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Role Reversal and Women's Violence against Men in Amma Darko's *The Housemaid*

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Abstract

Women's domination over men is now noticeable in many parts of the world. Domination in the context of marriage is mostly seen as the supremacy of men over women. Very often, women only are perceived to be the victims of domestic violence and to undergo decisions made by men who are seen as the decision makers, the family leaders, and the perpetrators of violence in marriages. Consequently, female hegemony over men remains untold in many African societies. This role reversal is noticeable in Amma Darko's *The Housemaid* through husbands' battery and maltreatment and the leadership of women. Through the lenses of the reader-oriented theory, this paper investigated the method through which Darko makes available the phenomenon of women's supremacy over men. It also argued that with the advent of women's domination over men, mankind slowly and surely attempts an effective deconstruction of the patriarchal status exclusively dedicated to men. Violence and decision making are no longer the privilege of men as women are changing the role in a male-controlled society.

Key Words: Domination, violence, female hegemony, male victims, patriarchal status

Introduction

If it is undeniable that the literature that emerges from the colonisation period aims at tackling the problems of the independence, rehabilitation, and the cultural identity of Africa, during the recent two decades literature is not concerned with the same preoccupations. Indeed, the evolution of societies is now the concern of many researchers worldwide. Change in mankind's life appears as a key element. Despite the recent growth of research in gender issues in African literature, women's domination and violence against men remain a silent issue. Women's violence against men is "any act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering ... including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life" (Adebayo, 2014, p. 15). Violence against men is gender based and can be expressed in various ways. However, many literary works on gender's issues mostly portray women as victims of male violence and oppression, putting forth the physical power of men over women. Accordingly, a major feminist concern consisted in protecting women from men's abuse. For instance, "reformist feminists...emphasize the need for the liberation of women from an oppressive and abusive marriage" (Ada, 2011, p. 264).

Conversely, addressing the issue of male violence in feminist theory, Amy and Russo (1999) asserted that "Feminists have done more than simply bring attention to the problems of male violence against women" (p. 19). Moreover, Harway and O'Neil (1999) showcased the probable causes of men's violence against women. Obviously, very few gender studies have dealt with the issue of male victims of female persecution. Most researchers generally dedicate their works to women's victimization of male violence. On this note, Bailey and Cuomo (2007) contended that: "The systematic mistreatment and devaluation of females cross-culturally is pragmatic human harm with grave and pervasive consequences" (p. 1).

It then comes to reason that the bulk of the literary studies about gender issues have disregarded violence against men and female domination over men. Accordingly, Chan quoted by Adebayo (2014) rightly pointed out that: "The problem in conducting studies that seek to describe violence in terms of gender is the amount of silence, fear and shame that results from abuse within families and relationships. This is why domestic violence against men remains largely unreported" (p. 15). Chan therefore approved of the view that critics do not tackle the decisive issue of men's victimization by women. It is clear that the scholarships which address the issue of female oppressors rarely exist. No doubt, because of the news-worthiness of women's oppression, the issue of men being under female hegemony seems to have been ignored by literary critics. The reversal of violence against men and female hegemony is invisible given that studies, for a long time, have considered violence as coming from men alone. It appears that the previous literature has not fully tackled the question. The aim of this paper is to fill that gap by exploring women's hegemony in Darko's *The Housemaid*.

The theoretical approach used within the framework of this study is the reader-response and the hermeneutics literary theories. According to the reader-response theory, the narratee and the text share a transactional experience in drawing meaning from a literary text (Bressler72). The hermeneutics literary theory, on the other hand, is the "science or methods of interpretation employed in reading

literary and cultural texts” (Klages, 2012, p. 36). We have, therefore, drawn from our reading experience to interpret the novel under scrutiny.

This essay is built around two main sections with two subsections in each. The first section deals with women’s hegemony in a patriarchal society with specific emphasis on women’s domination over men, and the deconstruction of their patriarchal status as appearing in the focus novel. The second section addresses the failure of men’s roles.

Women’s Hegemony over Men in *The Housemaid*

In *The Housemaid*, the feminist Ghanaian woman writer, Amma Darko, reveals many contemporary gender-based issues among which the striking issue of women’s hegemony over men. As a matter of fact, Darko, in her fiction, explores the tension between African women’s traditional roles and their attempts to improve their status. As Adjei (2009) put it,

Darko, through her narrative postures and significations, exhibits strong anti-patriarchal tendencies and attempts to deconstruct and demolish the patriarchal status quo by reducing men both to worthless, irresponsible, physically grotesque images and to wicked husbands and fathers in order to engineer a new social order in which women are in control of their common destiny (p. 59).

