

IN PURSUIT OF DREAMS: MIGRATION AND TOXIC MASCULINITY IN *BEYOND THE HORIZON*

Theresah Patrine Ennin¹

Department of English
College of Humanities and
Legal Studies
University of Cape Coast



Abstract

This paper explores masculinity and migration, analyzing the complex processes of sustaining manhood in a different environment in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*. The paper argues that the fraught nature of the migrant experience contributes to the creation of toxic masculinities and the perpetuation of gender-based exploitation of the female. Migration then creates new opportunities for male exploitative behaviour which is detrimental to the male himself.

Keywords: *Beyond the Horizon*, exploitation, masculinity, migration, mobility, toxic masculinity.

Introduction

The intersection of gender and mobility is not new (Blumen and Kellerman 1970; Crane 2007; Deakin 2002; Elias, Newmark and Shiftan 2008; Hanson 2010), though it previously focused on the disadvantages and challenges faced by migrant women. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the focus has shifted to include male migrants (Wojnicka and Pustulka 2019). This is crucial in that, for many years, masculinity as an important factor influencing

¹ Theresah Patrine Ennin is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of English, College of Humanities and Legal Studies at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, where she teaches and engages in research in African literature, Literary theory, Masculinities, and Literary and artistic constructions of gender and sex. Her PhD is in African Languages and Literature from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA. She has published in journals such as *the West Africa Review*, *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men*, *Research in African Literatures* and *the African Studies Quarterly*. Dr Ennin is the author of the book, *Men Across Time: Contesting Masculinities in Ghanaian Fiction and Film* (2022), published by NISC. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9448-9446>

migration has been neglected. Researchers Katarzyna Wojnicka and Paula Pustułka define migration as a process that influences the changes in defining, negotiating and performing masculinities. They indicate that migration as a gendered and gendering process has conspicuous consequences for men, women and societies, with the notion of migrants' sex preconditioning our reception of migratory flows (Wojnicka and Pustułka 2019: 91).

Migration has become a very important phenomenon in the wake of current political upheavals all over the world. Gendered studies in migration have turned to men and masculinities and their experience of migration. From multiple angles, scholars examine migrant men in the context of labour markets, family transformations, as well as social problems such as domestic and sexual violence, youth criminality or culturally-specific crimes (Kanaiaupuni 2000; Manuh 2005; Griffiths 2015; Vlase 2018;). Wojnicka and Pustułka identify one of the milestones within this process as the publication of the edited volume by Donaldson et al. (2009) in which the editors not only brought together research on men and migration using approaches from critical men and masculinities studies, but also introduced an intersectional approach by covering issues such as class, race, ethnicity and citizenship. Helen Wray's and Katharine Charsley's special issue of *Men and Masculinities* (2015) entitled *Migrant Men* is another important document on men and the migration experience. The 2017 *NORMA* Special Issue on *Men and Migration* consisted of several articles, dealing with issues such as hybrid masculinity among third culture children; narratives of dangerous foreign masculinity; relations between nature, space and masculinity of migrant men in the United States; the multiplicity of masculinities among Polish migrants in different parts of Europe, as well as analyses of transnational fatherhood. The majority of the articles demonstrated that migrant men cannot be treated as a homogeneous group as seen in the varied terms that are used to elucidate masculinities. The main thrust behind this is the intersectional matrix of social class, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, family situation, and many aspects that generate contradictory positionalities and outcomes of migrating men.

Masculinity is defined in various ways. Gender scholars generally agree that it is an identity marker that is constructed by historical circumstances and social discourses and not primarily by biology (Berger et al. 1995). An important characteristic of masculinity is that it is constructed and not innate. Roy McCloughry (1992, 20) describes masculinity as being about

the values, expectations and interpretations which men have attached to the idea of being a man. Therefore, he argues that it is possible for men to behave differently if they understand that these ideas can be challenged and changed. Todd Reeser (2010) argues that a person's conception and understanding of masculinity is bound to change when he moves from one place to another. This is because the values and interpretations of masculinity are not universal. Each culture has its own definitions and expectations of masculinity which may sometimes be very different from some other culture. Masculinity is also historically specific. In the same culture, behaviour that was seen as "masculine" in the 19th century may not be seen as such in the 21st century. As a result of these differences in time and space, masculinity is studied not as a single definition but as variable and complex, giving rise to the more current expression, "masculinities." Critics then argue that because masculinity is a culturally specific and socially functional "gender identity," we should be cognizant of its peculiar and often negative consequences for men. Reeser makes this claim in the light of the fact that gender identities as presently defined obscure social possibilities for men themselves.

