

## *Original Paper*

# Migration, Human Trafficking, Sexploitation and Trauma in

## Amma Darko's *Beyond The Horizon*

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### **Abstract**

*Human trafficking and exploitation have become prevalent migration configurations in Africa that often plunges the victims into harrowing mental, emotional, and physical trauma. This paper aims at portraying African female immigrants' experiences in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* projecting the female migrant characters as victims of human trafficking, sexual abuse, and economic exploitation in the hands of their selfish and egoistic husbands. Given the complexities of the lives of African women who immigrate to Europe and get caught in a spider's web of prostitution and pornography, the fictionalized German universe in the text reveals that Europe is not the "Eldorado" where milk and honey flows in abundance as perceived by most Africans. The paper's analysis employs a feminist analytical framework to examine the objectification and commodification of the black female body. It submits that, despite their traumatic experiences, these African immigrant women assert their sexuality by challenging the status quo thereby obtaining for themselves an emancipated female agency that allows them to take control of their own bodies as well as their financial gains.*

### **Keywords**

*Migration, Human trafficking, Sexploitation, Commodification, Trauma*

### **1. Introduction**

Migration is a universal phenomenon driven by the human desire for a better future. Africans who migrate either voluntarily or involuntarily within and beyond national boundaries face multiple challenges in the world today as a result of various push-and-pull factors ranging from wars, conflicts, poverty, greener pastures and many others. Due to continuous migration into areas and countries perceived as peaceful and economically buoyant, numerous socio-political, economic and psychological issues are bound to surface. Human trafficking and sexual exploitation are some of the

challenges that most African female immigrants are caught up with in the world. Some of these women are trafficked as sex workers, while most children are trafficked on basis of forced labour. Despite this menace, some of these African immigrants willfully trafficked themselves, while others are ready to either die along the Sahara desert or in the Mediterranean sea in search for a better life in Europe and America. Most African women who engage in human trafficking for commercial sex purposes, often do so as a result of poverty and the dream of an “Eldorado” in Europe and America. Amma Darko’s *Beyond the Horizon* explores the motivations behind migration, including the pursuit of economic opportunities, escape from poverty and hardship, and the hope for a brighter future. Darko skillfully captures the aspirations and dreams that fuel the determination of her characters who set off on these journeys, painting a vivid picture of the complex factors that prompt these individuals to leave their homes in Africa for Europe. She portrays the traumatic effects of human trafficking and sexual exploitation her female characters undergo in the hands of their husbands and a host of men in a hostile environment like Germany.

These women (Mara, Kaye, Vivian and Comfort) in *Beyond the Horizon* experience all forms of exploitation (sexual, financial and physical) in the hands of their husbands through forced prostitution, forced labour, rape, forced marriage, pornographic shows and many others. Darko’s novel projects two distinct societies, Africa and Europe whose cultural experiences and peculiarities are quite different. Poverty and the dream to live a better life abroad are those constraints that make the characters move from Ghana to Germany. Their dreams are however squashed as the Western society’s realities of life stare at them glaringly in the face and pushes them to indulge in all sorts of demeaning activities in order to survive. This paper therefore, focuses on how and why the female migrant falls prey to human trafficking and explores their effects and consequent resistance to it. In order to achieve this goal, the paper is analyzed from a feminist point of view assessing the impact of African feminism on gender dynamics, social inequality, exploitation and the impact of Western influence on the traditional African society.

Human trafficking generally constitutes a serious crime and a violation of human rights whose effects have received the attention of several scholars and policy makers in a bid to curb this menace. Several definitions of human trafficking abound but for the purpose of clarity, this paper shall adopt the definition of human trafficking proposed by Monde-Anumihe Chinenye and Portland State University. According to Chinenye, “Human trafficking is often characterized as the exploitation of people through force, coercion, threat, deception, and includes human rights abuses such as debt bondage, deprivation of liberty, and lack of control over freedom and labour” (Qtd, Aiyetoro and Owhorodu, 5). Portland State University shares a similar definition to that of Chinenye cited above but goes ahead to include that “human beings are trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual activities as well as forced labour” which forms the basis of our arguments in this paper.