It is clear that the author attempted to reverse the patriarchal status of men. Men’s authorities are restricted to establish a new social order in which women have the control. The theme of women’s hegemony has been depicted in the novel through the domination of men by women and the deconstruction of the patriarchal status of men.

Women’s Domination and Violence against Men

Domestic violence is violence that is perpetrated by intimate partners and other family members, and that is manifested through physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, economic abuse, and acts of omission (UNICEF 2000). It is obvious that in an African context, domination and domestic violence is culturally assumed by man as the aggressor and the victim, a female. It is then out of question to imagine a man facing female assault in an intimate relationship. Consequently, “Family violence research has focused on the relative risks that men and women face and mask the high number of men at risk, because of the large number of women who are injured as a result of domestic violence.” (Adebayo, 2014, p.17). In the same line of thought, Watts and Zimmermann quoted by Adebayo maintained that:

Though there is a prevalence of domestic violence against women in Nigeria as many women have died, brutalised or maimed for life by their violent male counterparts, however, there is also a prevalence of domestic violence against men, which has largely remained under-reported [...]. The under-reporting of domestic violence is almost universal and may be due to the sensitive nature of the subject (2014, p. 16).

Traditionally, women, especially African women, are regarded as obedient, submissive and victims of social injustice. Conversely, in Darko’s *The Housemaid*, Tika’s father is under the control and the

domination of his wife, Sekyiwa. Indeed, Tika's father, though twenty-four senior his younger wife, is a vivid example of men's domination by women. The authoress of *The Housemaid* depicts Sekyiwa with oppressive tendency towards her husband. This has occurred in the novel under study through domestic violence, both physical and psychological. Domestic violence against men is a term describing violence that is committed against men by their wives, contrary to what has for a long time been established in the patriarchal society. Domestic abuse against men in *The Housemaid* takes many forms, including battery, insult, neglecting or controlling. As Kerr and Woolard (2007) defined it, domestic violence is a combination of physical and intimidating behaviours meant for manipulating and controlling another competent adult or adolescent for submission and dependence. The theme of male victims of domestic violence in the focus novel is mostly set in Tika's father's household. Sekyiwa, Tika's mother, begins a covert love affair with Tika's father because of his first wife's barrenness. The fact that Tika's father is craving to have a child makes him stick to Sekyiwa abandoning his first wife. The homodiegetic narrator informs:

At the age of twenty-two she began a clandestine affair with a married man twenty-four years her senior. His wife was barren and rumour had it that this was the result of an abortion she had had when they were courting. Then Sekyiwa got pregnant. And the man felt his obligation to his unborn child transcending his loyalty to his wife. He left her. 'I will live the rest of life for you and our child,' he promised Sekyiwa (Darko, 1998, p. 18).

But the situation has soon changed after the birth of their daughter and as the man grows old. In fact, the relationship between Tika's parents is profit-driven. The husband craves for having children whereas the wife longs for wealth. The goal of building up a peaceful and tuneful family is not a shared preoccupation. This rapidly results in fights and arguments between them leading to the domination of Tika's mother on her father. The former often makes violence on her husband. Tika, their unique daughter, has confessed: "All the screaming and yelling had come from her mother; the imploring and pleading from her father. She remembers her mother's hand flying at her father's face in time with her insults" (Darko, 1998, p. 19). From the above quotation, it is clear that the violence is perpetrated against the man. Sekyiwa is therefore the oppressor and her husband is the victim, which is not common in gender based violence. The narratee can easily infer that Tika's father is totally under his wife's domination. Sekyiwa abuses, beats and oppresses her husband. Amouzou states convincingly that "in his solitude, a man looks to a woman to confer an absolute value upon his life" (2014, p. 17). However, Tika's father's situation is a totally different one. Sekyiwa exploits her husband to reach her goal, which is to become rich and enjoy life. What she does goes beyond the boundary of feminist as explained by Pewissi (2017), "feminism aimed to protect the right of women and empower them so that they too can feel human as their men counterparts. As the word indicates, feminism is for women in the society where men had privileges over women" (p. 9). Sekyiwa's attitude is rather a radical feminist struggle. In fact, the way the female character Sekyiwa is depicted in a hostile patriarchal arena shows that Amma Darko is among the new generation of African women writers: "who questioned and criticized how their culture constructed gender roles, particularly in cultures where what is gendered female or feminine is valued less or subordinated to what is male or masculine" (Klages, 2012, p. 29). One can notice that the female character Sekyiwa is taking her revenge, on behalf of all the oppressed African

women, for all the ordeal African women suffer from their male counterparts in that she plays her intrigue and gets pregnant for the man so as to make him stick with her. Her plan is a wonderful success as the man, under Sekyiwa's total subjugation, promises to make her rich and happy. The extradiegetic narrator gave account:

I will live the rest of my life for you and our child' he promised Sekyiwa. 'I will set you up in business. I will make you rich. I will invest every pesewa that crosses my hand in you. So that one day, when I am old and no longer working, you can take care of me and our child

So, soon after Tika's birth, he got Sekyiwa a big shop and filled it with textile prints. By the third year, Sekyiwa had become one of the wealthy market mummies (Darko, 1998, p.18).

The calm and happiness do not last within their household. Sekyiwa is too young to ruin her sexual life with an old man whose libido is waning. Such a situation does not comfort her, and as a matter of fact, she voices out her sorrow with her spouse. "He took her in his arms. 'Now that we have achieved what we set out to, [...] we can begin to really enjoy life.' But to his dismay, Sekyiwa gave him a scornful jeer. 'Enjoy what life? What life is there to enjoy with the dead penis? That was how the squabbles started. No day passed without a fight or an argument'" (Idem). This attitude of Sekyiwa's affects morally and psychologically Tika's father and that is the real beginning of his sorrow. He is always hurt and ill-treated by her young and sexually obsessed wife who has changed into an adulterous woman. Young and stout men start vying for Sekyiwa's attention and she seizes such opportunities to satisfy her strong lust. "She gave them good money; and they gave her good sex" (Idem). All the income of her business is then invested in sexuality. It is common that men pay women to have sex. But it is Sekyiwa, the woman, who reverses the role by dating men. Her old and 'useless' husband cannot bear her cheating and betrayal that finally causes him death. This role reversal makes Sekyiwa the family head. Throughout the novel, Sekyiwa becomes the best narrative element that Amma Darko uses to pinpoint female domination in the conjugal household. Here, it is perceptible that Tika's father experiences violence and abuse in the hands of his wife who is suspected to be the cause of his death. To put it mildly, the authoress portrays female violence against men as a strong women's willing "to gain their personal identity [by overcoming] the impositions of patriarchy" (C. Murphy, Jr, 1995, p. 96). On this score, Amouzou contended that:

The ideological commitment of the feminist movement is the redefinition of male-female relationships, giving voice and authority to woman to play important roles for her own survival and that of her community. In the artistic articulation of these concerns, many women adopt radical positions, advocating a role-reversal which makes woman more powerful than man [...]. As we see, Feminism's agenda is to challenge all restrictions imposed to woman by tradition and culture. The renunciation of male domination pushes many African female writers to portray their male characters with negative images (2014, p. 19).

Sekyiwa's portrayal plainly confirms a role-reversal in male-female relationships. She exercises abuse as perpetrated by men in order to imply that women are capable of action in domestic affairs. No matter how woeful Sekyiwa's domination over her husband is, this is a proof of women's attempt to balance gender roles in a phallocentric society.

The Deconstruction of Men's Patriarchal Status

The system of patriarchy set up in traditional societies explains the reasons for women's ill-treatment and domination through ages. As can be noticed, the ideology of patriarchy emphasizes man's importance, his dominance and his superiority to subjugate women and make them second-class citizen. Obviously, the culture of many African societies is based on male ascendancy. Men have power and control over women. That is why the "African women's main challenge is to live in a society where both men and women could have mutually fruitful relationships both in the private and public spheres" (Gbaguidi, 2018, p. 81). Indeed, in most African families and according to the patriarchal system, men are too busy to take care of their children. So, it is up to women to cope with that whether the child is a boy or a girl. Hence the traditional role of women goes as Oladele explained: "Women have the primary responsibility of bringing up the children [...]. It is the mother who has the child under her prolonged and detailed care, moulds its character and ensures that her offspring conforms to social norms [...]" (1984, p. 7).

Interestingly, the female character nicknamed Teacher in *The Housemaid* defies this conception. In fact, Teacher is a young lady who starts school at eleven thanks to her foster father who does his best to help her succeed in her studies. She is teased by her mates and even by her teacher because of her lead in age on the rest of the class: "But, encouraged by her foster father, the girl stayed on and succeeded in making it all the way of teacher training college" (Darko, *op cit.*, p. 35). After graduation, Teacher starts teaching in a school in Accra, which is an achievement in such an overbearing patriarchal society in her time. At that position, Teacher is one of "the few Katsuoans in Accra with formal jobs and the comfort of home [...]" (*Ibid.*, p. 34). This proves that women are also capable of many other things beyond the domestic chores patriarchy confines them to. Likewise, Tika and her mother are much known as powerful businesswomen in their society.