Thesis Statement

In the light of the above, this paper examines the portrayal of toxic masculinity exemplified in the male characters in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*, arguing that the men's propensity to exploit the women in their lives is exacerbated by the harsh reality of migrant life in Germany. According to Michael Kimmel and Tristan Bridges (2011), masculinity refers to the behaviours, social roles, and relations of men within a given society as well as the meanings attributed to them. The term masculinity stresses gender, unlike male, which stresses biological sex. Masculinity is socially constructed and contains many variations. These variations are seen in four ways. First, masculinity varies *historically*. Second, masculinity varies *cross-culturally*—conceptualizations of masculinity are culturally specific, each culture determines what it means to be a man. Third, masculinity varies *intra-psychically*—what it means to be a man changes over the course of one's life. Finally, masculinity varies *contextually*—even within a given society and time, masculinity can mean different things to different people. Therefore, "being a man" means different things across different historical periods, to men in different societies and

even within the same society. This explanation is important in the context of this paper as it will account for the changing masculinity of the male characters to be discussed.

Masculine behaviours, according to social scientists such as Terry Kupers, may be healthy or unhealthy. Unhealthy masculine behaviour is any behaviour that has a detrimental effect on others and/the performer. Unhealthy masculine behaviour is normally referred to as toxic. Toxic masculinity thus refers to the dominant form of masculinity wherein men use dominance, violence, and control to assert their power and superiority. According to Kupers (2005), toxic masculinity can be defined as the need to aggressively compete with and dominate others and encompasses the most problematic proclivities in men. The impacts of toxic masculinity are far-reaching. One example is that it can lead to more violence against women, as men may feel entitled or validated in their abusive behaviour. Unhealthy masculinity is also incredibly detrimental to men. Research has shown that men who display traits of toxic masculinity are more likely to experience isolation, poor health, and unhappiness. In *Beyond the Horizon*, toxic masculinity is seen in the ways that Akobi exploits Mara as chattel for financial gain. It is also manifest in his misogynist attitude towards Mara, beating her up at the least provocation, sexually molesting her and disregarding her feelings as a human being.

Author and Text

Amma Darko was born in Tamale in 1956. From Northern Ghana, she moved years later to the Ashanti Region. She studied at the University of Science and Technology at Kumasi, where she received her diploma in 1980. Afterwards, she worked for the Technology Consultancy Centre. Then, in 1981 she travelled to Germany and upon her return, went to live in Accra where she is a tax inspector. Amma Darko serves as one of the new voices writing in contemporary Ghana, coming after writers like Ama Ata Aidoo and Ayikwei Armah. Her novels straddle the divide between what is termed as ‘serious’ literature and popular fiction. On one hand, her novels could be placed among the novels of disillusionment such as Ayikwei Armah’s *The Beautiful Ones are not yet Born*, Ama Ata Aidoo’s *No Sweetness Here* and Kofi Awoonor’s *This Earth my Brother*. On the other hand, her fiction also fits into the vibrant tradition of Ghanaian popular writing in her treatment of popular plots, character types, gendered struggles and coping strategies. Critics assert that she generally dispenses with the romantic plot but:

consistently respond[s] to ‘hot’ issues such as marriage, the illusion of the successful ‘burger’ and the phenomenon of street children, and the sensational manner in which she handles her subjects, coupled with the in-text moral judgments (verbalized or implied) and commentaries that accompany it, which demonstrate her leanings towards the didacticism of writers of Ghanaian popular fiction such as J. Benibengor Blay, K. Bediako (Angsotinge et al. 2007: 84).