Problematic as this phenomena is as far as human rights violation is concerned, this activity continues to be very lucrative for those involved in the business as they make billions of dollars from trafficking

women as commercial sex workers. Though controversial as the subject is, some women willingly allow themselves to be trafficked through dangerous routes to these parts of the world despite the difficulties they encounter while crossing either the Sahara desert or the Mediterranean sea in search for greener pastures. In many instances, so many lives are lost along these difficult and dangerous routes. Germany in this text is ironically portrayed as an “Eldorado” where many dreams are fulfilled, although the characters live shattered dreams in a land rich with ‘milk and honey’.

Darko’s *Beyond the Horizon* provides a critical commentary on the socio-economic, and cultural transformations taking place in Ghana and many other developing countries as the author skillfully weaves together multiple narratives, capturing the intricacies of urbanization, the clash between traditional and modern values, and the impact of external influences on local communities. Set against the backdrop of rural Ghana, the story delves into the lives of young men and women who are driven by the desire for a better life, leading them to embark on arduous journeys in search of economic opportunities and personal fulfillment. Through vivid characterization and evocative storytelling, Darko sheds light on the complex realities faced by migrants and highlights the resilience and determination that underlie their quest for a brighter future.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

Migration has attracted a wide range of literature from Africa and beyond which attempts to address this issue. Besides Darko, some of these African writers include: Chika Unigwe’s *On Black Sister’s Street* (2009), Ademora- Ezeigbo’s *Trafficked* (2008), Ifeoma Chinwuaba’s *Merchants of Flesh* (2009), Chris Abani’s *Becoming Abigail* (2008), and a host of others. These writers in their fictional representations of reality, portray black female migrants as victims of the male-controlled sex industry in the global sphere. Many scholars have devoted considerable attention to the independent and self-directed movements of women from different parts of the world to Europe and America especially those originating from sub-Saharan Africa. There is a growing consensus among some of these scholars that feminized migration represents a central aspect of the twenty-first century that requires urgent attention. To this effect, substantial critical works abound in the literary domain investigating migrant experiences, migratory patterns, and identities in Darko’s *Beyond the Horizon* from different perspectives (Aderanti Adepoju, 2005; Awitor, 2013; Umezurike, 2015; Okeke-Ihejirika, 2016; Aiyetoro & Oworodu, 2018). While their contributions have been laudable in the portrayal of gender issues, the issues related to human trafficking for whatever reasons have remained a serious problem in the African continent that need to be highlighted and reconsidered. Most of the women trafficked from Africa to Europe are sexually abused, exploited, objectified and commodified in their new Western abode.

Uchechukwu Umezurike illuminates the prevailing phallogentric culture which exploit gender difference in a society where women are reduced to objects of use and abuse by men and projects how the oppressed female attempts to resist the patriarchal structures of family marriage which continue to

subjugate them (Umezurike, 295). This resonates the experiences of Darko's protagonist Mara, who is subjected to all forms of ill treatment and sexually exploited by her husband Akobi. Her husband is the dominant subject by which Mara must submit to. Her subjection turns her into the property of her husband, although this contradicts Molaria Ogundipe Leslie's argument that "a woman's body is her inherent property" (547). Mara signifies the image of "an ideal African wife" who is defined in relationship to her husband. Her commitment entails the sacrifice of her own interests and happiness.

Violence and the violation of human rights are other concerns raised by critics of this text. Etse Awitor projects the lives of the female characters, Mara, Vivian and Kaye who are sexually violated and brutalized by their husbands. These women according to him, "are pawns in a chessboard as they are in a state of dilemma and cannot return to Africa for fear of blackmail from their husbands" (Awitor, 178). They have been subjected to modern slavery by the same men they are married to. Although this article fails to establish the link between migratory push and pull factors as one of the major causes of human trafficking which this work attempts to highlight, it however, shares the same concern raised Omotayo et al. where the women are sexually exploited by their own husbands (1).

Lilian Acero observes that "conditions of exploitation in the Third World create extreme vulnerability for poor women to succumb to pressure to sell their bodies for sex both in local and international spaces" (Qtd, Omotayo, Ladele and Ogbulogo, 1). She goes further to assert that: "Women who are sold or trafficked for prostitution are seldom from developed countries. Typically, they belong to the global South or to other countries undergoing distressing economic conditions" (1). The female characters in Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*, lend credence to this assertion as they are from Ghana, a developing nation with a bleak economic outlook, and worst of all from poor families and backgrounds.