Hence, Sekyiwa, interestingly, dominates her husband in a patriarchal setting contrary to the rule. Indeed, Madam Sekyiwa in the focus novel has always controlled her husband, Tika's father. She is the one ruling their household, contrary to the conventional role of the traditional African woman as submissive, passive, and weak and as the appendage of the once overbearing man in phallocentric societies. Consequently, the female character Sekyiwa can be perceived as a strong anti-patriarchal symbol. Therefore, we can infer that men seem to lose their masculine status in Darko's *The Housemaid*. On this score, Adjei (2009) saw Amma Darko's creative writings as "confronting and demolishing male dominance and exploitation" (p. 47). To sustain this trend, the authoress purposely presents many male characters as unnamed and then depicts them as irresponsible. This is the case of Bibio's father as well as Efi's. Bibio's father remains unnamed throughout the novel. Efi's nameless father seems to be the archetypal representation of the useless and irresponsible rural man who is addicted to the local drink 'akpeteshie'. The patriarchal context in *The Housemaid* is unquestionably in controversy. If according to Ogun-dipe-Leslie "feminism need not be opposition to men [...]", this seems not to be the case with

Efia's grandmother toward her son-in-law. The position of Efia's grandmother confirms that point of view when pouring the libation which her son-in-law is supposed to pour. Maame Amoakona, Efia's mother, warns her mother thus:

If libation must be poured, then my husband should do it, mother. You are desecrating the gods and ancestors. Old though you are, you are still a woman who once menstruated. And not even menopause cleanses you enough to qualify you to pour libation. And maybe things are beginning to go wrong because you broke a few rules. Don't you agree?

The old lady was shocked. 'You have the guts to take a stand for your husband against me? That stupid drunkard? It's his bad luck that has caused this. I was beginning to think something better of him. Now look. And you dare tell me it's my uncleanness to blame? Get out! Go! If he's the one you say is clean enough to pour libation, then go and call him. Go!' (Darko, *op cit.* p. 72)

It appears that there is an attempt to change the order or to give to women the authority they have been deprived of by the domineering male counterparts. Amma Darko therefore reverses the torturer-victim relationship by making her female characters take the lead even in things being traditionally men's prerogative. Frank (1987) rightly and rightfully noted the revolution in the creative writings by African authoresses as she posits that in the African feminist fiction, female characters do not only share responsibilities with men but they also fix up "a destiny of their own [...] a destiny of vengeance" (pp. 14-15). Oddly enough, when there is a good male character in Darko's second novel, he dies at an early age as is the case with Tika's father. This tallies with Adjei's stand when he writes: "Darko's stories are crafted in such a way that, if there are any 'good' men, they die before the stories open. In *The Housemaid*, Tika's loving father is ditched by Tika's mother, Sekyiwa, and he dies before the story opens. He remains outside the story and is referred infrequently" (2009, p. 57).

1. The Failure of Men's Role in *The Housemaid*

Men's anonymity in *The Housemaid* expresses the degree of the role played or the failure of their role in their households. Mainly two categories of men are concerned about or are involved in this failure. First, those who are present in the families but fail to play properly their roles and secondly men who simply run away letting the family members cope on their own. In both cases, it appears that the family burden or charges are left to mothers alone. In this section, two important issues are discussed: fathers' irresponsibility and women's parental responsibility.

A. Men Portrayed as Irresponsible Intimate Partners

In *The Housemaid*, oddly enough and against the rule, men remain almost under the shadow of women. They are portrayed as worthless, irresponsible, or sexually depraved creatures. As a matter of fact, while discussing the discovery of the abandoned baby, the tomato female seller at Kumasi main market does not hesitate to blame men for their irresponsibility. Remarkably, replying to one of the male truck pushers, accusing the mother of the dead baby of infanticide, the tomato female seller mockingly retorts "I can see you two young men turning out just like the irresponsible man who impregnated the poor

woman in the first place” (Darko, *op cit.* p. 6). Darko’s feminist stand here is clear, to level all the accusations against the man who has impregnated the ‘innocent’ woman instead of denouncing the female character who is guilty of infanticide.