Darko’s first novel, *Beyond the Horizon*, launched her onto the literary scene in Ghana and Africa in general. First published in German in 1991, and then translated into English in 1995, *Beyond the Horizon*, tells the story of a young man who sells his wife into prostitution in Germany in his desire to become a ‘big man’ in his community. The time setting is around the late 1970s and early 1980s and the story takes place in Ghana and Munich, Germany. Akobi refuses to be a farmer after his middle school education and convinces his father of the importance of living in the city. In the city, he finds work as a messenger clerk at the office of a government ministry but soon realizes that life in the city is too expensive for his meager salary. He cannot afford to live in the best part of town and rather finds a place in the ghetto. However, Akobi is not content to live as a poor man in the city. In his bid to live the life of the rich and important, he hatches an ambitious plan of going to Europe but as he cannot afford to save all the money he needs on his salary, he decides to get a wife from the village to help him acquire it. When he eventually goes to Europe, he finds out that it is even harder to make ends meet as an undocumented alien. Subsequently, he brings over his wife, Mara, and blackmails her into prostitution whilst pocketing the money she makes from the trade. When Mara realizes Akobi’s deception and his exploitation of her, she orchestrates his arrest. However, she is unable to return home to Ghana because of the stigma and shame associated with her practice of prostitution and remains in Germany, hooked on drugs and continuing to work as a prostitute to look after her sons and family back in Ghana.

Amma Darko’s novel has received a lot of critical attention, bringing it to the notice of academia as well as the general public. Generally, it has been discussed as an indictment of the treatment of women in Ghanaian society (Angsotinge et al. 2007; Adjei 2009), the exposure of

domestic and international violence against women (O’Connell and Odamtten 2007), and a commentary upon prostitution and the female body (Jonet 2007). Angsotinge et al (2007: 83) affirm that Amma Darko’s novels “deal with the present, and the metaphorical stench from rotten entrails seeps into everything.” These critics see *Beyond the Horizon* as a critique of consumerism manifested in Akobi’s desire for wealth and material possessions such as televisions, cars, refrigerators, etc. – a consumerism that is also evident in Mara when in the end, she compensates her family with a car, houses and other material possessions in lieu of her presence. Consumerism may be the outward manifestation of these characters’ status as people of means, but I argue that the lack of upward mobility and access to employment opportunities propel these migrants out of their home countries. Angsotinge et al also aver that the male characters in Darko’s novels are not explored beyond their asocial and absolutely amoral characters; in essence, they have been written out of the narratives (2007: 90); I interpret this as a deliberate silencing of the male characters by the writer in order to enhance the exploitation of the female, who is given enough space in the narrative to tell her story. All the male characters are striving for power and recognition in their community, and they take whatever avenues are available to achieve this. Mawuli Adjei (2009: 47) contributes to the discussion of Darko’s male characters by indicating that men in Darko’s works are the perpetrators of rape, battery, betrayal, abandonment, economic exploitation and obnoxious cultural practices. This perpetrator-victim relationship, subsequently, leaves the women consigned to fear, trauma, suffering and death. He asserts that rhetorical violence and narrative subjectivity are ways of confronting and demolishing male dominance and exploitation. I read this proliferation of perpetrator-victim images in Darko’s work, however, as an attempt by the author to demonize the system of domination inherent in hegemonic masculinity to highlight the exigency of favorable masculine expressions.

Mary Ellen Higgins (2006) discusses Darko’s book as exploring the failed solidarity between men and women, between women of different nationalities, and between parents and daughters because of the unhealthy masculine behaviours at play in the novel. In her analysis of *Mara*, she finds it problematic that after Mara’s arrival in the home Akobi shares with Gitte in Germany, Akobi forces her to assume control of all the household chores, thus reinforcing and entrenching her exploited position in the eyes of her husband. Akobi tells Gitte, “Our African

women work even harder than us men” (106). Akobi also marginalizes her position in his life by reducing her status from a wife to that of a sister in the home he lives in with Gitte, his German wife. Forced to share her husband with Gitte, Mara lives on the fringes of their home. In the novel, Higgins (2006: 313) states that, “Darko expose[s] the fictionality of multiple postcolonial promises - the promise of just governments after independence, of women’s equal rights, and the lingering, empty promises of upward development through close ties with Europe.” She points to the issues of domestic abuse, domestic rape and the international trafficking of women.

