



## Research Article

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### Alienation and Reinvention in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*

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**Abstract:** In every human relation everyone's will is to dominate or to be in possession of power. Reason and intelligence are systematically denied to women. This tendency results in the subordination, oppression and marginalization of a class (often male) over another (often female) and that of a colonizer over a colonized. Social hierarchy determines the perpetuation of human species as organized by men. As men carve all the social rules in their benefit, women have to live in the margin as secondary citizens. In that context, women are eternally assisted with surveillance as their existence is associated with the stereotype of women's capacity to control themselves. As Mary Ellen Lamp points out "women's speech, like Eve's, was pervaded by a dangerous sexuality requiring strict containment to prevent moral damage". Fortunately, writing occurs to split up all that division by giving proof-based evidence and by mixing up voices, identities and assignations. This is why in Africa, some female writers use their prose, replete of narratives of power control between the two, to demonstrate that women also can. By considering the narrative of Amma Darko in *Beyond the Horizon* (1995), the purpose of this paper is to show how the major protagonist tries to confront her weakness and then reinvent herself, but not without great consequences on her psyches and on her physical future. More, this paper maps out a colonizer's body sacrifice who finally tries to fence bitterly her way to liberty.

**Keywords:** Black Africa, Women, Alienation, Reinvention, Colonization.

## THE SYNOPSIS

*Beyond the Horizon* (1995) is the story of a young woman, Mara, born in a farming village named Naka in Ghana who moves to the city after an arranged marriage with an extremely ambitious man named Akobi. He is the monstrous man of his time. The young man schooled at the Joseph Father of Jesus Roman Catholic School, yet that pious name does not impede him from revealing his wicked heart. Just like the fate of a slave is chosen by her owner, Mara moves to Accra oblivious to what awaits her. Thereafter, she notices she has to share the shabby and corrugated shelter with her master, cooks, cleans and sells various things to survive. After the first and the second child, her master moves to Europe in the intention of working to raise much money to enhance his standard to the level he usually dreams. But before he can reach this goal, one ultimate sacrifice is to be made: imported his slave, Mara, the evergreen and naïve village girl. To Mara, a name that means 'bitterness' in Hebrew to recall the biblical woman Naomi in the Book of Ruth, going to Germany is like rising flesh and bones to Heaven. Once there, she can modernize herself, have a good and well-paid job, become wealthy and have her master's love finally. Unfortunately, none of this happens. She is beaten, slapped, verbally abused and raped. Mara is raped not only by her master, but also by many other men to quench their sexual lust. The video is kept to blackmail the Naka girl. She is no more innocent after this. She has to bear this wound deep in her soul.

Now brain bleached, changes his rustic and savage African name Akobi to be more human, Cobbi, lays bare a Machiavellian strategy. He forces her into sexual slavery in order to make the money he has been dreaming for so many years. Just like slaves worked in their masters' plantations to earn only beatings, humiliation, their legs or hands cut or any other condescending acts, Mara travails for Cobby who becomes polygamous. Here, with money flowing into his bank account, he takes on another woman apart from his German wife, Gitte and later on another one, Comfort. Consequently, Mara's body is torn apart by men who pay to satisfy their libidinal desires. One of Mara's fingers is broken by one of her best exploiters while putting in execution his sadomasochistic thoughts. Mara is devastated and cracked to her marrow and has to live on hard drug addiction to sustain her permanent pain. Amma Darko uses the bodily imagery to allow the reader to picture the severed body of a colonized. The misused and broken body of Mara draws necessarily the reader's compassion. The misused body represents Africa's invaded land years ago. This also recalls the Algerian of Martinican origin Frantz Fanon's statement about Africa land's invasion: "The landing of the white man on Madagascar inflicted injury without measures. The consequences of that irruption of Europeans onto Madagascar were not psychological alone, since, as every authority has observed, there are inner relationships between consciousness and

social context and the economic consequences?"<sup>1</sup> The economic impacts of that encounter are as worst as those inflicted directly on the slave's body to weaken and assimilate it. This applied to a fictional work, presents Mara with a new, but deformed shape.

