

**RE-VISUALIZING FEMALE IDENTITIES IN AFRICAN AND WESTERN SPACES
IN DARKO'S *BEYOND THE HORIZON* AND UNIGWE'S *ON BLACK SISTERS'
STREET***

Kpantioron Abel KONÉ

Doctorant en Littérature Africaine des Pays Anglophones au Département d'Anglais,
Université Alassane OUATTARA.

ABSTRACT: The current paper re-visualizes female identities in African and western spaces in Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*. It explores African women's lives in Africa and in the West. The objective of this study is to determine that African women's identity is impacted by some migratory experiences like sexuality. This article is theoretically framed by Postcolonial Feminism. The use of this theory helps conclude that in addition to race and gender, sexuality is revealed in the two novels under study as symbol of the identity of African female immigrants. The work is subdivided into two sections: the first one sheds light on women's identity in traditional Africa; afterwards, women's identity is analyzed from their sexual experiences in the West.

Keywords: Africa, Identity, Immigration, Sexuality, Postcolonial Feminism, West, Woman.

RÉSUMÉ : Ce présent article ré-visualise l'identité féminine dans les espaces africains et européens dans *Beyond the Horizon* de Darko et *On Black Sisters' Street* d'Unigwe. Il explore la vie de la femme africaine en Afrique et en Occident. L'objectif de cette étude est de déterminer comment l'identité de la femme africaine est impactée par certaines expériences migratoires comme la sexualité. Cette analyse a pour cadre théorique le féminisme postcolonial. Cette théorie aide à conclure qu'en plus du racisme et la question du genre, la sexualité, à travers la prostitution, s'est révélée dans les romans étudiés comme symbole de l'identité de la femme immigrante africaine. Le travail se subdivise en deux parties : la première met en lumière l'identité de la femme dans la société traditionnelle africaine ; ensuite, l'identité de la femme est analysée à partir de son expérience migratoire en Occident.

Mots clés : Afrique, Féminisme Postcolonial, Femme, Identité, Immigration, Sexualité, Occident.

Introduction

The questions of African women's identity and sexuality have increasingly become topical issues in African literature and especially in postcolonial female migration writings. Migration and identity are two concepts which appear in that literature as the manifestation of women's sexual experiences both in Africa and in the West. From Africa to the West, there is a real shift of their identity. Thus, this paper explores the perception of women in Africa and also in the West from a postcolonial feminist's point of view. In its approach, postcolonial feminist literature gives a broadened view on women's living conditions in African and western settings. From this perspective, African women have at least two identities, one in Africa and another in the West, which are revealed in postcolonial female writings. The current article re-visualizes female identities in African and Western spaces in Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*. It details the question of sexuality as an item of female identities in Africa and in the diasporic space. In the first part of this study women in African communities are faced with daily choruses which relegate them to a sexual bondage in their connubial and extra-connubial lives. Afterwards, the act of migrating reveals that African women's sexual life in the West has got a different value from the one in Africa.

1. Sexism, the Embryo of Women's Identity in African Space

In the two novels under study, Darko and Unigwe describe the mode of identification of women in Ghana and Nigeria. In their works, they explore the way women in African communities are valuable only on the basis of their sexual belonging. Such a consideration has gained so important proportions in African communities that it even has influenced women's perception of themselves. For Georgiads Mboya Kivai, all this derives from masculine politics for making women stay in the backside ladder of the community. He shows such an impact when he puts that "patriarchy compels women to believe that their inferior position is natural and irredeemable." ("The Female Voice and the Future of Gender Relationships" 2010: 24). Kivai's formulation may justify the idea that female sex as a biological trait becomes a means for determining their identity. To corroborate, Chris Weedon also argues that "patriarchal power rests on the social meaning given to biological sexual difference." (*Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* 1987: 2). Weedon's words infer that the difference between the two sexes, male and female, is disadvantageous for women since it symbolizes patriarchal power. From such perspectives, this chapter will describe how women are oppressed and exploited on the basis of their sex in their marital and social lives.