Domestic violence is one of those fundamental issues projected in Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*. Moussa Sidi attributes causes of domestic violence to "the weight of patriarchal practices including the dowry or bride price system, which bestow power and authority to men who consequently consider women as second-class citizens" (Sidi, 1). After Mara's marriage, she is transformed into a housemaid and provider as she does all the house chores and even pays all the bills. In addition to this, she is mercilessly and repeatedly beaten up by her husband, Akobi. The novel is filled with various cases of mistreatment, violence, humiliation and violations of women's rights influenced by the patriarchal order. In as much as these practices are relevant to the plight of African women, this article however, does not highlight issues of migration and human trafficking as major factors that contribute to the continuous exploitation of women and violence in various facets which is our major concern in this study.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This paper is analysed from a critical feminist perspective with regards to the tenets of objectification and commodification of the black female body in the Western diaspora where women's bodies are treated as objects to be bought, sold, consumed or used for the pleasure, entertainment or profit of

others. In the context of feminism, objectification on the one hand is seen as a dehumanizing practice that reinforces gender inequality and perpetuates harmful stereotypes, while commodification on the other hand refers to the ways in which women's bodies are turned into products or objects for economic gain especially in industries such as pornography, sex trafficking and the beauty and fashion industries. Prominent feminist scholars like Simone de Beauvoir (1949), Bell Hooks (1992), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2012 & 2013) argue that the objectification and commodification of the female body have negative consequences for women's autonomy, dignity, and overall well-being as these women are constantly reduced to their physical appearance or sexual appeal. De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* argues that women's bodies have historically been reduced to objects of male consumption and that this objectification limits women's agency and perpetuates inequality. Bell Hooks in her book titled *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992), examines how black women are often portrayed in popular culture, media, and art industries. She critiques the ways in which black women's bodies are objectified and consumed for the entertainment and pleasure of others.

Hakyong Ahn portrays the objectification of the female body in Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* where the female character, Lola's sexuality is implicitly objectified when she has her "big puta moment" (222). Here, she engages in an affair with the politician father of one of her classmates during her time in Santo Domingo, offering up her body for sex and then demanding two thousand American dollars in return (Díaz 212). This description marks a teenaged girl used sexually by an older man of power thus projecting her as a predator. To Hooks, this objectification reinforces power imbalances and contributes to the devaluation of black women's lives and experiences. As such, she calls for a feminist movement that centers the experiences of women and voices of black women with the aim of addressing the objectification and commodification of the black female body.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie on her part is against the objectification of women and the narrow beauty standards imposed by society on them. In her novel *Americanah* she critiques the ways in which women are objectified and reduced to their physical appearance. In her famous TED talk of December 2012 titled "We should All Be Feminists", Adichie discusses gender inequality and the objectification of women, where she addresses the societal expectations placed on women by emphasizing that women are more than just objects of desire. She argues for the importance of recognizing women's intellectual and personal agency beyond their physical appearance and challenges the stereotypes and limitations that objectification imposes on women. The overlying point here is that, these feminist critics aim at challenging the commodification and objectification of women by creating spaces where women can be seen and respected beyond their physical bodies. It is this clarion call that female writers like Amma Darko pen down in her novel *Beyond the Horizon*, the experiences of her female characters in a bid to challenging harmful standards and stereotypes on women thereby supporting policies and movements that seek to protect women from exploitation and objectification. She also advocates for gender equality at all fronts as well as the underlying dynamics of the patriarchal order which legitimizes the oppression of women.

#### 4. The Complexities of Migration and Female Experiences in Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*

##### 4.1 Forging a Better Future through Migration

The migration of Africans to Western countries in recent times is explored in fiction from various perspectives. One significant aspect of this ongoing wave of migration encompasses, but is not limited to activities such as: sex trade, trafficking of humans and human organs, and coerced or manual labour. The present surge of African migration is a consistent trend, with numerous potential migrants being willing to be trafficked and some even risking their lives crossing the desert and the Mediterranean sea in order to reach the West. The notable participation of African women in this current wave of mass migration and the abhorrent practice of human trafficking can largely be attributed to the economic circumstances prevalent in many African nations.