Now mature, Mara takes heart and plans her revenge due to a female comrade in misfortune, Kaye and the Detective Gerhardt. The obedient girl follows at the letter the advice of her mother to her loss. In spite of her being damaged and worn out from everywhere, she writes about her ordeals and denounces her exploiters. The paper succeeds in sending in jail all the abusers and the alike. Mara takes on her whore status to control the male domination. Sex, taken as a metaphor, is no more Mara's concern since she accepts her profession of whoring and plunges in it so deeply. She is whore as Africa goes from one European country to another to balance his annual budget. This situation jeopardizes her children to whom she has only menial: Sesame Street and Tom and Jerry video tapes. Others culturally colonized are in making. As a woman, Africa loses her pride, her identity and hope is in remote future.

## INTRODUCTION

In postcolonial African literature, most of the writers try to map out the discourse of colonization and its severe aftermaths. These writers deal with shocking and depressing issues such as violence and oppression as tools to subjugate the indigenous physically, mentally, culturally and politically. Novels, dramas and poems are tools that communicate and share these truths by the interposition of characters. Past events or point of view about social, cultural or political acts in society connect people's present and future. Much of the novels' information reflects real but traumatic events that happened. It is an attempt to critique the postcolonial discourse which takes an individual as inferior to another. In that process of narrating the past, Amma Darko intrudes with her novel first written in German but translated in English, *Beyond the Horizon* (1995). Throughout the narrative, the reader is embarked with the violence used by the colonizer to maintain in servitude an individual he finds weaker and powerless. Women bodies are commonly represented in postcolonial writings as being that of the nation-state. In that sense, Elizabeth Grosz underscores the material dimension of corporality by drawing attention to how social and historical variations articulate bodily identity in both subjective and physical terms: "What are regarded as purely fixed and unchangeable elements of facticity, biologically given factors, are amenable to wide historical vicissitudes and transformations"<sup>2</sup>. The colonized body symbolizes a site of violent and libidinal experiences to the limit that it can sustain. The novelist employs others violent scenes to snatch the reader's compassion. However, Amma Darko suggests a therapy blended with saint revolt and conciliation from the colonized to her or his abuser. "It is a synthesis of protest and imitation. This duality permeates its stratagem, its style, and its themes in a manner that is not always readily perceptible to critics"<sup>3</sup> and postcolonial literature proposes itself as tool to get to that goal. As stated by George Lukacs "The historical novel of our time [...] aims at presenting the movement of popular life in history, in its objective reality and simultaneously in its living relation to the present"<sup>4</sup>.

## DISCUSSION

The present paper is to shed light on the thematic of alienation and reinvention in a West African female writer's novel: *Beyond the Horizon*. The novel, a rather compelling fiction in reading, is written in German *Der Verkaufte Traum*<sup>5</sup> in 1991 by Amma Darko first of all before being translated to *Beyond the Horizon* in 1995. According to *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, alienation is "a withdrawing or separation of a person or a person's affections from an object or position of former attachment. It is a conveyance of property to another"<sup>6</sup>. In literature, characters' alienation results from their estrangement from their true selves or from their cultural heritage or society. Amma Darko, a Ghanaian woman with currently five novels and other stories presents in her first novel the life of a female character which bellies that alienation. Here the paper endeavours to analyse the thematic of alienation and the way the protagonist succeeds in reinventing herself throughout the fiction. Though the analysis is applied to Amma Darko's novel, we have tried to include other novels in the study. Alienation or self-alienation has been portrayed indifferent ways. While some describe it as boredom, loneliness, impairment of depth of feelings, remoteness from self and one's own construction. An individual suffers from alienation when her or his impairment comes from another individual. The sort of alienation our study has taken into account is that which comes from loss of identity due to the invasion of another culture. Cultural assimilation brings down a whole continent economically. The theme of alienation is objectified in characters' emotional

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<sup>1</sup> Fanon, F. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press, p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Asante-Darko, K. (2000). "Language and Culture in Post-Colonial Literature". *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 2.1. Purdue University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Lukàcs, G. (1976). *The Historical Novel*. London: Penguin (1<sup>st</sup> pub. 1962), p. 404.

