated my first sweats of doubt. Then he snatched the money from me, counted and re-counted it, God knows how many times, then to my utter astonishment, slapped me hard across the face. I was stunned. I mean, Akobi was not beating me for the first time and this was not going to be the

last beating. ... ” (pp. 19-20)

This sequence is an illustration of women's battery by their husbands. Mara's submissiveness to Akobi results in the total domination of the former by the latter. Instead of a husband being happy and proud of his wife, Akobi maltreats Mara for wickedness sake. Here, his victim accounts for the reason of her punishment.

But Akobi was a closed man, no one saw inside him. At least I didn't. But I dearly wished there, that moment, that somehow he too could feel it, the movement in my belly, for maybe it could have revived his human instincts.

What do you mean paying without interest? He bellowed eventually.

I didn't know what interest was so asked meekly? ” And at the same time instant I saw his clenched knuckles ready to knock pain into my forehead. ” (p.21)

The special way of gratitude Akobi has found to express to his wife is not only to demand that she pays interests on the capital but also beat her because she has not thought of doing so. Once again, Mama Kiosk is really right when she tells Mara, talking of the latter's husband “...he is a man but a bad husband.”⁽²²⁾ AmmaDarko, *Ibidem*, p.13

Mara has fought, unfortunately, with a woman named Esiama in the lorry park where she sells her boiled eggs. This obliges her to stop her first trade because her opponent is “the love of the boss of truck drivers.”⁽²³⁾ AmmaDarko, *Idem or Ibidem*, p.27. Although Mara is compelled to put an end to her trade, “Akobi refuses to resume giving her money for their daily food.”⁽²⁴⁾, AmmaDarko, *Idem*

Mara leaves for her village looking for care and bearable living conditions mainly because Akobi frightens her that she will wake up dead the following day. Mara describes the last atmosphere she has lived in Akobi's house after her fight with Esiama:

He howled, growled, and bawled. If I thought he was going to resume giving me money for our daily meals, he snarled, then I was kidding myself. He had more important plans for his money, he went on, and no way was he prepared to hear again that I wasn't going to trade any more, unless I was willing to wake up dead next morning. (p.p 27-28)

It is obvious that Mara has come to life to struggle, struggle for the noble cause. She does not stay arms folded once back anew in her village. She “had to help on the farm to make up for my upkeep and shelter. And I had to sell palm wine too to make money for Alhaji's monthly rent back in the city.”(p...) Mara is really the type of woman that can be called a responsible one. Although she is in her home village, getting ready for the birth of her second child, she still thinks of how to provide for her needs in the village and also pay the rent for the empty room she has left behind in the city in order to be able to live in it once back to the city. She has given birth to her second child and now that he is eight months old, she returns to the city. This second coming back to the city is something but being able

to afford a good living is another.

Mara stops her first trade and meanwhile has her first son in her village. Once back, she must undertake a new trade. In this framework, she starts hawking roasted groundnuts to go with banana. She “also took up selling cheap tobacco at the night market, and, when time permitted on Sunday fresh coconuts at the beach”. In addition to all that she continues hawking boiled eggs, but she cut down the quantity by a third. She has found another place which is the train station; Mara settles on the train station.

Like for her first trade, it doesn't take much time for Mara to enjoy the fruit of her new trade. She soon starts making profit, which is good for her new situation. It enables her to resume providing for the food of the couple. She also pays the rent of the house where they live which is an extraordinary or even a strange devotion in Africa. She says: “All this I did whole heartedly because suddenly no work was too hard or too strenuous for me so long as it would go to seeing Akobi realize his plans. So that soon not only was I the sole provider of our daily meals but the sole payer of our rent too because every penny that Akobi made became his and his alone.” (p.39)

Mara proves to be a faithful and loyal woman as it is the case with most women in traditional Africa.