1.1 Sexual Intercourse and the Meaning of the African Married Woman's Body in *Beyond the Horizon*

The role of women in most African communities is defined in the private and closed family sphere. These tasks assigned to them in such an environment include care taking, water fetching, cooking, cleaning, and many other activities at home. However, all these tasks are overall crowned by the excessive submission to males' desires to make their wives pregnant and also to satisfy their libidinal egos. Such conditions regulate the daily identity of the African married woman. Sexually speaking, African married women are used to satisfy their husbands' libido.

Women's identity in Africa is pejoratively and sexually determined. Social tasks are designed for them so that they can believe that their worth in community must be first of all sexually accepted. Thus, women's identity seems to be restricted to a socio-cultural law about sexuality. That is why, in most African communities women still believe that they must sexually be devoted to satisfy their husbands. Hyde and DeLamater underline that these social and cultural considerations of women's sexuality are instrumental to crushing down the woman. They castigate the fact that "our culture has traditionally placed tighter restrictions on women's sexuality than... on men's and vestiges of these restrictions linger today." (*Understanding Human Sexuality* 2008: 324). They believe that "these restrictions have acted as a damper on female sexuality." (ibid, 324).

It is also in this vein that Aduke Adebayo holds that cultures in Africa and in the Western world as well are not grounded in objective ideologies, because he considers them as myths (Adebayo Aduke, 1996). Adebayo's conclusion that world cultures are all myths means that there is no real point of start of these stereotyped roles designed for women. The words of Adebayo in this context are also clear to understand that maternity which is not possible without the sexual act is essential to men to define their wives' attributions in the family and also in the community.

The woman's status in Africa, according to Adebayo's analysis, discloses the fact that her roles are not grounded in objective ideologies based on the full expression between men and women. The critic's argument is that women are not offered any opportunities to make decisions, to the extent that traditions relegate them in a position of muteness. In such a context, African married women can be considered as sexual objects, in ways that they cannot truly decide on their own bodies and their intimacy. The husband can decide to have sex with his wife regardless of the latter's opinion or consent.

Women's marital life in African communities is strongly linked to their sexual

availability for their men. This implies that their sexuality depends also on the emotional life of men. In Ghanaian Amma Darko's first novel, *Beyond the Horizon*, the Ghanaian woman is strictly devoted to her womanly role as it is prescribed in the Ghanaian education. As Adebayo, Hyde and DeLamater evoked it just above, Mara's life as Akobi's wife reflects the life of a wife who is subject to her husband sexual bondage because of the sexual restrictions and the mythology about the female sex in patriarchy. Therefore, Mara's sexual life as a wife may refer to sexual abuse.

One of the main characteristics of Darko's debut novel is that it reveals a postcolonial feminist considerations of women's marital status. As Darko's main character, Mara, is portrayed in the novel, her entire life as Akobi's wife is reduced to satisfy his libidinal fantasies when he needs to. That is explicit through Mara's sayings: "The first time he slept with me, when he started moving quicker and panting louder and sweating more, he suddenly at one stage removed himself very quickly from inside me and wetted me all with a strange milky-white liquid coming from his manhood." (Darko, 1995: 16). This passage pictures the idea that Mara is an object of desire used to satisfy Akobi's fantasies.

Through the words of Mara, we can also say that Akobi's first intention after his marriage is to use Mara just to satisfy his libido. In fact, throwing his manhood upon her also demonstrates that he does not want to have children with her. The description of the way Akobi has sex with his wife may even go against the values of African traditions which, in fact, prescribe Women's fertility. Thus, Darko's intention through this sequence can reflect the fact that individually speaking, men within patriarchal communities can dictate their own rules and for their own purpose.

Otherwise, Mara is sexually oppressed in the novel because of her naivety. When her man needs her, Mara feels obliged to obey automatically because for her, the role of a wife is to do everything her husband asks her to. Mara's belief is that "not obeying and worshiping Akobi" would make her "less of a wife, just as having no menstrual periods" would make her "less a woman" (Darko: 16). From these passages, Mara is convinced on the fact that her husband is the master of her life. For that reason, she cannot refuse him his libidinal pleasure when he needs it. The fact that the attitude of Mara is influenced by her mother's advice to her may also make an allusion to societal conventions from which refusing sex to one's husband is a sin that implies a fine, even a repudiation in extreme cases. Both Mara and her mother fear that in their community, they would be rejected.