<sup>5</sup> Odamttten, V. O. (2007) *Broadening the Horizon: Critical Introductions to Amma Darko*. London: Ayebia Clarke Publishing, Print., p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> *Merriam Webster Dictionary* (1995)

conflict as well as in their detestation of social establishments, which are not only oppressive in nature but also ethically ambiguous. Such experiences result from characters' having to deal with a reality that bellies their true identity.

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines colonialism as "the practice by which a powerful country controls another country or other countries"<sup>7</sup>. Colonialism was the tool *par excellence* to reach the cynical goal of transferring the European whiteness to African darkness. If colonialism is the establishment and maintenance of a colony in a specific region, then it occurs with or without indigenous. When a mass of people invades a territory, oppression is often a resulting factor as the former peaceful population cannot stand domination. They finally surrender if they are outnumbered. This happened in many African kingdoms and territories between 1450 and 1962.

So far, some postcolonial writings point out that colonialism in Africa has just changed its name to become imperialism and globalization. The colonizer's focus is the maximum of people under his domination. Others take Bretton Wood Institutions as imperialism armed branch. Indeed, these two years define the period that the *Scramble for Africa* lasted. From that moment to present-day, Africa has lost its cultural identity mostly because of the Europeans' wish to dominate and replace it. This is what they called assimilation. As if being ordained by God, these people took hold of ground resources of the continent leaving the mass destitute and wretched. The goal of invaders was to educate the savages and now this can satisfy Joseph Conrad's sailor's deceit when he meets for the first time Africans. Charlie Marlow says "It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled, and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity... Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough. (2.8)<sup>8</sup>.

It is of course obvious that during the period of colonialism, Africans encountered exile, loneliness and remoteness either in Africa or beyond the horizon in the colonizers' merciless hands. This in turn developed a paradigm which has incarnated inferior and second rank feelings from Africans. This position, taken further, shapes the colonized identity. This is line with what the autodiegetic narrator in *Beyond the Horizon* shares: "I am staring painfully at an image. My image? No!-what is left of what one used to be my image. And from my left and right, all about me [...]" (Darko, 1). The passage shows what remains of a colonized physically and psychologically. Mara the protagonist symbolizes the deformed colonized after the long and hard storm of oppression. The repetition of this geometrical shape explains that the protagonist was not of this shape before. If, Mara represents the whole African country, then it means that it is the whole continent which is suffering. Mara feels the sharp pain not only on her body, but also in her soul. She ails under the coldness. She says "I feel so cold because this coldness I feel does not grip my body so much as it does my soul. It's deep inside me" (Idem). This constitutes the loneliness a slave can feel because of the maltreatment of her master. It is also an open critique of the extreme exertion of hegemonic power over female body. It illustrates women's claim to have a full control of their body, a claim which has been on the feminist agenda for a long time.

In this light, Edward Said's assertions on exile provide the framework for analysis and enable us to show that in the context of the novel, home is, most importantly, an understanding and acceptance of self. It is having the satisfaction of contributing meaningfully to society, an attitude which the author translates as "sharing that self with others". Here it is Mara's psychological alienation which provides her the feeling of being exiled. Exile takes on extensive dimensions cutting across cultural, physical, social and psychological issues. Exile and alienation create definitely trauma. As quoted by Julian Wolfreys, trauma is "a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" whereby "knowing and not knowing are entangled in the language of trauma"<sup>9</sup>. The alienated body of Mara repeats many times in a day her assignment of prostitution. In fact, she cannot help but do so because it is brought about by force in her mind and driven within to control her. Mara is then not conscious of what she is doing. She is in what Sigmund Freud named "neurotic symptoms" which are characterized by unconscious inclinations or feelings. As a matter of fact, she reveals this "I am sitting here before my large oval mirror. I like oval things. They are not too round and not too square, is what I say when people ask why my everything is oval, mirror, tables, all" (Darko, 1). The female protagonist would not have sat all alone and the day long if she was conscious of her mental and physical devastation. This is what remains of the overused body of a mentally and physically colonized. The woman's body is definitely deformed. The introspective character of Amma Darko's fiction is shaped by her early experience and her intention to give life to what is hidden which is that most former colonized African countries look devastated today. As Sean P. O'Connell and Vincent Odamtten's highlight "this narrative turning on itself, captured metaphorically in the opening pages of Amma Darko's novel, by the use of the oval