Talking of sex in *Kataso*, young men are represented as perverted and blamed for their flippancy. For instance, Kofi Akorti, depicted as a very perverted male character, is made an outcast from his own village because of his libidinous fervour. The homodiegetic narrator fittingly points out:

One dawn, the palace announcer would shout out, ‘Hear, oh hear, you good people of *Kataso*. The chief has asked me to bring this message to you all. Kofi Akorti has been asked to leave this village immediately. Mama Ama Mbroo reported he had impregnated her fourteen-year-old daughter. This brings to twelve the number of the young girls Kofi Akorti has so far impregnated in *Kataso*. The chief thinks it in the interest of the village that Akorti carries his wilful and undisciplined penis away from here before he impregnates another twelve girls (Darko, 1998, p. 30).

This passage gives much detail about how male characters, though young and single, are portrayed as grotesque and rash. An instance of irresponsible father in *The Housemaid* is Bibio’s father. He rarely exists for his children, who really need his support and education. But “Not a pesewa came from their father.” (*Ibid.* p. 11). The female character Bibio does not remain indifferent to her father’s recklessness and irresponsibility as she compassionately asks her mother thus: “Why, after making Nereley with him, when you realised how irresponsible he was, did you go ahead to make Akai, me and Nii Boi as well?” (*Idem*). Caught off her guard by this unexpected question, Mami Korkor is crippled with sorrow and distress as she goes to the length of cursing the father of her four children “in her head” (*Ibid.*, p. 12). The Ghanaian woman writer’s narrative depicts negatively male characters to the extent to be viewed as misandrous. In an interview with Ayinne (2004), Darko justified her harsh attitude dealing with men / her male characters:

We’ve started writing from our [African women writers’] point of view because, for a while, you were writing for us [...]. So [...] if we are writing, probably there is some pain that has to come out. And I think rather than take it as male-bashing, you must take it as a means to better understand the women folk of Africa [...]. You were always portraying us as all-enduring, all-giving mothers and that is the attitude we find in males [...] but I don’t want to be all-giving all the time, I don’t want to be all enduring, I want to be angry, I want to react.

Indeed, most of Darko’s creative writings demolish the injustice inflicted upon women in that male characters, mainly in the focus novel, are careless towards their children and spouses, less considered due to their evasion of parental responsibility in marital life. As Adjei (2009) accurately puts it:

Darko, through her narrative postures and significations, exhibits strong anti-patriarchal tendencies and attempts to deconstruct and demolish the patriarchal status quo by reducing men both to worthless, irresponsible, physically grotesque images and to wicked husbands and fathers in order to engineer a new social order in which women are in control of their common destiny (p.49).

Another instance of irresponsible man as depicted in the novel under consideration is Efi's father. He is portrayed as inebriated, useless, and incapable. He is pictured in relation to his total addiction to the local alcoholic drink 'akpeteshie'. As his mother-in-law derisively points out, "It's what he rinses his mouth with first every morning [...]" (Darko, 1998, p. 40) to the extent that "his body has fallen to akpeteshie" (*Ibid.* p.45). These figurative sentences show the extent to which Darko's narrative derides on male characters. Indeed, what is normal is to rinse one's mouth with water; but when it happens that an alcoholic drink (akpeteshie) replaces water then it becomes a lust. Under such a circumstance, it will be impossible for Efi's father to impose his phallocentric authority when need be. In this wake, Amouzou (2014) espoused that Efi's father does not mirror the "powerful and unshakable image which is attributed to man in his society" (p. 17). Worse still, when Teacher and Tika go to Kataso to negotiate Efi's departure to town, they cannot talk with Efi's father because the latter is as usual drunk. To his wife's utter dismay: "He was lying spreadeagled on the floor, oblivious to the flies buzzing in and out of his open mouth, and snoring as if tomorrow were doomsday" (*Ibid.* pp. 40-41). This distressing portrayal of this male character, in whose drunk state flies revel, is atypical of Darko's disparaging stand regarding her male characters. On this score, Adjei (2009) emphasized "the condescending manner in which Darko treats her male characters" (p. 48). Efi's father proves he cannot do without akpeteshie. Moreover, he does not have his own house but dwells in his in-laws' house, representing him, once again, as a shameless husband and father.