Critics who have examined migration in Darko’s book such as Silue (2017), have focused on how Germany is represented as a place of immorality where African immigrants are turned into beasts without conscience. Others like Gbaguidi (2014) discuss the disillusionment young African migrants face in Europe. Gbaguidi categorically states that migration is not a better option for the African migrant who is better off staying at home, whilst others like Tomi Adeaga (2021) focus on migration and its attendant sexual exploitation of women. As can be deduced from the review, the novel is predominantly looked at as a critique of the marginalized and oppressive treatment of women by men. Whilst others like Adeaga have focused on migration and its attendant sexual exploitation of women, the link between migration and unhealthy masculine behavior is yet to be explored. This paper begins this discussion by examining how migration may be seen as a possible cause of toxicity in male characters in the text.

Making Monsters

In making her confession, Mara begins by narrating her childhood; specifically, she describes a father whose only interest in his daughters was the money he would make from giving them away in marriage. Mara says that her father instead of looking for a good man for his daughters, “had a different formula for choosing or accepting husbands for his daughters, which took more into consideration the number of cows coming in as the bride price than the character of the man” (4). Mara tells the reader that she was given away to the man who, “*paid* two white cows, four healthy goats, four lengths of cloths, beads, gold jewelry and two bottles of London Dry Gin to her family and took her away (3, *italics provided*). The transactional language used in

the description underlines the exchange that takes place when the woman is getting married. Instead of partners choosing each other, the marriage is reduced to an exchange system where a woman is exchanged for goods. Mara continues to use these expressions of trade throughout the narrative, “[her father] had proclaimed that he would gladly have given me away even for one goat” (7); “Three weeks later [Akobi] came straight from work ... and left for the city ... with me as his wife ... and property!” (7).

Her father’s callous attitude towards his daughters and wife betrays a fundamental societal perception of women as chattel, and disposable. The women are thus portrayed as goods that can be exchanged for other goods, as well as objects that can be passed on from one man to another, thus Mara is passed on from her father’s house to Akobi’s. This inherent idea of woman as disposable property permeates the entire narrative and shows in the way Akobi treats Mara in the city. The practice of treating women as disposable assets contributes to discriminatory and misogynistic attitudes towards women by men in society and leads to subsequent abuse of women.

Akobi is portrayed as a young man who is obsessed with making a good impression on people. In Ghana, he takes care to dress in the best European clothes he can afford, “pencil-striped, grey trousers, a stiffly starched and ironed white shirt, a thin black tie, and impeccably polished black Beatles boots” (6), the outfit that Mara says was “his pride” (10). Secondly, he refuses to work as a farmer because he believes it will lower his standing and esteem in the eyes of the people in his village; after all, he is the first man in the village to have obtained a middle school leaving certificate which is equivalent to a high school diploma. In the city of Accra, he keeps a wide berth between himself and Mara so that his colleagues at work will not know that she is his wife. In a description of the scene at the lorry station, Mara shows the extent to which Akobi goes to maintain this impression:

Next morning, I left later with him, he, smart in his pencil-striped grey trousers, snow-white shirt, thin black tie and sharply pointed Beatles boots, with me beside him in my old faded clothes, my crude thick-soled rubber-tyre slippers and on my head, my sieve container full of cooked eggs. I don’t think that all this while that we had been living together Akobi had really bothered to take a closer look at me in my shabby clothes ... But that

morning he did. And ... he didn't like what he saw ... at the station he left a respectable space between us. And when he saw [his bus] coming he would very quickly and hastily move even farther from me as if suddenly I was a stink-bomb scheduled to go off soon.

Even though he is ashamed of Mara because she is not as sophisticated or well dressed as the women at his workplace, Akobi makes no efforts to help her acquire the sophistication or better clothes he admires on other women, and he even forbids her to sew any of the cloths that were part of her dowry. His behaviour may be understood in the light of the fact that in the city where he lives and works among people who are better off than him, Mara's shabbiness validates his image as a better person than her.

Poverty and lack of good job prospects because of his level of education cause Akobi to live in a slum in the city of Accra. G. K. Nukunya (2003: 149) asserts that in the early to late 1980s in Ghana, a great rise in urbanization, as a result of the drifts of people from the villages to the towns in search of greener pastures, had led to the creation of ghettos and slums in many of the towns and cities, and the gap between the rich and the poor had grown wider. He indicates that the social institutions of kinship and marriage were greatly affected by all these changes and traditional sanctions that were used to sustain accepted kinship and marital behaviors had been weakened or lost.