<sup>7</sup> *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2015). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>8</sup> Conrad, J. (2006). *Heart of Darkness*. Ed. Sumanyu Satpathy. Delhi: Worldview. Print.

<sup>9</sup> Wolfreys, J. (2002). *Trauma, Testimony, Criticism*. Introducing Criticism at the 21st Century. Ed. Julian Wolfreys. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP. Print.

mirror...The sense of oppression and claustrophobia, expressed in Amma Darko's novel by the tiny room from Mara speaks to us."<sup>10</sup>

Pain is psychological as well as physical and Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) highlights it in *Black skin, white masks* (1952). The Algerian psychoanalyst dared to dig out the mental status of a colonized as he was himself during the crucial period of decolonization's struggle in almost all African countries. In fact, there is no better way to psychoanalyse an individual if the psychoanalyst does not do it on himself. This auto-analysis allows perceiving the extent of the disease. Now he writes about his own anger against the injustice created colonialism. He feels himself the result of it. The psychiatrist writes "The oppressed will always believe the worth about themselves"<sup>11</sup>. This is quite normal because the oppressed has no sustenance. Mara is abandoned and overused. She experiences an inner exile and no longer cares about what can happen. The narrator shares "I've used myself and I have allowed to be too used to care any longer" (Idem). The oppressed is mentally broken and lost. The colonized is torn apart and fragmented by too much biased consideration which sinks his psyches and his capacity of replication. Mara resigns and adapts herself to her new situation. She comes to the conclusion that violence and subjugation are included in her destiny and that she cannot escape. She says "I was beginning to consider this situation as my karma. I resigned myself but at the same time I began to wonder" (Darko, 118). In her thoughts, she witnesses her growing desperate condition as rather traumatic.

In Frantz Fanon's insightful *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), the colonized is portrayed as dreaming to become one day the colonizer (Fanon, 19) which is rather the full feeling of a wounded individual. In that sense, we see that Mara is faced with two different troubles in that situation. First, she is alienated and submissive, a condition which attacked her psyches and secondly victim of racism. They prophesized that they came to Africa for what Jamaica Kincaid named as "real work", which to civilize the "uncivilized, irrational, inhuman, or barbaric" Africans. What was needed in order to convert the poor savages into civilized bodies was the ultimate use of repression. As stated by Sigmund Freud "Repression or oppression is essential to civilization, the conversion of animal instinct into civil behavior, but such repression creates what might be called a second self, a stranger within"<sup>12</sup>. From Sigmund Freud's findings, we note that the new self of a colonized wanted by the colonizer should derive from oppression as the colonizer is driven by desire for self-fulfillment.

So repeatedly, if driven by his primary desires, the giant man will come to the source of his fulfillment and Mara symbolizes that source of pleasure. So far, the British Empire and French people who mostly got colonies in Africa employed violence to succeed in their mission. Mara highlights it in the following passage: "The injury was done to me by one of my best exponders, a giant of a man but who always, when he comes to me, cries like a baby in my arms, telling me about his dictator wife who he loves but who treats him so bad she makes him lick her feet at night" (Darko, 2). The passage reveals that the giant man cannot face his wife's request to make him do unwilling performances. The only one person on whom his repressed impulse is possible is that of a colonized. This raises another question of the colonizer without violence. In fact, the narrator's unveiling the giant man's brutality on her body shows the impossibility for a colonizer to impose himself outside his household without his ultimate weapon, which is violence. This means also that the vicious giant man knows his limit as far as his kinship color is concerned. His wife's whiteness makes the difference and Mara's blackness matters since black color is unfortunately associated with dirtiness, weakness, poverty and savagery. During colonial time, the cliché has been more mindful to emphasize the cleavage between the beautiful whiteness and the dirty blackness. Yet, more recently, the color psychology elaborates a great deal on color and finds out that black color is related to power.