While *Beyond the Horizon* depicts the harsh realities of migration, it also explores the hopes and dreams that drive these characters to leave their familiar surroundings in search of a better life in Europe. Migration in this context serves as a driving force to the characters. According to Augusta Irele, Imbolo Mbue in *Behold the Dreamers* resonates Darko's vision of life abroad for the African Immigrants. In this novel, Mbue depicts how gender affects migrant experiences before and after their displacement while portraying the multiple levels at which African women endure social and institutional alienation in deigning to ascribe to the notion of the "American Dream" (9). The desire for a better life, economic opportunities, and the hope of escaping poverty and hardship push many like Akobi, Osey, Mara, Kaye, Vivian, and Comfort to leave comfort zones in Africa in search of greener pastures in Europe. They aspire to escape poverty, to access better educational/work opportunities, and to provide for their families. Akobi has to sell part of his father's land and his wife's "precious jewellery that her father-in-law gifted her, and her expensive wrappers and other jewelry given to her as dowry"(30) to obtain himself a passport and purchase an air ticket to travel to Germany. All these because, Akobi's level of education could only earn him a clerical job at the ministries with a meagre salary which could not conveniently satisfy his family and woe him a concubine, Comfort a typist at the Ministries. These and many more are the things that pushes Akobi to travel to Germany through crooked means. In the same vein, the primary female protagonist of Mbue's *Behold the Dreamers*, Neni Jonga, considers her move to New York City from Limbe, Cameroon as the opportunity to finally grow into her Afropolitan potential. When she first arrives in New York with her husband, Neni sees the city as a venue to host the dreams that were unimaginable in her native Cameroon. New York was "a place with all the pleasures she desired" (Mbue 13). Through the vivid portrayal of these female characters and their ordeals, Darko and Mbue reveal that migration is not simply an act of desperation but often a courageous endeavour fueled by the belief in a brighter future and better living conditions.

Migration inevitably brings about identity and cultural transformations. The novel highlights the complexities of navigating identity in a new and unfamiliar environment. An individual's identity in any given society is determined by race, ethnicity, language, culture, religion, gender and even lived experiences. The new identities presented by the sex workers are greatly influenced by the kind of trade

they ply in the West especially the trafficked sex workers, whose new identities go beyond change through the processes of assimilation and acculturation. The novel goes beyond mere name changes and false assumptions to explore how the black female subjects' identities are deeply intertwined with their psyche, emotions, and chosen professions. The perception of a new self emerges after enduring years of prostitution in Germany, an experience that has profoundly shaped her. According to Omotayo et al Mara's new self image emerges with her self realisation where Darko's novel opens with the protagonist, Mara staring at herself in an oval shaped mirror and seeing a new person, she says:

“I am staring painfully at an image. My image? No! – what is left of what once used to be my image” (1). The perception of a new self comes after years of prostitution in Germany, years that have rendered her “So friendless, isolated and cold” (1), and with the confession of her own complicity in her reality: “I've used myself and I have allowed myself to be too used to care any longer” (1).

From the above extract, one could deduce that most of the characters in the novel who migrate to Germany are confronted with the challenges of assimilation and cultural adaptation as they experience a sense of displacement and alienation; and grapple with the clash between traditional values and the demands of the host society. Akobi, Mara's husband equally suffers from cultural alienation as he changes his name to Cobby because “he thinks it sounds more civilized” (66). This name change, way of dressing and acquisition of a foreign accent all connote to a total rejection of his African identity, culture and heritage which many Africans go through in Europe and America just to survive in a foreign society. Darko sensitively explores the impact of migration on personal and cultural identities, highlighting the resilience and adaptability of migrants as they negotiate their place in a foreign land.

#### *4.2 Unveiling the Dark Underbelly of Human Trafficking*

Human trafficking generally constitutes a serious crime and a violation of human rights. Several types of human trafficking have been identified by Aderanti Adepoju as: “trafficking in children primarily far for labour and domestic work within and across countries; trafficking in women in young persons for sexual exploitation, mainly outside the region; and trafficking in women from outside the region for sex industry of South Africa” (Adepoju, 76). According to Anti-Slavery International, human trafficking is the “recruitment, harbouring, or transporting of people into situations of exploitation through the use of violence, deception, coercion and forced work against their will” (Qtd in Omotayo, Ladele and Ogbulogo, 2). This definition aptly captures the lives of the female characters in the text who are trafficked from Ghana to Germany by their husbands through deceptive and coercive means.