It can be argued, that although Akobi lacks the wherewithal to live in a better part of the city, he dresses well to maintain the façade of his life as a well-to-do young man living in the city. As such he is able to conceal the truth of his impoverishment from his family and the community. Mara, who finds out his financial situation, also helps to perpetuate the myth by not telling her family the true state of affairs. His extreme obsession with winning the approval of others and his driving desire to be accepted into the society of the wealthy and important, serve as the driving force that control his life and behaviour. Thus, in Germany, he Europeanized his name to "Cobby" to gain the approval of his German acquaintances.

It becomes clear that Akobi has low self-esteem that propels him to pretend to belong to the elite class in his society. This low self-esteem and his desire to achieve some authority at all cost may be responsible in influencing him to subjugate Mara so that he can be in a position of

control and power. Thus, the exhibition of toxicity, seen in the physical abuse and anti-social behaviour in his relationship with Mara may be interpreted as a bid for authority.

This obsession reflects Akobi's desire to achieve the status of a "big man." However, his lack of a good education prevents him from getting a job that will help him acquire such a status. Similarly, his contempt for life in the village causes him to reject working as a farmer to make more money. Consequently, he looks to Europe as a place that will ensure him the status he needs. However, the journey to Europe involves money he does not have, and therein comes Mara. Akobi marries Mara mainly to acquire her monetized labour. Mary Higgins equates Akobi to the European colonizers and neo-colonizers because he fails to grant Mara rights due her in their traditional setting; he takes back the cloths and jewelry that were given to her during their marriage ceremony, he refuses to share his earnings with her, and divests her of her earnings at the market to finance his dream of going to live in Europe and becoming rich. Akobi's anxieties about achieving his dream in Germany fuel his misogynistic attitude towards Mara both in Ghana and in Germany. Interested only in the profit he can reap from her labour, he sees her as a commodity, beats her at the slightest sign of insolence (in his opinion) and crushes her moves to be free from him. All these indicate an unhealthy conception of his masculinity.

Emasculated by his menial job and poverty, Akobi relies on the subservient attitude of Mara to gain some semblance of power and control. By exploiting and dominating Mara, Akobi gains some measure of control as a man in his own eyes; therefore, he thrives on the fear Mara has for him. When he migrates to Germany and realizes that he is still unable to achieve the status of a "big man" he hoped to achieve, he relies on Mara to bolster his ego as a man. Immigration then presents a whole new set of problems for the illegal immigrant. Akobi must ensure his stay in Germany, and he does this by feigning love for a German woman Gitte, marrying her and pretending to build a home back in Ghana and take her there. He must also learn new gender roles that are completely in contrast to all he knows. In Germany, he washes, cleans and cooks: - chores that he would have looked down on with disdain in Ghana. Mara shows her astonishment at this transformation when she describes the scene that takes place when she arrives in Gitte and Akobi's home in Germany and Gitte asks her if she's hungry:

My mouth fell open. I was shocked. Akobi to cook for me? ... So Akobi, this my own dear husband Akobi who back home used to reproach me if I was a minute late with his food; who many a time landed me knocks on my forehead with his knuckles if I fetched him too little or too much water in the bowl for him to wash his hands before and after eating; this my very own Akobi it was who, upon his white wife's commands, trotted into the kitchen. Seconds later, the clattering of pans and spoons told me that he had commenced his assigned task ... Akobi had turned into a really good cook (97; 103).

Thus, illegal immigration forces the enactment of different masculine models in the new land. In Ghana, Akobi's hypermasculine behavior of master of his household is not tenable in Germany with his German wife who has a different concept of who a man is. Neither Gitte, his German wife, nor Comfort, his sophisticated girlfriend, is ready to treat him as a king and pander to his every wish, he must learn how to be a new kind of man for Gitte and Comfort, and thus, his masculinity becomes a subordinated masculinity that must learn to accept the woman as an equal partner in their relationship.