Consequently, the fierceness toward a colonized can be race-based to expression one's hatred for a race or another. The unnamed giant man is unable lift his hand against his white wife. His hatred-love for his wife is then expressed as soon as he is with a black woman. Violence is undeniably manifest in a context of colonization and racism. When these two concepts intervene, the African woman can be more a slave than any other being. In many post-colonial writings, "women are often taken to represent the mainstay of the cultural identity of the nation, retrieved for the present from the society of the past. For macho-nationalists, home and the domestic sphere, relatively free from colonial control, was the best guardian of the traditional values, culture, and identity [...]"<sup>13</sup>. This reminds us of Frantz Fanon's metaphor in *Black skin, white Masks* about Mayotte Capécia and her white husband. The story is similar to that told by René Maran and his Jean Veneuse. It offers graciously an elaborated discussion of the psychological dimensions of a colonized woman's alienation. In Frantz Fanon's narrative, Mayotte Capécia, a Martinican woman seeks to love any white man's

<sup>10</sup> Odamtten O. V. (2007). *Broadening the Horizon: Critical Introductions to Amma Darko* (ed.) Vincent O. Odamtten, p. 48.

<sup>11</sup> Fanon, F. (1952). *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs*. Paris : Editions du Seuil, [Published in English as *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967).]

<sup>12</sup> Freud, S. (1920). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. London: International Psychoanalytical Press.

<sup>13</sup> Young, R. J. C. (2003). *Postcolonialism: A very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, p. 97.

domination in order to acquire a bit of his whiteness (Fanon, 1952). Mayotte's desperate longing of whiteness is similar to that of many colonized women's love for white skin color. Others go even farther to lighten their skin and become yellow complexion. The chemical product wipes off the black skin which represents shame, dirtiness and backwardness to project them to a more accepted skin. The eternal myth of inferiority still haunts the colonized man and woman's mind. In the same way, Mara accepts to quench her best spender's masochistic desire to bleach her blackness, but does not perceives herself as a white woman like Mayotte Capécia and contrasting Abdoulaye Sadj's *Nini, Mulâtresse du Sénégal* (1954) who perceives herself as a white woman. Notwithstanding that, Mara changes her hairstyle from a kinky and braided to a silkier one because the environment dictates her that skin color and hairstyle are more important than any other item on earth. Colonialism takes a heavy toll on the colonized woman's mind that she wants to get rid of her 'black skin' to become white. Mara's transformation shows how pervasively dangerous alienation can be among the colonized due to his mental change. It is what Frantz Fanon defines as "neurotic orientation"<sup>14</sup> which is rather pathology. Mara, the enslaved woman develops that mental pathology as she lives in a society (German) in lack of black women in her profession. She thinks therefore that it may be better for her to look white and strong than staying black but inferior. This is in line with Albert Memmi thought which submits that:

L'écrasement du colonisé est compris dans les valeurs colonisatrices. Lorsque le colonisé adopte ces valeurs, il adopte en inclusion sa propre condamnation. Pour se libérer du moins le croit-il, il accepte de se détruire. [...] Des négresses ses désespèrent à se défriser les cheveux, qui refrisent toujours, et se torturent la peau pour blanchir un peu"<sup>15</sup>.

The tragedy becomes ineluctable when the character believes that she does not have any other identity than the one that is imposed on her by her new society. Mara thinks she is invisible because of her hairstyle and that only changing it may provide her with the wanted visibility.

In the same line, when Karl Marx (1818-1883) was once asked the question What is a Negro slave? He replied this "A man of the black race. A Negro is a Negro. He becomes slave in certain relations. A cotton spinning jenny is a machine for spinning cotton. It becomes capital only in certain relations. Torn from these relationships it is no more capital than gold in itself is money or sugar is the price of sugar"<sup>16</sup>.