After Akobi's departure for Europe, Mara gives birth to their second son. After that she must continue to work hard for her living and also learn a job. When she comes back from her village, Mama Kiosk welcomes her warmly. Mara has no time to waste. Her plan is clear enough

She seeks a seamstress who will teach her how to sew since she had the plan before realizing she was pregnant for the second time. To meet the expenses of her training, her rent and satisfy her other needs, she has decided to deal in “frying pancakes for sell at the market place in the afternoon because mornings” she attends her “sewing lessons, while nights and weekends saw” her “selling sweets and cigarettes in front of the cinema houses”.

Mara has progressed not only in her sewing apprenticeships but also in her standard of living. She now wears dresses and not cloths and wrappers contrary to the past. When everybody starts despairing about Akobi's case, he sends a letter inviting Mara to join him in Europe. Mara confesses: “...; Akobi wanted ME to join him in Europe!!” (p. 51) Logically Akobi is already in Europe. Has Mara accepted to join him in Europe?

1-3-3-Mara, the everlasting obedient servant

Because Mara doubles the quantity of the goods she sells, she spends more time in the lorry station where she sells. By spending more time in the lorry park, she spends less time at home. The direct consequence of such a situation is that she devotes less time to Akobi, her Master or her 'God'. The latter cannot bear that. He always wants Mara, his wife, he has referred to as a village girl, to serve him his supper on time. When serving him supper, she must “bring him the bowl of water and soap in time for washing his hand before and after eating, and when she fails to do this on time, she receives “a knuckle knock on” her forehead. For other mistakes he “grabs

her ear, pulls her body on a distance and this hurts her a lot'. As a result, she confesses: "By the time he released me my left ear had gone numb. He said nothing more. He didn't even touch me again. He just left the next decision to me. And I took it without delay. I cut down on my daily quantity of eggs just to be home in time to attend to his wishes." (p.19)

Mara is a well-mannered woman. In order not to disappoint her demanding husband, she accepts to lose part of her 'turn over'. Mara cuts down her "daily quantity of eggs" just to be at home in time to satisfy her husband's needs.

As if this is not enough, he forbids his wife to leave for the lorry park, where she sells goods, together with Mama Kiosk, her "perfect substitute mother."⁽³⁰⁾ AmmaDarko, *ibid*, p.23. She tells Mara: "From now on I don't want you to leave in the morning for the station together with Mama Kiosk."⁽³¹⁾ AmmaDarko, *Ibidem*, p. 24. Since Mara cannot object to doing what her husband has said, she makes do with a feeble protest. She says herself that she has 'protested feebly'. Mara is wrong by protesting even feebly. Her husband, her 'owner', gets angry. He puts his woman and slave like for him at her place: "and who taught you to put whys to my orders?". It is clear that in Akobi's opinion all that he tells Mara is not a topic for debate but an order or orders to be executed.

After noticing the disappearance of her valuables and new clothes, life must nevertheless continue for Mara and unfortunately at Akobi's house. Things have not changed with Akobi. Mara resumes her slave-like life at Akobi's. She resumes to be the first to wake up to serve Akobi before he goes to work, to wash the couple's clothes, to throw people's rubbish, to cook food for Akobi in the evening and serve the food not only on time but also do other things before and after the food. When her 'master' Akobi is eating, she must be standing not far from him in case he needs anything. She confesses how she resumes her former domestic chores:

Indeed, next morning it was as if I hadn't been away for a year and just returned. A resumption of the same daily routine followed: up at dawn to warm water, carry his things for him to the bathhouse, wait for him to wash, carry bucket and bath accessories back, clean the house and cook the food and then go throw people's rubbish away for them for foodstuffs." (p.32)

Mara is not only serving Akobi but she is at his entire disposal. She is like a slave, even more than that because some slaves are freer and better at ease than she is.

Akobi's important plan is to go to Europe. He leaves now for Europe without saying goodbye to Mara who has taken care of him for years and whose valuables he has sold before being able to raise the total funds for the journey to Europe.

Another illustration of Mara's neglect or belittlement from Akobi is the fact that he leaves the house where they live together for Europe without telling her or saying goodbye to her. She has gone out for only twenty minutes and Akobi leaves once for all to fly to Europe.