Human trafficking, a central theme in the novel, exposes the dark underbelly of migration. Poverty, which is one of factors responsible for human trafficking amongst unemployment, political instability and so on. Mara's father is a victim of this as he doesn't hesitate to give out their daughter to traffickers and their cohorts due to poverty. To him, having a child in Europe, is a big step to poverty alleviation. Germany in this text is ironically portrayed as an “Eldorado” where many dreams are fulfilled, although the characters live shattered dreams in a land rich with “milk and honey”. Akobi's dreams

turns out to be a nightmare beyond the horizon as he falls prey to human trafficking. Akobi tricks his wife Mara, to join him in Hamburg, Germany where he claims to have discovered greener pastures. Mara engages in forced labour as a domestic worker to a white lady in the neighbourhood and at the same time as a maid to her husband, Cobby and his German wife Gitte.

Mara's naivety makes it easier for her traffickers who exploit her vulnerability and dreams by enslaving her in sex business. She is subjected to total control by her husband Akobi who coerces, threatens, and forces her into domestic servitude as well as prostitution for his personal gains. As an illegal migrant and penniless, Mara is trapped in a vicious cycle as her dream evaporated like a drop of coconut oil on a red-hot slab" (74). She depends solely on Akobi for survival. Like Mara, Kaye and Comfort are also trafficked to Frankfurt by their boyfriends who equally coerced them into prostitution for their financial gains. Unfortunately, these women are defenseless and are at the mercy of their criminal husbands and boyfriends since the women do not have legal papers to live in Germany.

Vivian is equally trafficked to Germany by her husband Osey who forces her into prostitution for his selfish ends. Vivian's experience is even worse as Mara confesses that "Vivian was a helpless woman, who without her Osey, could move neither left nor right. And she would probably even stop breathing if Osey ordered her to" (90). Like Mara, Vivian is trapped in this predicament as her life depends totally on Osey as she is at his beck and call. The story of Mara, Kaye and Vivian is reminiscent of Abigail's story in Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail* (2006). Abigail, the young protagonist of Abani's novella, suffers torture, rape and is forced into prostitution by Peter, her own relative, who brought her to London from Nigeria.

The novel exposes various tactics employed by women traffickers, to unveil the dehumanizing conditions faced by the victims and the commodification of human lives for profit. Their trafficking exemplifies the use of deception and other trickery techniques by human traffickers to capture women and young girls and force them into all sorts of dehumanizing acts in the name of fulfilling their dreams in Europe and America. This declining situation in most African nations fosters human trafficking.

#### *4.3 Confronting the Cruel Reality of Exploitation*

The novel delves into the experiences of individuals who are forced into exploitative situations including domestic work, sex work, and child labour. Darko in this text, sheds more light on the power dynamics and systemic issues that perpetuate these forms of exploitation, highlighting the commodification of human lives and the dehumanizing conditions endured by victims. Once in the city, Mara finds herself caught in a web of sexual exploitation. She suffers multiple forms of exploitation as a domestic worker, and sex worker, with meager wages that she does not have access to. Mara's exploitation begins right in the city before her departure for Germany. She has to sleep with the passport officer to obtain a passport and she had to pay huge sums of bribe "that could have fed my whole family in the village for maybe a year or so" (53). Her agent who has the habit of smuggling women from Africa to Europe makes huge profits from this lucrative business as the protagonist narrates:



My agent knew his way about these things. He travelled regularly between Africa and Europe. Men paid him to smuggle their wives and girlfriends, who had no valid visas into Europe, a very risky but lucrative business that had rewarded him with a beautiful family house by the seaside in the city's coastal area ...he had it all"(57).

This indicates the high level of exploitation and commodification of women in the hands of men for their selfish interests. Mara is exploited financially as all her proceeds from working as a housemaid and a sex worker go to her husband, Cobby. She has no control over her own finances, the reason she works hard but lives in abject poverty and cannot help her parents and children back at home in Ghana. While working for a German family, "Akobi took the money I earned as payment for the roof he and Gitte had provided over my head, food and transport ..." (106). Despite all these, Mara is transformed into a housemaid working for Akobi and Gitte as she does all the laundry, cooking, cleaning and ironing.