In effect, Karl Marx argued that capitalism can be distinguished from all other modes of production by its strong and unique aim which expansion of capital. In this scope, the black woman becomes slave as soon as the aim of the giant man is to expand his selfish pleasure. Mara's body becomes just the playing ground of the sexual desires for the white man.

Violence shuts up definitely the colonized. Violent makes the colonized as docile being forever and having to chance to rebel. On the other, the colonial stereotype is at cause as it describes the African woman's body as being flamed by voluptuous fire ready for fun. The colonized woman's sexuality is therefore suspected to be in endless wants of fulfillment and this affects her life and environment as well. Further, a rather disturbing story came of Saartjie Baartman (1789-1815) exposing the British colonial power which exhibited a young Khoisan woman in a zoo to prove the African woman's sexual oddity. The body of that innocent woman was used for a pseudo-scientific interest to justify the noticeable buttock and genitalia. The comparison to a monkey chimpanzee sustained the evolutionist theory of Charles Darwin. This exposes the racist use of the black body to demonstrate the white supremacist's idea as being 'homo sapiens' than African. Throughout the period, black bodies continued to be a site of humiliation and discrimination. Soon the colonial discourse found a counter discourse like that of Aimée Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* (1955). In his renowned writing, he compares colonialism to nazism<sup>17</sup> since both used extreme violence, hatred, discrimination and recurred to genocide to prosper and expand their ideology. Aimée Césaire claims that:

People are surprised, they become indignant. They say: "How strange! But never mind-it's [n]azism, it will pass!" And they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism, but the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; that it is [n]azism, yes, but that before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that [n]azism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that [n]azism, that they are responsible for it,

<sup>14</sup> Fanon, F. (2008). *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto Press, Print, p. 43.

<sup>15</sup> Memmi, A. (1957/1985). *Le Portrait du colonisé précédé du portrait du colonisateur*. Paris : Buchet-Chastel.

<sup>16</sup> Rubin, G. (1975). « The traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex" in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed Rivkin, J. & Ryan, R. (1998). Massachusetts: Blackwells Publishers Ltd, p. 533.

<sup>17</sup> In our research we find out that the word nazism is written with capital 'n', which is rather surprising as the word is historically linked to a nasty and unfortunate event. So, we decide to write with small 'n' in our paper.

and that before engulfing the whole of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack<sup>18</sup>.

This rather long extract is necessary to disclose the writer's resentment on colonialism and further its impacts on Africans' psyches and cultures. Besides, as we say, alienation working in pair with oppression result in the colonized's fragmentation in terms of identity and cultural loss. The fragmentation is represented by Mara's deformity and her dependence on her profession, a profession which is rather shocking: prostitution. When talking about prostitution, we refer to both sexes and we know to which extent sex is treated as a metaphor in most African writings. The fulfilment of libidinal desire in this manner in most societies is regarded as rape.

The autodiegetic narrator confesses that: "At Oves' brothel, I have plunged 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 [...]. Now I can't go through a day without sniffing 'snow'" (Darko, 139). Here in articulating the word 'snow'<sup>19</sup> which cannot be reached by a simple reader, Amma Darko shows her mastering of allegory. The meaning is too complicated not only by the fact that it derives from a Western climatic tradition, but also because it is associated to a narcotic product. Snow is naturally white and white is associated to the colonizer's skin color. To reach his goal of alienation, the colonizer uses even the highest of the opioid. Throughout the period of colonization, Mara does not stop achieving her daily task of giving her body for money in the colonizer's account. But this does not allow her to gain her freedom; the same way Africa's giving off its best ground resources does not make it respected. The narrative divulges her work in a newer side: making sex videos (Darko, 139). The colonized surrenders mentally under the huge weigh of alienation the same way the protagonist of Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996) does. She says that:

I am of the vanquished, I am of the defeated. The past is a fixed point, the future is open-ended; for me the future must remain capable of casting a light on the past such that in my defeat lies the seed of my great victory, in my defeat lies the beginning of my great revenge<sup>20</sup>.