1-3-4-Akobi precedes Mara in Europe and Mama Kiosk's prophecy

Akobi has now been smuggled to Europe, smuggled because he joins there without a visa, visa for which he has nevertheless heavily bribed someone who is to be found nowhere once he has pocketed the huge amount of money. What will Mara's life look like once her wicked husband is overseas and without her? Akobi is now established in Europe. Mama Kiosk is deeply disappointed by his attitude towards Mara during the few hours before his departure. Consequently, with her good will of mother and because of her love for Mara, she advises the latter to forget about Akobi. She says:

..., if I was you, now that he's gone I would forget him and start thinking wholly about yourself and your son. That is what you must do. These men they always leave for Europe and say they'll be back in one two or three years. 'I am only going there to work and make money and return' is what they all say, but they go and they never return again. You must forget him. (pp.45-46)

To this advice which is almost clearly impartial, Mara's point of view is different. She strongly believes that Akobi will keep his promises. After an interior monologue, she replies to Mama Kiosk in the following terms:

I was horrified, to say the least. What was this Mama Kiosk was telling me? Forget Akobi? 'I have plenty respect for you Mama Kiosk. I began calculating, my bile rising into my throat at what I considered Mama Kiosk going overboard, 'and I look up to you many times as my mother. And you are so good to me too. But I don't like this that you are saying to me, Mama Kiosk. I don't like at all.(p.46)

Mama Kiosk has listened calmly to Mara expressing her anger to her and disappointment too. She wisely apologizes for what she is reproached with. She nevertheless keeps her position: The narrator reports: "Good, said Mama Kiosk eventually with a surprising calmness, then do what you think is best for you, Mara. But don't ever say your Mama Kiosk didn't warn you." (p. 46). Within two years after Akobi's departure for Europe, What Mama Kiosk has told Mara has become a truth. Two years after his flying to Europe Mara has hardly had news about him. Even the two letters she has sent to him have been returned (back) to her. (p. 50). This is not less than the fulfillment of Mama Kiosk's prophecy.

After Akobi's departure for Europe, Mara can remember how the same Akobi used to beat, kick and slap her. He also used to scold humiliations on her. She realizes that she "had grown wholly attached to Akobi, to his unfairness, to his bullying, to the strength he possessed over" her. She also assumes she is "afraid of change, of the unknown, this new situation ...". (p. 44). She becomes her own master. She says that this fear of change makes her want Akobi back. She also wishes and desires his presence. (p.44)

In this attitude of Mara's, we notice the reluctance and fear of the African women in general, Mara's in particular, to free them from men's domination, men's excessive domination. No slave should permanently fear to fight in order to free

themselves. Mara has not understood this yet.

Once again Mara refuses to free herself from the yoke of a man who has ill-treated her in all ways for several years. She takes for granted that a married woman must stay with her husband forever. More than thinking it, she is definitely convinced that she belongs to Akobi or is married to him for the worse and the better. By living in such a way, can Mara free herself and show the way to other women?

Akobi is already in Europe. A hard-working woman like Mara is happy and full of the hope to see her husband back one day; Mara takes the decision to learn sewing. In this context how to satisfy her everyday needs and mainly how to pay the rent to her landlord, the greedy Alhaji and also pay for her sewing lessons she has decided to take. She organizes her time table and is therefore able to couple the lessons attendance and her trade.

2-African Women's Life in Europe: Mara's Case

2-1-Mara's first disappointment in Europe: Her sharing the same apartment with her German rival

It is four days after her arrival in Europe that Akobi comes to Osey's place to see Mara for the first time. When they are on the way to his room, Osey has already started his job to prepare Mara's mind to become a whore.

Osey has married a German woman and this enables him to have the necessary legal papers to stay in the country. At the same time, he has his African wife that Vivian is. She is introduced to Osey's German wife as Osey's sister and the white woman believes it and treats her as her sister-in-law. And in this framework, she gives her presents. Vivian explains Mara her own situation with Osey's white wife that must be referred to as her rival:

Look, it is the same with me and Osey.