In Darko's narrative, Mara is a character who is sexually exploited by her husband because she herself is victim of an current male-based education. For Mara, a wife can gain

worth only when her actions are undertaken to satisfy her husband. This relationship established by Mara between womanhood and the role of the wife can be interpreted as a social and cultural duty. From such perspectives, Mara's and her mother's agreements with the fact that their lives do not depend on themselves but on their men who are free to make with them what they want can also be regarded as the influence of these socio-cultural conventions based on a patriarchal lifestyle.

This remark made about Mara's status in her connubial life by Darko is regarded by scholars as a critical eye that aims at castigating the way husbands treat their wives in Ghanaian families. This is how Davies Carole Boyce and Fido Elaine praise the important accomplishments by many feminists like Darko in her debut novel. They evoke the idea that "these pioneers are critical of the exploitation of women ... they explore what is dangerous to them as women in traditional cultures." ("African Women Writers: Towards a Literary History" 1993: 311)

Furthermore, Darko's current fiction is an exposure to males' oppression through sexual dictatorship in family life. It means that beyond the simple fact that Mara feels like to play her role as a good wife, Darko portrays Akobi as a husband whose way to make love with his wife is a dictatorship. This way of making sex is a metaphor of African leaders lording on their people. The same way, Mara is sexually controlled by her man who believes that he has all the rights to have sex with his wife when he desires it without even taking into account her feelings and view. For instance, the narrator relates that Akobi only wants to fulfil his sexual ego. As Mara says, "when Akobi closed the door on the two of us in the room, one of the two things happened. He either beat me or slept with me." (Darko, 20). For Darko, Ghanaian society can also represent that metaphor through which men's sexuality within marriage life shows patriarchy under an imperialist form. Men have an emotional and sexual control over their wives. For husbands like Akobi, women are beasts who must be tamed by them. Such a misogynistic view is one of the main reasons for connubial violence.

Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* is an authentic postcolonial feminist novel for it explores Ghanaian women's sexual lives in marital sphere as an important aspect to understand third world females' issues in feminists' literature in general. Unlike the focus of western feminism, that is the life of white women only, Darko's current narrative regards the situation of Ghanaian women as part of this struggle for liberating the female gender from any kind of males' sexist exploitation, oppression and dictatorship. Darko appeals for considering these particular experiences of Ghanaian women in African mainstream the same way all "the postcolonial women as well as women of color call for recognition of their plurality as opposed

to the idea of global sisterhood posed by second wave Western feminism.” (Shameem M., 2021: 30)

Sexuality in African cultural landscapes plays an important role in the formation of the African married woman’s identity. The way they are used to satisfy their husbands’ libidinal desires, the way they are regarded as simple sexual materials to make babies, the way they are thought to obey dumbly when their men want to have sex with them, all these in fact are the product of an educational system which provides women with an identity based on sexism. Women’s sex is used for men’s pleasure and considered as the weaker sex as well. However, Ghanaian author wants to raise the idea that “African women would be viewed and treated first and foremost as humans rather than sexual beings.” (Fayemi Ademola K., 2009: 205).

Just as that, Darko’s narrator recaptures the above picture of the woman as the weaker sex and also the one used not only for pleasure but also the one used by men to show their masculinity. This is visible in the following passage:

He was lying on the mattress, face up, looking thoughtfully at the ceiling when I entered. Cool, composed and authoritative, he indicated with a pat of his hand on the space beside him that I should lie down beside him. I did so, more out of apprehension [...] wordlessly, he stripped off my clothes, stripped off his trousers, turned my back to him and entered me. (Darko, 22).

The picture drawn through this scene between Mara and Akobi exposes the picture of an authoritative husband treating his wife as a sexual being. In fact, Akobi’s attitude demonstrates that for him, lying with his wife on the mattress is to be her equal. In his mind, Akobi believes that if he sleeps with her in the bed, his authority as the man will also collapse. For Darko, Akobi wants to show his potency and play his patriarchal role.