Only Mara does not demand a change from him and inadvertently continues the vicious cycle of abuse even in Germany. Thus, in the absence of Gitte, Akobi orders Mara around to do as he wishes; she becomes his personal maid, and eventually, he blackmails her into prostitution. Akobi wants to attain the status of a "big man" man by any means possible so that he can also live up to the demands of his girlfriend, Comfort. Comfort, unlike Mara, does not want to engage in any servile work in Germany; she wants to live as a woman of means just as she had done back in Ghana, therefore, Akobi must get extra money to support her lifestyle as well as keep up his part of the bills in the home he shares with Gitte. Consequently, when he forces Mara into prostitution and controls her earnings, he uses the money to take care of Comfort in the luxury she demands.

It appears that Akobi is not the only man who exhibits such toxic masculinity as an immigrant. Osey, a friend of Akobi, is another young Ghanaian man who has migrated to Germany with his wife, Vivian. He takes over the care of Mara at the airport from the agent

who brings Mara to Germany. His actions and behaviour towards Mara at the airport and in transit indicates a man who has no respect for women whatsoever.

Whilst waiting for the train at the station, Osey takes Mara to watch a pornographic movie at the station and then makes lewd comments to her, telling her the film was his welcome treat to her, she says in a horrified tone, “action film à la Osey, was raw obscenity. When I told him just that, thinking it would embarrass him, he turned the tables on me, belittling me and reproaching me to leave my primitiveness back home and to start living in civilization” (62). Not satisfied with this, he also makes a move on Mara in the train, claiming that it is part of the payment for his job in bringing her to Akobi (66).

Apart from his sexual objectification and demeaning of women, he also shows a lack of respect for African women. He does not help Mara with her luggage throughout the journey, content to watch her carry the heavy luggage all the way. He berates women and sees them as useful only for sex (68). This attitude is extended even to his wife who he beats at the slightest provocation (73) and forces to work as a prostitute, whilst he keeps her earnings, making her completely dependent on him. Osey’s loss of all inhibitions and traditional Ghanaian values becomes very prominent when he has sex with his wife in the full glare of Akobi and Mara in the same room, showing not an iota of respect for his wife (84). His brand of toxic masculinity shows the harmful effects of this unhealthy masculine behaviour on the performer. He becomes an obnoxious individual who has no self-respect and is aggressive and prone to violent acts.

The misogynistic attitude of the male characters towards the women in the novel can be attributed to their migration experience. The difficult financial challenges coupled with their status as undocumented aliens are conditions in the host country that cause them to subject their women to dehumanizing experiences and sex slavery. In their bid to survive in the host country, they lose their sense of decency and moral values and degenerate into monsters. Like Akobi who does not consider Mara as an equal partner in their marriage, Kanye’s unnamed boyfriend who tells her he is studying engineering in Germany, convinces her to come to Germany only to turn her into a prostitute whilst he lives off her earnings (116). Osey in the same vein uses Vivian as an article of labour; she works as a prostitute whilst he controls and keeps her earnings.

Apart from the difficulty of making a living as an illegal immigrant in Germany, where Ghanaian men and women as shown in the novel resort to all forms of dubious means to earn a living, the drive for hegemony in these men also contributes to the creation of exploitative men. Kanye's boyfriend takes her earnings and buys expensive sets of musical instruments which he ships home and hires out to musicians all over Africa, whilst spending most of his time driving a Porsche and having dinner with beautiful white women whose feet he would lick if they commanded him to. (117). From being on the fringes of life back home, these men suddenly have access to money and power, and they would do anything to maintain the power they have found as men with money to drive expensive cars and financially support their relatives back home; even if they must denigrate their wives and exploit them for money.