B. Women Faced with Parental Responsibility

Parental responsibility is a joint role that should be played both by men and women. But due to the failure of some men to play their part, women especially mothers are compelled to take on responsibilities which are not traditionally theirs in the African society. In *The Housemaid* parental responsibility lies with some mothers whose husbands die or divorce, or they prove to evade their parental and spousal duties. Although the situation is stable between Efi's parents, the father is limited in his role. The fact that Efi's father is a drunkard discredits him allowing his wife and mother-in-law to take on responsibility he is entitled to. For instance, when food runs short in the house, it's Efi's mother who has to toil to provide after informing her mother. This is how the heterodiegetic narrator describes the role reversal in Efi's father's ménage: "Moments later, Efi's mother went looking for the old lady. 'Mother, we don't have enough cassava for this evening's fufu. I have to go and uproot some more' [...]. And left for the farm" (Darko, 1998, p. 44). She could have asked her husband to go and do so. But she is aware that the man is reckless and an old soak. This implies that Efi's father is not the one feeding the family, but instead his wife and mother-in-law play the role a normal and responsible man should play.

For those who are not lucky to be with their husbands, they generally end up lonely with the responsibility of taking care of the children. If one of the advantages of union is happiness and mutual responsibility, Mami Korkor in *The Housemaid* does not taste this bliss as she ends up single with four children. She plays the role of her husband who has abandoned her. "Being determined, she overcomes all the obstacles in her life in a patriarchal society" (Gbaguidi, 2018, p. 83). "She had to hawk fish from dawn to dusk to earn just enough to feed herself and her children. They all depended on her. Not a pesewa from their father" (Darko, 1998, p. 11). As can be seen, Mami Korkor has to face alone the

difficulties related to educating and feeding her children. Mami Korkor can be perceived as those African rural women who, despite their destitution, keep on fighting. The authoress, Darko, through this character, shows how the African woman can also go beyond her traditional roles to cope the situation she is facing. So, she finds herself alone for that huge burden and this rapidly seems to be beyond her capacity. So as to fill in the gap, she initiates her ten-year-old daughter Bibio into traditional roles of women in society such as household chores. As for the boys, she cannot prevent them from going for scavenging in search of take-offs. In this poor village, children from poor families like Mami Korkor's are living in a total dinginess fending for themselves to make both ends meet as the extradiegetic narrator describes in the following lines:

In the midst of the uproar, two boy scavengers searching the rubbish dump as usual for anything that might be useful, spotted a red plastic bag and made a grab for it. Inside they found a faded pink, white and yellow flowered blouse, some beige nylon underwear and a faded cover cloth. All of these were stained with plenty of blood and other fluids the two scavengers could make sense of. But they took it all anyway, because they had come across finds in worse states which had turned out good and useful (Darko, 1998, p. 5)

This clearly showcases the harsh and destitute conditions in which Mami Korkor's children have been brought up. Unlike Mami Korkor, Sekyiwa is very rich. The common point between the two is that they are both left alone. As matter of fact, Sekyiwa's nameless husband dies following the scornful ill-treatment she has inflicted upon him. Hence, she faces alone the upbringing of her unique daughter, Tika. She plays both the roles of father and mother. In view of all the drudgeries Sekyiwa has to face in order to bring up her only child, Little Tika has nobody to play with at home because her mother is always away. Sekyiwa buttresses Tika's constant loneliness at home by pointing out: "Because I have to make money to look after us" (*Ibid.* p. 20). Sekyiwa is quite aware that her husband has gone and only she alone has to face the family charges.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that women have taken the lead in the ménage. In this role reversal, they perpetrate physical and psychological violence and oppression against men and ridicule them. Throughout the novel, Sekyiwa, Mama Korkor, and Teacher become the best narrative elements the Ghanaian woman writer uses to display female characters' supremacy over their male counterparts in the family circle. If women do not snatch power from men, they will remain under male hegemony for good. This is justified in the novel under scrutiny through the tension between Tika's Father and Sekyiwa. Obviously, men prefer women with traditional attitudes like Efia's mother in *The Housemaid*. But for gender equality's sake, women should not always mother men as it would almost be impossible for them to achieve their goal. Amma Darko empowers her female characters to be the ones running their families as their other halves turn out to be irresponsible or powerless. The traditional female roles are not then strictly observed. Instead, the patriarchal system is destabilised. The issue of men's domination by women has been discussed through *The Housemaid* by Amma Darko. On the one hand, it has been shown that Sekyiwa's attitudes to her husband have deconstructed the established males' hegemony over their wives. On the other hand, this paper has addressed the failure of men to

take on their parental and spousal duties giving the advantage to women to play those roles. It has also been proved that women's domination over men is untold. There is a need to balance the role share in the household for more justice between men and women.

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