Mara is sexually and financially exploited by her husband Cobby who coerces her into prostitution and she never manages any of the money she earns from being sexually exploited. Despite all these, Mara feels so exasperated and drained both physically and financially as Cobby uses all her resources to cater for his girlfriend, Comfort. She laments thus:

I felt drained, so drained that I had to ask for a glass of water. My husband brings me from home to a foreign land and puts me in a brothel to work and what money I make, he uses to pay the rent on his lover's apartment, and to renovate a house for her in her village back home (p. 137).

The above quotation demonstrates the high level of exploitation Mara goes through in Germany orchestrated by her husband. Although Mara manages to break free from Akobi's firm control and switches over to another pimp, she is still exploited sexually and economically as Oves claims thirty percent of her income. Additionally, she is required to give a total of fourteen thousand and six hundred Deutschmark to the homosexual man who married her for the purpose of obtaining a residence permit. Worse still, she must pay him an extra two hundred Deutschmark every month for a duration of two years.

Like Mara, Kaye and Vivian have gone through this unscrupulous exploitation and humiliation from their husband and boyfriend. Kaye is brought to Frankfurt, Germany by her boyfriend who "coerced her into prostitution, pocketed every mark she made and kept her in the trade by blackmailing her with pictures he had clandestinely taken of her in action with different men" (117). Similarly, Osey, Vivian's husband, forces her into prostitution and uses all the money she earns to take care of his German wife, Ingrid. While prostitution exists to some extent in many societies, the extreme immorality associated with the practice and the degradation experienced by female sex workers in Western societies results in a complete loss of dignity for these women.

Exploitation of African women in the *Beyond the Horizon* is severely expressed through the commodification of their bodies in the Western societies. The sexual and economic exploitative experiences of these women in the novel, reminiscent of those of the girls in Chika Unigwe's *On Black*

*Sister's Street* where all the sex workers in the novel are made to do an average of fifteen men a day to be able to pay their share of house rents of five hundred and fifty euros a week and Dele's five hundred euros a month, totaling to two thousand five hundred euros a month. The women in this text, learned to sexually display themselves from the glass windows of their brothels waiting for potential buyers (Unigwe, 178).

#### 4.4 *The Traumatic Lingering Effects of Migration*

The experiences of migration, human trafficking, and sexploitation leave lasting scars on the characters in *Beyond the Horizon*. Trauma becomes a central theme as individuals grapple with the physical, emotional, and psychological consequences of their ordeals. African female characters in the novel face exploitation that leads them to undergo identity transformations reflected in their psyche, emotions and professions. These experiences can deeply impact individuals, shaping their sense of self and influencing their choice and actions. Psychologically, Mara grapples with feelings of inferiority, self-doubt, loss of identity and dignity engendered by male power. This internal conflict is what drives her to question and redefine her sense of self, leading her to a transformation journey of self-discovery and empowerment. From the opening pages, Darko, through her protagonist, projects an image of a pitiable woman whose expressions are nothing but bitterness and pain. Looking at her devastated figure and body, Mara cannot help but cry bitterly because seeing herself through the oval mirror in front of her.

Tears are building up in my eyes. They always do when I stare at what is left of me. They are blurring my vision and are rolling down my face in agonizing rhythm like the beating of the devil's own drums...ta...ta...ta...dropping down one after the other, painfully slow, painfully gradual, onto these two flappy, floppy drooping things I called my breasts, my tired graceless bosom.[...] I may be dirty, old and overused but I can still feel emotions. And that is why I cry sometimes. And when I've got my crying to do I sit here alone before my large oval mirror and stare painfully at this bit of garbage that once used to be me and I cry (pp. 1-3).

This shows that Mara's body has depreciated beyond retrieval for she has become according to Awitor, "a bit of garbage ready to welcome any kind of dumped waste as she is dehumanized" (Awitor, 176). However, her anguish intensifies and becomes more agonizing as she contemplates her circumstances and the repulsive bruises on her body inflicted by her male oppressors. She wonders what her poor mother back in Africa would say if she sees these bruises and scars on her back and neck. The scars on her body rather creates a pitiable state of her life as she says:

They extend even far beyond the back of my ears, several bruises and scars left generously there by the sadistic hands of my best payers, my best spenders. And even back down my spine too run a couple more – horrendous ones which I fortunately do not suffer the distaste of seeing vividly like those on my neck, and so I care less about them (2).