Beyond the Horizon reveals that the female child in African families is victim of a sexist disregard. As aforesaid, the married woman in Africa is a sexual object whose aim is to satisfy her husband’s libidinal pleasure. In Darko’s view, the woman’s sex is an important element that defines women status and identity in African communities. As such, she explores through Mara in her debut novel some important characteristics of females’ sexuality that show that the woman’s identity is importantly based on what she offers her husband sexually. Therefore, women in marital life in Ghanaian are reduced to the rank of simple objects of pleasure, something which does not trigger not only her emotional life but also her assertion and contribution to the improvement of the family welfare.

Finally, the current paper also explores sex trafficking that is revealed in Africa as tendency. That phenomenon is part of traditional marriage ceremonies. In Darko’s debut

novel for instance, Mara's father and Akobi's contracted a marriage between their children so as to restore either their image or fill their pockets (Darko, 4). That another aspect is so far better investigated in Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*. That fact is that the female sex in Africa serves as a weapon to fight for financial purpose which all the same remains meager.

1.2 Sex, a capitalist apparatus for exploiting unmarried women in Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street*

On Black Sisters Street is an eye-opener novel which helps better understand women's sexual use for making profit. In fact, when reading Nigerian Unigwe's second novel, one may contend that her main female characters are not married. This particularity is a descriptive means to show that married and unmarried women are not sexually used the same way. The analysis of Darko's debut novel in the first sub-section of this paper has argued that women in marital spheres are sexually exploited by their husbands to satisfy their libidinal egos and show also their social conventions. If sometimes wives are sexually exploited for financial purposes in traditional marriage ceremonies, Unigwe furthers such analysis by showing that outside marriage life, sex becomes a means to make profit on unmarried women.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty regards third-world women in post-independent societies as economically discriminated characters. She is certain that such an injustice results from a serious patriarchal capitalist system. She obviously observes women's difficulties to maintain a certain financial stability and equity with men. For her, "it would require a clear understanding that being a woman has political consequences in the world we live in". For women constitute a problematic gender, she certifies that "there can be unjust and unfair effects on women depending on our economic and social marginality and/or privilege" (Chandra Talpade Mohanty 2003: 3).

The emergency of females' economic slenderness visibly endangers them in the quest of their financial assertion. In most African agglomerations, girls are described as vulnerable characters who become easy targets for sex traffickers and escort agencies. Unigwe's description of women in this context is well-oriented to criticize the impact of the neo-capitalist form in African economic policies. As she describes Alek, Chisom, Efe and Ama, their financial positions are piteous.

On Black Sisters' Street describes Dele, a character portrayed through his misogynist attributes and also through his capitalist thirst by using women for his own profit. Thus, the character pictures and represents patriarchal capitalist strategies. Unigwe wants to put the emphasis on the fact that the man's sole interest is women, particularly their bodies. The

following passage illustrates the character's view of the woman: "I dey get girls everywhere. Italy, Spain. I fit get you inside Belgium, Antwerp. I get plenty connectionsthere. Plenty, plenty!" (*OBSS*, 34).

For Chika Unigwe, Dele's activity that is to use unmarried girls for his sexist business is the proof that Nigerian society functions on the basis of new economical programs which are not flexible for the female gender, mainly for the growing and youngest generation. Clearly, Dele's job proposal to female characters in the novel understudy does not match that of an altruist man. Instead, the character Dele as portrayed by the narrator is the symbol of a patriarchal capitalist system in post independent Nigeria still hostile to women. Such an analysis of women's conditions in Nigeria shows a rude and exploitative capitalist system against women in Africa which are undertaken by contemporary African male leaders on the marketplace.