We are very happy. I live here and at my other place and he lives with his wife in town. She believes that I am his sister, and we get on fine. No problem. Look, even this nightgown I lent you; it was she who gave it to me. Ah, she gives me plenty things; lipstick, eye shadow, pants, this, that. And in return, I go on enduring her. I just shut my eyes to our rivalry And then it is simple. I don't see why it should be difficult for you to do so. What should you have done if you were at home and Akobi had taken a second wife?" (p. 79-80)

For Vivian, it does not matter if her husband has a white wife in addition to her and she wants Mara to behave the same way. For her, polygamy is not an obstacle to African women's welfare. Mara herself has always seen things the same way but when she has been in Africa. Polygamy in Africa is different from what is being described to her now. Before Vivian, Osey has tried with art to let Mara know that the situation is not and can't be what she has expected when leaving Africa. This is what Osey refers to as Mara must "be prepared for it" (p. 78). He tells her:

Look, Mara, Akobi has permission to live here. And me too

my wife came about nine months ago and is working to get plenty money to marry a German man so that she too will have no problem living here. You understand? We don't do it because we want to. We do it because we have to"

.....

"You see, my wife here, she is my wife and she loves me. And this German man that she will marry, she doesn't love him and he too doesn't love her. But they will marry. And it will only be on paper, official, that they are married. You get me? Privately? They won't do things together like two people who are married. You understand? And that is the reason why she has to pay him . . ." (pp. 77 – 78)

Akobi informs Osey that Mara doesn't understand all this "high thing anyway". Osey takes the floor again and explains it more. "Yes, so you see, Mara, Akobi and I, when we came, we didn't have any money to pay some woman to marry us. You get what I am trying to say? So we had to marry seriously ... that is to say for false love. Like we loved the women; you get me? Even though we don't love them. You understand?" (p. 78) After Osey, Vivian and the same Osey takes the floor in turn.

Mara is resigned to accept everything that can happen to her henceforth. She confesses it here:

Since so much depended on me, I could easily give the game away and it wouldn't be only me who would suffer the consequences.

Akobi was now trying to be cautious with me. And anyway, if I didn't go along with what they were demanding of me, what other alternative did I have? So I said nothing more. I just decided to sit there and let them go on planning my fate for me.(p.81)

It is assumed that Mara understands everything and agrees to observe them. Almost like in Africa, Mara starts her stay in Europe with mental torment.

2-2-- Mara shows changes in her, once again, in Europe: a step in Mara's evolution

During the discussion between Akobi, Osey, Vivian and Mara, the way the last has reacted several times foretells that she is intelligent and endowed with the courage of reacting at any time. Many times, when they ask her if she understands, she replies "I don't understand". It also happens that she asks relevant questions mainly to Osey and Akobi. Some elements which show that Mara will rebel and then free herself from Akobi's yoke one day are as follows. First she reproaches her husband with taking a second wife without informing her family whereas their tradition requires it from him. She addresses Akobi in the following terms.

Your second wife?" I asked weakly. 'You have taken on a second wife and you didn't tell my family back home? "Our tradition demanded it. It was a sign of respect to the first wife and her family. When a man took on a second wife without informing the first wife or her family, it showed an indifference towards his in-laws, which in itself was considered disrespectful and humiliating(p.79)

Once again Mara proves that she is intelligent and courageous too. In this remark made to Akobi, the reader can notice her knowledge and mastery of the custom and the tradition she belongs to although she has never been to school. This is the evidence that without Western school education, one can be intelligent, courageous and solve life's complicated equations. Mara lives now with Akobi and her rival Gitte, the German woman, in the same flat. Mara is really introduced to Gitte as Akobi's sister. In Germany, Akobi can cook food in turn with his wife and even serve the dish. This is surprising and striking for Mara. She is well aware of the lack of consideration with which Akobi treats her and is preparing to react shortly. The question about her clothes and valuables sold by her husband has brought the first shower on him (Akobi) as one can quite realize through the following dialogue:

"Where are they?" I said at last.
"I have sold them!" He replied, still looking at the ceiling,
"You what?" I said, making a grab at the armchair for support
"I sold them. And now go and see my porridge" He ordered...
"Can you tell me why you sold them?" I screamed. What did you do with the money? Did you buy a bus? Some land? Or maybe a house?"
But he remained surprisingly calm.
'No,' he replied, 'I deposited the money for my passport and a ticket. I am travelling to Europe...
"Please answer me truly, Akobi" I pleaded.
"Didn't you hear? Go and see to my porridge!" (p.33)

2-4-Mara's first occupation in Europe: Akobi's new form of exploitation of Mara

Mara spends a few weeks at Akobi (Cobby) and Gitte's apartment. The fourth week, she starts working. She works as a housemaid for a German family. The money her work yields is paid to Akobi. She does not even know when it is paid to him. Akobi doesn't keep the money for Mara. He uses it as he wants. Unscrupulously, Akobi keeps the money because Mara must pay for everything she enjoys in Akobi's apartment. Part of Mara's salary is used by Cobby to take care of Comfort in Hamburg. This is wickedness towards one's fellow. Her work is hard and she is always exhausted. She serves a family of six people and now when she is back to Cobby and Gitte's apartment she does almost the same domestic chores. (p. 166)In actual fact, she is not treated as one should treat his wife.

It happens to Akobito have sex with her but it is not to enable her to enjoy but just "out of sense of duty". She confesses about that:

About once a month when Akobi was on the afternoon shift he had a few minutes quick cold sex, with me on the living-room floor, more, I guess, out of a sense of duty than anything else since he always first excited himself in the bedroom before coming to pounce on me and was always over with it in five minutes without having once opened his

eyes to look at me." (p.112)

This is the way Cobby expresses disgust at his wife he has married with dowry duly paid. This is more than ill-treatment and wickedness towards women.

2-5- Mara is forced to whore.

Mara is laid off by the German family she is working for because "the wife says she fears getting charged for employing" her "illegally" (p. 109). At Mara's dismissal Akobi has reacted as if she has chosen to be laid off. In actual fact, Mara's new situation is an opportunity for Cobby to haste up her involvement in prostitution, his main objective which Vivian refers to as "the other job." (p. 112). How does he proceed to reach this goal? In this perspective, Akobi has brought Mara to a sex club one night where she has been sexed by several men. In the following report, Mara enables us to have an idea of what has happened in the sex club:

Then suddenly the room was filled with people, all men, and they were talking and laughing and drinking. And they were completely naked! There must have been at last twenty images.

Then they were all around me, many hairy bodies, and they were stripping me, fondling me, playing with my body, pushing my legs apart, wide, wide apart. As for the rest of the story, I hope that the gods of Naka didn't witness it." (p.111)

It is quite obvious that many people have played with Mara's body. In this group of men, some have made love with her. It is even better to insist on rape as from the pains she has complained subsequently about:

... And so this morning, suffering a cracking headache from the wine. I had drunk the night before ... And I wasn't even sure what else I had drunk after that first glass of wine and whether all those naked men I thought I saw had really existed. But then, I was feeling a strange sensation between my thighs this morning, and considerable pain two." (pp. 112 – 113)

This is the new life Mara has been indulged in after she has lost her job of housemaid. Cobby thinks of the ways to convince Mara to become a prostitute, a full time whore. Once again, Osey has been invited to play his part in convincing Mara. Mara is shown the video of the scene of her having sex with many men in turn. The flesh creeping pornographic description of the video is once again the illustration of the unscrupulous way Akobithingifies his wife in complicity with Osey:

The situation was this: the three of us were watching a video film that showed me completely naked, with men's hands moving all over my body. Then some held my two legs wide apart while one after the other, men, many men, white, black, brown, even one who looked Chinese, took turns upon me. All this was captured clearly on the video film. And this was what Osey and Akobi blackmailed me with so

that I agreed to do the job at Peepy. (p.115)

After this video is shown to Mara, she is led to her new work place, Peepy. It is a sex club owned by a man called Pompey. "I was made the property of a good-looking dark haired man who owned a sex night club called Pompey." (p.114) This night club is run by an African woman called Kaye, "an African woman, too, a stunning black beauty and the wife of a good-looking man who was the owner of Peepy" (p.116) She used to be a professional whore. She is still in the trade because it yields much money as Osey has told Mara in order to encourage her to accept to enter into it. She has been coerced into it by her former boyfriend, an African student.

2-6-The final straw that breaks the camel's back

At Peepy, Mara becomes a professional whore. She receives three men a day. But unfortunately for her, like what has happened when she has been a housemaid, Akobi is paid the money her whoring yields into his bank account. The homodiegetic narrator informs the reader: "Every day, apart from Sunday, I took on at least three, what they paid me went to Akobi. And Osey, too, I guess, had arranged his cut with Akobi". Men torment and distort poor Mara's body mainly her genitals but it is other people who enjoy the money from it. She says "the body being used and misused belonged to me." (p.118) Mara thinks and wonders which way out? She finally confides in Kaye her whole situation.

After listening to Mara, Kaye takes the decision to help her but in which way, seen that her husband, the owner of the sex club, "Pompey ... a rigidly disciplined businessman" is difficult to convince in matter of business and money. (p.119) She convinces her husband that Mara must reduce the number of men that she receives a day, telling lies that she (Mara) has received an Italian who has destroyed her (p...). Instead of that it is the contrary which is applied, that is to say the number of daily customers is increased. She confesses: "our plan was put in to motion. I didn't reduce my daily customers to one as Kaye had told Pompey. I increased them to seven." (p.119) this plan is implemented in order to enable Mara to save enough money, in a relatively short time, to pay a German guy for a bogus marriage. She suffers too much. She describes how it has been painful for her: "When I wasn't sleeping with a man I was crouching over a bucket of steaming hot water diluted with camphor and alum. Sometimes, the treatment left me with a numb vagina, so that I even felt nothing than pain." (p.120)

There is no questioning how far Mara suffers before earning money. Nevertheless the plan that they have made and that she has implemented has been successful. She confirms it here: "Only when I had my period did I get some rest. But even before five weeks was up I was ready with my cash to pay some German guy to marry me, so that I could get my resident papers." (p. 120) Mara has got the necessary amount of money and her accomplice Kaye has arranged for the marriage. As a matter of fact, Kaye knows the right people and the right contacts for such a thing. Within three months, everything is ready and Mara has all the necessary papers mainly "the blessed stamps of five-year resident's visa in her passport." (pp.

120-123)

2-7-Akobi's nemesis

Mara has tried and succeeded in meeting Gitte. They have met at an ice-cream parlour.

They reveal to each other what Akobi has been, what he has done to them. As a whole, Akobi has cheated both Mara and Gitte. The latter describes Comfort as a "sophisticated" woman. After the meeting some changes occur in their respective lives mainly Mara's.

With the help of the "stunning black beauty", Kaye, Mara has ceased working at Peepy. By this way she has prevented Akobi from getting money from one of his sources: her whoring.

Akobi's situation is not good at all in the end. He has started paying for his ill-treatments of and his cheating of both Mara and Gitte, two ladies who have been loyal and faithful to him. He has ended up stewing in his juice when he wallows in:

in jail here in Germany; he attempted to sneak out while still owing money to the bank and a couple of mail order houses and was caught. I am sure that he was wanting to follow Comfort when she got deported. Everything he and Gitte owned has been taken by the bank. Gitte has divorced him and returned to her family. (pp. 138-139)

Akobi's free fall from the Olympus has been all that sudden because he has never established as solid background and autonomy for himself as a man. Furthermore, he has been taken unaware by Mara's slow bomb-bullet explosion.