Mara suffers domestic rape, emotional and psychological torture in the hands of her husband Akobi and other male predators in Germany. She laments the fact that far from being Akobi's wife, she becomes

his servant, his housemaid and slave:

“My thoughts were curtailed when I felt the sudden sharp pain of Akobi’s entry in me. He was brutal and over-fast with me...I was still kneeling there very much in pain because what he did to me was a clear case of domestic rape” (84).

Mara does not enjoy the husband she married while in Ghana and must live a life of pretext as a sister and maid to her very own husband just to save herself in the face of humiliation. She laments that “once I was not good enough for his work colleagues to know that I was his wife. Now, I wasn’t good enough to have my portmanteau carried for me or sit beside him in his car. And I wasn’t good enough to lay my body on his beautiful couch” (103). Patriarchy is at the origin of this kind of forced marriage whereby both husband and wife are not consenting. Mara suffers all these forms of humiliation and trauma coupled with the series of death threats from Akobi should she ever reveal the secret of their marriage to Gitte “...don’t come spoiling my stay here, or you will end up a corpse, Mara, I tell you” (104). The fear of deportation and selfish ends, makes Cobby to constantly remind Mara of the implications of her actions upon all of them.

Mara is emotionally depressed from the love making, groaning sounds from her husband and his German wife Gitte. According to her “At the beginning their love lovemaking had depressed me. All sounds from the bedroom came clearly through to the living room, especially in the quietness of the night” (112). She consoles herself by listening to music. In Africa, most polygamous men have separate homes for their wives, as such no amount of love making, romance would bother the co-wives. Mara however, suffers emotional depression as she cannot openly make love to her husband and must continuously live a pretentious life while suppressing her emotions in the presence of her husband and second wife, Gitte.

Mara’s psychological trauma is depicted through the various transformations she goes through. She is no longer the Mara she knew while in Ghana. Her stay in Germany has transformed her so much so that she no longer recognises who is she. From the opening pages, Mara is seen staring at herself in an oval shaped mirror and seeing a new person, she says: “I am staring painfully at an image. My image? No! – what is left of what once used to be my image” (1). This portrays a range of emotions, including anger, frustration, sadness and resilience that the protagonist goes through. These are indicative of the psychological trauma that affects the female characters in the text. Reflecting on her incredible transformation from a greenhorn to a whore in a German brothel by her ruthless clients, serves as the poignant depiction of the scars and damages she endures amidst the trails and realities of life in Europe thus making her think of herself as worthless. This state of worthlessness is portrayed at the end of the novel where Mara laments that, “there’s nothing dignified and decent left of me” (140). She has been a sex worker, featured in pornographic films and has become hooked on hard drugs as she says: “Now, I can’t go through a day without sniffing ‘snow’. I am hooked on it” (139). She cannot tell her people exactly the type of job she is doing in Germany other than serving in a metaphorical “African restaurant” (140). These and many more reflect the psychological trauma that most female characters in

the text and women in general go through in the so called “dream land”.

Vivian’s emotional affect is not totally different from that of Mara as she happily informs Mara who questions her whereabouts that: “I have disappeared” (128), which is taken to be both physical and metaphorical. She rejoices in her new found liberation from Osey’s tight control as she embraces Marvin, a GI whom she believes to be superior to her previous partner. With Marvin, Vivian got her papers, a hashish, and “a profession that she can practice in every corner of the world” (130) and to her, this means real happiness. Their degenerate circumstances in the West opine for their readiness to engage in any type of debasing business for the sake of money. The constant exposure to exploitation evokes a sense of injustice in the women that eventually fuels their determination to challenge their oppressors. These transformations serve as a means of resistance and self-empowerment against the exploitative structures around the female black subjects.