In fact, Chika Unigwe's narrative reveals that educated young women in Nigeria are not the priority of the government. This aims at maintaining them at the bottom of the social ladder in order to better exploit them. For example, the situation of Chisom (Sisi) is visibly the description of such a situation that the author makes in order to denounce how young and educated females have a trivial chance to succeed despite their degrees. Instead, the author fictionalizes the intention of a Nigerian capitalist society represented by Dele which is to sexually exploit young girls. Unigwe puts emphasis on such measures in order to show that men try to erase women from any competition that will permit have the same chances like young men in the new economical programs in Nigeria. Dele does not care about Sisi's educational level when he proposes her the indecent job that is to work for him as a whore. For him, women cannot compete on equal terms with them. Instead, they must be used for indecent jobs like prostitution, which goes against the moral codes in Africa.

Sex trafficking is for Francis Miko,

a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not eighteen years of age; or ... the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery ("Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response" 2004: 1).

This definition proposed by Miko stands as the picture of African sexist and capitalist communities. Like Dele, African communities' social politics of employment is set to damage women's sexual sensibility. Miko deduces that politics against women is so exploitative that it can be considered as "modern slavery" (Gulnara Shahinian, 2002, p. 1). However, Fayemi sustains that "prostitution and female trafficking are ethically unjustified." (2009, p. 209). For

this reason, Unigwe's second novel aims at denouncing such practices within Nigerian social and cultural environments.

In this specific regard, Unigwe's novel is a satire of the global capitalist system in Nigeria and in Africa in General. Her commitment for subverting the tendency of such an economic system, goes through her description of patriarchy used by men to lord socio-economically over women. In her novel, Unigwe describes Dele's activity as one which is not restricted by Nigerian authorities. This lack of commitment against sex trafficking attitudes by Nigerian authorities proves that Dele as a male character is the means by which the author wants to criticize patriarchal capitalist dictatorship. This is what Dele's attitude shows when he addresses Sisi: "Na when you get there, begin work, you go begin dey pay. Instalment payment we dey call am! Mont by mont' you go dey pay me' (*OBSS*, 35).

2. Portrayal of women's sexual life in the diaspora in *Beyond the Horizon* and *On Black Sisters' Street*

In postcolonial African female writings, one of the major points is the portrayal of third-world women's experiences within the western social, cultural and economic worlds. Belonging to the same literary trend, Amma Darko's and Chika Unigwe's feminist perspectives give a broader view on Ghanaian and Nigerian women's living conditions in the diaspora. For Gaelle Ferrant and Michele Tuccio, "the migration of women should represent a choice to improve their opportunities and overall wellbeing rather than an escape from discrimination or violence." (2014, p. 9). They do believe that "discriminatory social institutions in both origin and destination countries affect female migration." (2014, p. 10). The objective of this chapter is to show that in the West, despite the plethoric imbalances in African women's sexual lives, they succeed to subvert western capitalist, racist and cultural systems by reinventing themselves psychologically and also culturally.

2-1 Sexuality and women's fight against western capitalist system

The life of women in *Beyond the Horizon* and *On Black Sisters' Street* is described as the one of subordinated characters. From socio-cultural conditions to politico-economic situations, women face many difficulties in enhancing their statuses. In fact, such situations are provoked by the fact that not only traditions but also modern authorities' policies are in favor of these treatments against women. These realities describe the different stages of females' lives in African communities. The woman either married or not is depicted as a character whose identity is that of a subordinate and exploited one.

Darko's and Unigwe's current fictions also explore extensively the way African

women's identity evolves from a masculine exploitative system to that of an economic enfranchisement. In Nigerian Unigwe's second novel, females' sexual experience in the West has a different meaning from the one described in African local space. The female characters in the second novel of Chika Unigwe have more mental strength and this permits them to become more financially autonomous characters. The author succeeds through the different stages of his female protagonists' lives in Africa and then in the west to describe a kind of evolution through sexual experiences.

Instead of glorifying the activity of prostitution in western countries, Unigwe rather wants to focus her attention on the attitude of women evolving in sex activities. For example, unlike Sisi who was murdered by her boss, the other characters such as Efe, Ama and Alek are described at the end of the novel as financially dependent and successful women. That is significant in the narration of Unigwe because it aims at proving that beyond any pejorative idea concerning sex work, African women become economically independent. Despite the fact that they are sexually exploited, they finally gain an economic power in a western world which always tries to reduce black female sex to an inferior level.