Akobi exploits Mara's sexuality by appropriating earnings she makes as an object of sexual desire for men in Germany, for his own profit and social advancement. O'Connell and Odamtten (2007: 52) in their book on Amma Darko's works assert that illegal alien women in the West are converted into sexual objects, and the employment opportunities available to these illegal immigrants are generally only those that dehumanize the individual. Therefore, when Akobi invites Mara to Germany, the legal opportunities for her to work are nonexistent as she is an undocumented alien. When she finds work as a house help in a German household "under the table", an expression that indicates that because she is an illegal resident, she cannot receive her remuneration through the formal means, and thus will be paid with cash at the end of the month by the employer; it is not long before she is sacked because the law enforcement agencies put pressure on Germans not to hire undocumented aliens. Akobi then forces her into prostitution. Nonetheless, it may be argued that Mara is as complicit as Akobi and the wider society in their belief in the myth that Europe promises wealth and status for the colonized. Her decision to join Akobi in Germany is driven in part by her internalization of the "been-to" myth (Higgins 2006: 315). It begs credibility that she would believe that Akobi has her interests at heart in inviting her to Germany, judging by how he has ill-treated her in the past. This is a further exposition of her naivety in the novel. Operating under the assumption that those who have been to Europe and North America are deserving of all respect and admiration, she buys into Akobi's dream of acquiring imported goods like cars, televisions and fridges from abroad,

and is subsequently duped by him. In the end, this quest for “big man-ship” that the two engage in leads to their downfall.

This novel presents a sustained image of women being treated as less than human, as people without rights and privileges. It portrays women as chattel to be passed on from one man to another. Thus, Mara is transferred from her father to Akobi, then to her first pimp, Peepy and then to Oves. Consequently, all these men are seen as traders in human flesh as property, supervising its circulation and reproduction within a local and global network of exploitative relations all in a bid to acquire and maintain the status of “big men” in their societies as indicated by Odamtten. And this is made clearer in a geopolitical setting where the rights of the undocumented immigrant are practically nonexistent.

O’Connell and Odamtten further assert that Akobi is driven by licit desires, to live a western lifestyle and to acquire wealth, “however, the privilege afforded by his gender, coupled with his lack of understanding of how such desires might unfold in the neocolonial context of the world in which they live, make his actions all the more disastrous” (2007: 50). As I have already indicated, shortcomings in the areas of education and upward social mobility are some of the catalysts that propel Akobi towards Europe and encourage his misogynistic behaviour. Odamtten sees Akobi as the architect and victim of his own lust propelled by the “come hither” charms of a capitalist system of which he is only partially conscious (2007:106). In the end, it becomes a clear case of poetic justice that Akobi’s dreams of acquiring wealth and living the life of the influential and prosperous are destroyed by Mara.

The society plays a big role in perpetrating this system of exploitation of women like Mara. This condition pertains to a society where a woman’s worth is equated to that of property which can be expended in an environment where the education of both genders is not given equal attention, and the female is socialized to accept her place as subordinate to the male. This coupled with the challenges of illegal migration contribute in propelling Akobi and the other men into becoming the monsters they are in the novel. By despising all other legitimate avenues of labour and choosing one (prostitution) which involves the destruction of his fellow human being, Akobi shows a warped personality. In presenting such a demonized character, Darko may be suggesting that the cost of illegal migration may be too high, not only to the victims who are used as means to an end, but also to the men who embark on this quest.

The cost to Mara is not a jail sentence like Akobi, nor drug addiction like Vivian. Hers is a loss of identity as an honorable daughter, mother and wife, and a life of permanent exile from her homeland. Ashamed of her own life as a prostitute, she prefers exile to facing the complete annihilation of her being, should the truth about her be made known to her family. On her decision to avoid exposure, Catherine Jonet (2007) declares:

Mara's reference to 'black Africa' seems to signal a desire for her condition in 'white Europe' to remain concealed, bifurcated from her life in West Africa. Mara separates her identity in West Africa from her identity in Europe. She leads a 'double life' where her sexual exploitation as a prostitute is closeted in order to conceal its existence from her family, friends, and home in West Africa (204-205).

Jonet's point above is pertinent in understanding the trauma that these women go through. The loss of dignity and respect, as well as self-hood that dodge their steps every day; the inability to go back home and meet their loved ones and the sense of shame that dwells in their hearts all the time, are reflections of the trauma they live with.

Although critics discuss Amma Darko's novel for the depiction of the harsh life the illegal African migrant woman experiences in Europe, the focus tends to skip the portrayal of masculinities that emerge from the migration experience and the impact on the male characters. This paper has attempted a re-reading of migration in the novel and submits that more attention should be placed on the presentation of male characters and the toxic masculinity that may be birthed because of the migration experience.