2-8-Mara's wrong choice: She is whoring in her own account

Mara has already freed herself by raising money and getting married to a German man, a bogus marriage of course. This situation enables her to live freely in Germany owing to her marriage certificate and the five-year visa resulting from this marriage. When talking with Kaye, she starts her own examination, a kind of stock taking of her deeds. Her conclusion is to continue whoring. She really continues whoring at Oves' and she thinks she is well at ease continuing it. She concludes that she can't change and she won't change. She is so accustomed to the milieu of whoring that for her it is and it will be impossible to go back to her life of greenhorn, faithful and submissive woman. Here below, is one of the things she says about her life:

At Oves' brothel, I have planned into my profession down to the marrow in my bones. There is no turning back for me now. I am so much a whore that I can no longer remember or imagine what being a non-whore is. I have problems recollecting what I was like before I turned into what I was like before I turned into what I am now." (p. 139)

Mara confirms that she cannot return to a normal life. She is clear enough through the sentence "there is no turning back for me now". She, as some other whores, sniffs into a place hotter than hell" in order to be able to stand, to avoid sinking relatively soon. She is ashamed so that she hides the truths for

her intimate friend and mother-like, Mama Kiosk. The latter thinks that Mara is working as a waitress in an African restaurant although it is through her that she sends money and goods to her family. She volunteers to do better for her people. Mara is doing quite well in that business and is not ready to change for another one. She is now planning to buy a cement house for her two kids and has already given instructions for it. She says that "material things are all" she "can offer them." She adds "as for myself, there is nothing dignified and decent left of me to give them." (p. 140) Apparently, she is right to reach this conclusion.

This is a clarion call to be taken into a very serious account by those who think that going to Europe is the formula for solving in an arathereasy way life challenges. Attention is here drawn to the risks one incurs in showing up in Europe unprepared and ready for all donkey jobs.

Mara's example is surely not a random choice made by the writer. It is a good sensitizing directed mainly to the female gender to bring them to the awareness of the dangers of the lures of Europe. The final resolve of Mara is the heartfelt expression of an inner feeling of disappointment, despair and disillusionment. She instructs:

Sometimes I am not sure whether I did the right thing or not in coming here but thank God, here at Oves'. I don't have time to worry and regret it. That doesn't mean that I consider myself totally blameless either. After all, I was also party to it all even if involuntary. And I guess that my punishment for it, is that I am stuck with Oves for the rest of my life. I have decided to stop thinking about ever going home." (p. 139)

Mara's conclusion is the illustration of the fact that the titanic effort made by a few females to get free from the sexist exploitation has never been enough to scar the deep wound inflicted by the brutish, exploitative, lustful and eccentric patriarchal structure. Kaye and Vivian have both undergone the same bleak experience.

Conclusion

In traditional Africa, women are hard workers and faithful people too. These qualities enable them to contribute to the welfare of the household. It is an asset for their liberation. There is certainly something strange in the three main women characters in *Beyond The Horizon*. In their struggle to free themselves from their 'exploiters', and become dignified people, they never go to the end in order to win and enjoy complete or total liberation. They usually overcome the most difficult obstacles in the struggle for liberty or independence but refrain from engaging in the last and certainly the least difficult round in order to become completely independent people.

After succeeding in getting rid of Akobi, and better than that, after Akobi's imprisonment, the boulevard of total liberation and independence from any other person is widely open for Mara but she has not taken it. She is likely destined to failure by choosing not to come back to her home country in order to settle there in one way or the other; to settle and then starts a

kind of education to Africans in general and African women in particular against having oneself smuggled to Europe. The three main women characters in *Beyond The Horizon* have struggled hard to free themselves from their male exploiters. Vivian has got rid of Osey; Kaye and Mara have succeeded in doing the same of their exploiters. Yet, there always is a feeling of incompleteness about AmmaDarko's female characters as they often succumb to the too deep wounds inflicted by their male predators.

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