Like many African women in Belgium, Efe "had been forced to work in bars" (*OBSS*, 8). However, Unigwe wants to reconsider women's conditions through another character, Sisi. The first picture drawn by Unigwe through Efe comes in total opposition to what Sisi represents in the narrative. Efe is shown in Antwerp the same way women are also presented in Nigeria; that is they are sexually abused and exploited by men for nothing. But, Sisi's words raise something different. For Sisi, being an active sex worker is better than being a woman in Nigeria because it permits to rise from financial slenderness. For her, she is "lucky to be" in Antwerp, "living" her "dream" (*OBSS*, 15).

The feelings of Sisi come in accord with the dream of Irma, a Filipina worker in the Silicon Valley. For that woman, it is essential to be financially powerful so that one can be able to take care of the others (Mohanty Chandra Talpade, 2003: 139). The dreams of Sisi and Irma like the ones of African female immigrants match very well what Mohanty has termed 'demystification of capitalism' (Mohanty Chandra Talpade, 139). Such demystification of the western capitalism is also approved by Ghanaian Darko who still believes that African women can be economically successful. For example, Mara becomes a successful sex worker. The fact that she can send money and buy "a cement house in town" (*BTH*, 140) is the way for Darko to subvert western capitalism.

2-2 Sex, women's anti-patriarchal and anti-racist apparatus

African women in the diaspora have enhanced their cultural statuses. In fact, the west

is for women one of the greatest challenges for they have to face with racism and also patriarchy. In *Beyond the Horizon*, Mara suffers from the stereotyped judgments against Africans in general and especially against African women. Darko describes such a situation through the talk between Mara and Osey when he said to her: “I told you they call us monkeys” (BTH, 76).

In this novel, Darko takes an anti-racist discourse to restore not only the image of Africans but also the one of women through Mara. Mara’s first steps are those of a woman who went to Germany in order to satisfy her husband’s needs. But, she is confronted to an enormous challenge about her skin color. This situation has also impacted her activity as a sex worker. As black woman, Mara is considered by her white and also black customers as a sexual object that permits them to have power on her.

In *Beyond the Horizon*, Osey’s wife, Viviane has to work in order “to pay a German man to marry her” (BTH, 78). Such a picture as drawn by Darko helps understand that the patriarchal order in Africa and the one in the west are totally different. In western African countries such like Ghana, men are those who look for money in order to marry women. But, for Darko, such a tradition does not always make sense in some parts of the world. When she describes the wife of Osey as the one trying to get money in order to marry a man, the author tries to reverse the African patriarchal routine. She does so to show that women have the possibility to do what men do; that is women’s sex may become the dominant one, depending on the role she plays in the community.

Chika Unigwe’s ideas align with those of Darko about women’s sex. Indeed, like Darko, Unigwe describes Madam as a powerful woman whose sex activity enhances her power. In the novel, Madam has men who work for her. For example, Segun is a man who works under Madam’s order. In such a context, the female sex is no more the weakest. Instead, Madam has even the power to bribe the authorities in Antwerp. Such a reversal of sex role by Unigwe is to show women’s capacities to undertake and also play the roles that were in patriarchal communities, attributed to men.

Referring to the color of skin, both of Unigwe’s and Darko’s novels can be regarded as a hint to former transatlantic slave trade. In one of her interviews, Chika Unigwe was even signified that her main characters were involved into prostitution in the west. (Daria T., 2013). Unigwe’s describes her characters “in front of the glass showcase... to attract customers”. (OBSS, 178). Such a disposal can be considered as the metaphorical representation African slaves who were also displayed so that white masters could make their choices. Just like this, Darko describes Mara’s initiation into prostitution: “the room was filled with people, all men...they were stripping me, fondling me, playing with my body.” (BTH, 111). In fact, Mara

is tested so as to please her future customers. The descriptions of the two authors are proving that former transatlantic slave trade is now undertaken by Nigerian, Ghanaian and also German and Antwerp authorities who are not restrictive towards the practice of sex trafficking.