References

- Adeaga, Tomi. (2021). "Sexuality, Resilience and Mobility in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and Chika Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*". In *African Women Writing Diaspora: Transnational Perspectives in the Twenty-first Century*, edited by Rose Sackeyfio, Lexington Books.
- Adjei, Mawuli. (2009). "Male-bashing and Narrative Subjectivity in Amma Darko's First Three Novels." *SKASE: Journal of Literary Studies* 1 (1): 47-61.

- Angsotinge, Gervase et al. (2007). "Exploitation, Negligence and Violence: Gendered Interrelationships in Amma Darko's Novels." In *Broadening the Horizon: Critical Introductions to Amma Darko*, edited by Vincent O. Odamtten. Banbury: Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited.
- Berger, Maurice, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson. eds. (1995) *Constructing Masculinities*. NY: Routledge.
- Blumen, O. and Kellerman, A. (1990). "Gender differences in Commuting Distance, Residence, and Employment location: Metropolitan Haifa, 1972–1983". *The Professional Geographer*, 42: 54–71.
- Crane, R. (2007). "Is there a Quiet Revolution in Women's Travel? Revisiting the gender gap in commuting". *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 73(3): 298–316.
- Darko, Amma. (1995). *Beyond the Horizon*. Cambridge: Heinemann.
- Deakin E. (2002). "Sustainable Transportation U.S. Dilemmas and European Experiences". *Transportation Research Record*. 1792(1):1-11.
- Donaldson, M., Hibbins, R., Howson, R., and Pease, B. eds. (2009). *Migrant men: Critical studies of Masculinities and the Migration experience*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Elias, W., Newmark, G. and Shiftan, Y. (2008). "Gender and Travel Behaviour in two Arab Communities in Israel". *Transportation Research Record*, 75–83.
- Gbaguidi, Celestin. (2014). "African Illegal Immigrants' Disillusionment in Europe: A study of Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*." *Litterature, Langues et Linguistique* 2(2).
- Griffiths, M. (2015). "Here, man is Nothing!" *Men and Masculinities* 18 (4): 468-488.
- Hanson, Susan (2010). "Gender and mobility: New approaches for informing Sustainability". *Gender, Place and Culture, A Journal of Feminist Geography*. 17:1, 5-23.
- Higgins, Mary Ellen. (2006). "Transnational, Transcultural Feminisms? Amma Darko's Response in *Beyond the Horizon*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 25(2): 307–322.
- Jonet, Catherine. (2007). "She Doesn't Know the Truth about Me: [T]he Shaping Presence of the Closet in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*." In *Gender and Sexuality in African Literature and Film*, edited by Ada Uzoamaka Azodo and Maureen Ngozi Eke, 199-211. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.

- Kanaiaupuni, Shawn Malia. (2000). "Reframing the Migration Question: An Analysis of Men, Women, and Gender in Mexico." *Social Forces*, 78, 4:1311–1347.
- Kupers, Terry A. (2005) "Toxic Masculinity as a Barrier to Mental Health Treatment in Prison." *Journal of clinical psychology*. 61(6), 713–724.
- Manuh, T. (Ed.). (2005). *At Home in The World? International Migration and Development in Contemporary Ghana and West Africa*. Accra: Sub-Saharan Africa Press.
- McCloughry, Roy. (1992). *Men and Masculinity: From Power to Love*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Nukunya, G. K. 2003. *Tradition and Change in Ghana: An Introduction to Sociology*. 2nd ed. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.
- O'Connell, Sean P. and Vincent O. Odamtten. (2007). "Licit Desires, Alien Bodies and the Economics of Invisibility in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and Stephen Frear's *Dirty Pretty Things*." In *Broadening the Horizon: Critical Introductions to Amma Darko*, edited by Vincent O. Odamtten, 48-57. Banbury: Ayebia Clarke Publishing Limited.
- Reeser, Todd. (2010). *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Silue, Lefara. (2017). "Fictionalized Representation of Space in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*." *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*. 4 (2): 217-228.
- Vlase, I. (2018). Men's Migration, Adulthood, and the Performance of Masculinities. In: Vlase, I., Voicu, B. (eds) *Gender, Family, and Adaptation of Migrants in Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wojnicka, Katarzyna and Paula Pustulka (2019.) "Research on Men, Masculinities and Migration: Past, Present and Future." *NORMA* 14 (2):91-95.