In the excerpt above, Xuela qualifies her past as being a "fixed point" and she keeps remembering it. This point is also that of Mara who remembers her past when she was told childish games: "I think often of the games my mother used to play with them, my fingers" (Darko, 2). It is these very fingers which have been broken by the giant man during his highest peak of lust Mara's body. The amputation obliges the colonized to bear the burden of colonization for life. This unearths the physical mutilation inflicted on the colonized, but she feels no pain since she is used to being beaten, kicked, slapped and raped. In this way, the colonized is no longer in control of her own life. The effect of colonization is sometimes more irreversible on the colonized and it inflicts suffering to a large number of people. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie argues in "The Headstrong Historian" (2009) that:

The women in Onicha were complaining about the white men. They had welcomed the white men's trading station. But now the white men wanted to tell them how to trade, and when the traders of Agueke, a clan of Onicha, refused to place their thumbs on a paper, the white men came at night with their normal-men helpers and razed the village. There was nothing left (...). Adichie (204)

Traditionally, male authority in colonial period was never challenged and it was mainly asserted over the colonial female subjects ensuring his dominion and supremacy. The indigenous male having lost his authority, suffers from feeling of emasculation according to Albert Memmi (79-118). All this happened in the past because of some Eurocentric ideology as stated by Homi K. Bhabha:

The other loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic device, to establish its own institutional and oppositional discourse. However, impeccably the content of an "other" culture may be known, however anti-ethnocentrically it is represented, it is its location as the closure of grand theories, the demand that, in analytic terms, it be always the good object of knowledge, the docile body of difference, that reproduces a relation of domination and is the most serious indictment of the institutional powers of critical theory<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Césaire, A. (1955). *Discourse on Colonialism*. Translated by Joan Pinkham. This version published by Monthly Review Press: New York and London, 1972. Originally published as *Discours sur le colonialisme* by Editions Presence Africaine, 1955.

<sup>19</sup> Heroin (snow like product) is an opioid drug made from morphine, a natural substance taken from the seed pod of the various opium poppy plants grown in Southeast and Southwest Asia, Mexico, and Colombia. Heroin can be a white or brown powder, or a black sticky substance known as black tar heroin. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/heroin>

<sup>20</sup> Kincaid, J. (1996). *The Autobiography of My Mother*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, p. 215-6.

<sup>21</sup> Bhabha, H.K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, p. 31.

In fact, we have to recognize that body, particularly female body in postcolonial context can be fixed and flexible. It is fixed for a person who cannot move from a place to another or for a person prevented to speak like a colonized. It is flexible in the context of shape and deformity like Mara's body. The daily ordeal of a colonized revolves around violence, from the least to the highest peak. Consequently, to fight back against the colonizer's violence, our Medical Doctor, Frantz Fanon prescribes "[Violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect](#)" (Fanon, 72-3). The final therapy against violence must be violence, a physical confrontation to help terminate the humiliation due because colonial power was not secured by Europeans through mild integration, but by violence and force. For example, against a snake bite, one uses antidote based on venom. Therefore, the colonized must fight with the same weapons as the colonizer: use violence to fight violence. Mau-Mau engaged in this technique against the British Empire while it was necessary. This is narrated in Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'O's *Weep not, Child* (1964). Moreover, in term of female body's flexibility (distorted with violence), Luce Irigaray highlights in her study *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1991) that while referring to women's bodies it is important to point out their corporeal fluidity. She remarks that "fluids have never stopped arguing"<sup>22</sup> in women's kingdom. She is more convinced that it is the search of that fluidity which makes men be violent toward women. Luce Irigaray puts women in a position of victims which is quite similar to Julia Kristeva's essay entitled *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982).

Yet, rather than using Frantz Fanon's medical instruction, the Ghanaian female writer makes her protagonist employ a very discrete mode of rebellion. The protagonist writes to expel the trauma engenders by the permanent violence. So, to fight against the colonizer, Mara writes to denounce his exaction against her body and it enables her to full re-appropriate her body and then history although nothing can be fixed on the cracked, cripple and crook body.