Following the above, we can perceive Darko's and Unigwe's postcolonial feminist intentions. Both of the two authors describe their main characters as culturally and socially empowered women. This can be regarded as a commitment to the reversal of gender roles and also the racial order which dominates the West. For Darko and Unigwe, it is a symbolic way for beheading patriarchy by attributing some masculine roles to their female characters. Just like Unigwe's character, Madam, Darko wants to show that Mara's arrival in Germany makes her reconsider what she culturally is. For example, Germany is a new socio-cultural society in which sex has a different meaning. Also, Akobi's imprisonment can be construed as a way for eradication the evil of patriarchy in the West.

Conclusion

We contend that a woman's sexual experience has been socially constructed as being part of her identity, in such a way that she becomes socially devalued whenever she does not comply to norms, thus making sex work a 'degrading' experience even though it is not intrinsically so. (2014, p. 2)

Jacqueline Comte's words emphasize sexuality as part of women's identity. In the two novels, *Beyond the Horizon* and *On Black Sisters' Street*, Darko and Unigwe describe women's sexual experiences as revolutionary ones. The two authors enhance the sexual image of their female characters in Africa and in the West in order to determine their identities in both environments. In Africa, women's identity is linked to their sexual fertility as mother and also as their husbands' sexual objects. In this vein, women become vulnerable characters who cannot succeed to reach a financial power. However, Amma Darko and Chika Unigwe's respective narrativesshow that women's identity in the Western world through their sexual activities has helped them shine economically and become culturally autonomous characters.

References

- ADEBAYO Aduke, 1996, *Feminism & Black Women's Creative Writing: Theory, Practice, Criticism*, Ibadan, AMD Publishers.
- DARIA Tunca, Vicki Mortimer & Emmanuelle Del Calzo, 2013, "An Interview with Chika Unigwe", *Wasafiri*, Vol. 28, N. 3, p 54-59.
- DARKO Ama, 1995, *Beyond the Horizon*, London, Heinemann.
- DAVIES Carole Boyce, Fido Elaine Savory, 1993, "African Women Writers: Towards a Literary History in: Owomoyela, O.", *A History of Twentieth Century African Literatures*, Nebraska, University of Nebraska Press, p. 311-346.

- FAYEMI Ademola Kazeem, 2009, “The Challenge of Prostitution and Female Trafficking in Africa: An African Ethico-Feminist Perspective”, *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol.3, n. 1, p. 200-213.
- GAELE Ferrant, Michele Tuccio, Estelle Loiseau and Keiko Nowacka, 2014, “The Role of Discriminatory Social Institutions in Female South-South Migration”, *OECD Development Center*, p.1-12.
- HYDE Janet Shibley, DeLamater John D., 2007, *Understanding Human Sexuality*, 10th ed. San Fransico, McGraw Hill.
- JACQUELINE Comte, 2014, “Decriminalization of Sex Work, Feminist Discourses in light of Research.”, *Sexuality & Culture An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*. École de Service Social, Université Laval, Quebec City, QC, Canada. ISSN 1095-5143 Volume 18 Number 1 Sexuality & Culture.
- KIVAI Georgiads Mboya, 2010, “The Female Voice and the Future of Gender Relationships” in the Nigerian Nation in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Arts of Kenyatta University, B. Ed (Arts), C50/10286/2007.
- MIKO T. Francis, 2004, “Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response”, *Congressional Research Service*, Washington DC, p. 1-21.
- MOHANTY Chandra Talpade, 2003, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, Durham/ London, Duke University Press.
- SHAHINIAN Gulnara, 2002, “Trafficking in women and girls”, New York, Glen Cove, p.18-22.
- SHAMEEM Musarrat, 2021, “Postcolonial Feminism’s Reinscription of Diasporic Female Identity.”, *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, Vol. 9, No.6, p. 28-36.
- UNIGWE Chika, 2009, *On Black Sisters Street*, New York, Random House.
- WEEDON Chris, 1987, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, 2nd ed., Oxford, Blackwell.