#### *4.5 Self-Recognition and Resistance*

In Darko’s *Beyond the Horizon*, resistance intertwines with the experiences of female migrants, revealing their remarkable strength and resilience in the face of adversity. Mara’s self-awareness and recognition of her loss of dignity is triggered by her relationship with her husband Akobi who has robbed her of her dignity and her financial control. When Mara awakens from her submissive and exploitative position, she asks herself, “Why couldn’t I take control of my life” (118). This question spurs her to action to the excitement of her friend Kaye who admits that “At last, Mara! You have woken up” (119) and engages in helping her contrive a plan that will eventually liberate Mara from the firm grip of her husband Akobi. Mara, however, increases the number of men sleeps with in a day from three to seven to be able to make more money and buy her freedom. Through this act, with the help of Kaye, she is able to “contract a marriage with a German guy, obtain a five-year resident’s visa” (120) and liberates herself from domination and subjugation.

Mara’s determination to resist her forces of oppression intensifies when she hires the services of a private detective to extract information on “Akobi’s financial deals, private arrangements, properties acquired, if any...” (133). She digs further to know every deal involving Akobi and Comfort or Akobi and Gitte, and all that Akobi has achieved/is achieving and how he achieved these things. Armed with this information, Mara resolves to expose her husband and splits his relationship with Comfort who is eventually deported to Nigeria, Akobi jailed and his accounts frozen while Gitte divorces him and returns to her family. Mara achieves all these and regains her freedom from the tight grip of Akobi and Pompey, her pimp. Although Mara succeeds in her resistive measures, she however finds her life “sinking into a place hotter than hell” (139) as she is deeply plunged into drug addiction with Oves, her boyfriend. Like Mara in Darko’s novel, Abigail the female protagonist in Chris Abani’s *Becoming Abigail*, equally resist her forces of oppression, sexploitation and dehumanization where she suffers as a migrant in London. Dickson Bernard and Chinyere Egbuta are of the opinion that “Abigail’s violent resistance transforms her into “a cannibal (160)” as Abigail becomes “unable to stand it anymore .... And with her teeth tore off Peter’s penis” (Abani, 92). It is through this act of violent resistance that

Abigail gains her freedom from Peter. London in this case, fails to provide Abigail a better life as her father had projected.

Although with the help of Vivian, Kaye, and Gitte, a new Mara is resurrected. The feminist critical approach which aims at valorising women's image is relevant here in that Akobi finally meets Gitte who ends up sending him to prison because of his abuse of women. Bawa Kammampool refers to Amma Darko as follows:

Although no attempt is made to label Amma Darko as a radical feminist, her commitment to finding solutions to women and children's problems draws her close to many female writers in this instance. Significantly, Mara's unbreakable friendship with Gitte, Vivian, Kaye and Mama Kiosk can be seen as a deliberate attempt by Darko to suggest that one of the ways to attain women's emancipation from the shackles of patriarchy is through sisterhood—a bond unbreakable by race, education, colour, religion or geographical differences. This type of solidarity is a landmark of African feminism (15).

Darko in her novel, highlights the transformative power of resistance, illustrating that even in the face of overwhelming odds, the human spirit has the capacity to rise above, break free, and forge a new path towards liberation and self-discovery. Mara's self-awakening serves as a poignant reminder that resistance, in all forms can be a catalyst for change, offering a glimmer of light in the darkest times.

## 5. Conclusion

Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* offers a poignant exploration of migration, human trafficking, exploitation and trauma. Through the experiences of Mara and other characters, the novel exposes the harsh realities faced by individuals seeking a better future, only to find themselves trapped in a world of exploitation and trauma. Darko's narrative exposes the vulnerability of African migrants, particularly women, who often fall prey to all forms of hardships and exploitative situations in the hands of their manipulative husbands and men. She captures the desperation and powerlessness experienced by these female individuals, highlighting the urgent need for effective measures to protect the rights and well-being of migrants. By utilizing Mara as the protagonist-narrator, Darko sheds light on and condemns the sufferings endured by numerous African migrant women who are oppressed and trapped in dehumanizing conditions. Through these experiences, the author seems to provide a platform for the voiceless victims to express their struggles and confronts male dominance by portraying male characters who are willing to sacrifice everything, even the integrity of their wives for the sake of money. Darko however, invites readers to critically examine the systems and structures that perpetuate such injustices urging women in the face of overwhelming odds, to rise, break free, and forge a new path towards liberation from male domination and subjugation. Ultimately, the novel serves as a powerful reminder of the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity and the urgent need for collective action to address these pressing challenges faced by female migrants worldwide.

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