Additionally, what acts as a catalyst in Amma Darko's narrative in favour of Mara's reinvention is her own capacity of decision to act "If I was sleeping with and charging them for it, it was me giving myself to them. The body being used and misused belonged to me. What had that got to do with Akobi? [...] So, why care about a sex orgy video with me in it?" (Darko, 118-19). This is what guides the colonized body of Mara to her reinvention. Her decision makes her free like slaves' decision to flee from their masters' help them flee beyond the horizon. Many other women are in the same condition like Mara in East, North, West and South Africa. Then, the decision to write about her own story is an opportunity to give voice to all these silenced women by society. Contemporary writers and painters represent the griots<sup>23</sup> who have witnessed or have been told thousands of stories which magma like boil in their mind and threat to be released either on papers and painting boards. Rightly, in African literature, orality is the main partner of writers and African griots succeed in maintain the flame burning.

Put another way, we claim that Mara's creation now dominates her colonizer, not with her brawn, but with brain to contrast with other suggestions. By pushing each other to the edge, the result is to find the one to win the battle of keeping the other on the margin. In this scuffle, the colonized does not back down until the frightening ghost of colonialism is overthrown and therefore, she conjures the karma. Nonetheless, she pays the price of her courage by writing her trauma which stands for a rather pacifist attitude in line with Martin Luther King Jr's (1929-1968) theory of non-violence.

Finally, the end of Amma Darko's novel does not augur any good perspective for Mara's tactful reinvention, yet she is neither entirely desperate nor full with superstitions. Whore she is, whore she remains to the end with no return. In this regard, she says "It is difficult for her to remember what she was and she is filled with feeling of loss identity: "I just don't belong there any longer" (Darko, 139). Yet, she passes the worst of the stages. Like Naomi is ashamed to return to her people, Mara dares not, but she is alive with hope that her children continue the struggle. Like slaves left in the Americas, home is to Mara a remote souvenir more in dream than in action and in actual fact, this version provides a more authentic information than any other.

## CONCLUSION

Alienation has as pair companion as violence and vice versus both work to subordinate and submit people. Violence is the privileged weapon for the colonizer. It allows the colonizer to alienate his victim. The colonized is permanently trodden down. She must be in agony for the colonized to be on his control and entirely subdued. During the colonial period, African bodies are represented as sexualized bodies, medicalized bodies, disciplined bodies and talking then bodies when opportunity is given to them. Living in a post-colonial country, Mara realizes that she is forever

<sup>22</sup> Irigaray, L. (1991). *This Sex Which is Not One*. (Trans. Catherine Porter). Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, p. 113.

<sup>23</sup> A griot is a member of a caste responsible for maintain an oral record of tribal history in the form of music, poetry or storytelling.

possessed by an unknown owner against whom she must fight and liberate herself. Amma Darko's novel examines how through everyday creative practices and within her own private spheres, Mara re-establishes a space of agency previously denied to her. In the search for her own garden and space, we find out that Amma Darko does not compromise her narrator into a bloody and violent revenge as theorized by the psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon, but she suggests a conciliation to be in the same line of thought with the doyen of African letters Es'kia Mphahlele (1919-2008) who stated in *The African Image* (1962): "I personally cannot think of the future of my people in South Africa as something in which the white man does not feature. Whether he likes it or not, our destinies are inseparable. I have seen too much that is good in western culture -- for example, its music, literature and theater -- to want to repudiate it<sup>24</sup>". No matter how African writers do this past will be hanging down in their mind ghost like to entertain forever as the dream is made that "one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood"<sup>25</sup>. What is finally important to highlight is that Mara, the colonized succeeds in tackling and reversing intelligently her wretched condition thanks to her ability to challenge colonial domination like female characters presented in novels by Ama Ata Aidoo, Assia Djebar, Tsisti Dangarembga, Calixte Beyala, Lola Shoneyin, Leonora Miano to cite just these few. Mara succeeds in decolonizing her mind to borrow from Ngugi wa Thiong'o's concept.

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