

The Syndrome of Sugar-Daddy and Sugar-Mummy: An Exploration in Amma Darko's *Not Without Flowers*

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Abstract: This paper offers a critical reading of *Not without flowers* (2007) and the way Amma Darko develops her thematic by representing many growing social issues in African postcolonial countries. The paper unveils the way the female novelist seeks to challenge the prevailing traditional views of patriarchy in African societies and subverts it. She writes about social evils among which the phenomenon of sugar-daddies or sugar-mummies and insidiously invites her female characters to stand against it. Amma Darko sharply condemns this syndrome and favours a critical analysis of the concept of new motherhood especially in contemporary Africa. Agreeing with Amma Darko and using a sociological approach, the paper brings to the fore this phenomenon as a serious reality to reckon in male dominant settings. The sugar daddy or sugar mummy phenomenon is the sexual relation between usually older and wealthy people and young students or unemployed from poor settings. Therefore, Darko's desire is to project the woman as a survivor of the harshest conditions, vicissitudes and hurdles which characterise African postcolonial existence. Considering the terrible ordeals imposed on African women, this paper uncovers how Amma Darko gives way to her feminist ideas to project her ideological stance in the present creative writing. She finally indicates poverty and illiteracy as the root causes of the phenomenon. This paper pinpoints the origins of the phenomenon and its magnitudes on the youth in question and on African community.

Keywords: sugar-daddy, sugar-mummy, sex, gift-based love, HIV/AIDS.

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1. Introduction

Like interest, sex leads life, people say. Sex can get people killed, bankrupted, put in jail, personally ruined, to rephrase Edna Buchanan's saying. When sex lacks in a couple, it leads to their disruption. From that point one can have betrayal in the family. Polygamy might be viewed as good, in some African cultures, whenever it serves a noble cause like filling the gap of childlessness in a household; however, it turns sour if it is not carefully handled. Sugar daddy phenomenon is also considered as a form of polygamy, which is one the worst social realities with regard to family life that still negatively affects most African women in their being yoked forever to difficulties. The growing plight of sugar daddy or sugar mummy is to be addressed by all means because it is one of the first root causes to the Aids pandemic.

In *Not without flowers* (2007), Amma Darko portrays African decaying society in terms of moral and decency. She gives way to her imagination to prove how difficult it is to cope with social contemporary plights like that of sugar-daddy and sugar-mummy syndrome in Ghana and, by extension, in other African postcolonial countries. The novelist makes use of experiences of common Ghanaians' daily lives to demonstrate her feminist position. Sugar-daddy or sugar-mummy syndrome is a social issue which causes lie in poverty, sexual fantasies, lust and money-guided love affairs. However, the debates are more about the way common people take patients of HIV in society and how these people try to maintain themselves on surface without being drowned by negative thoughts. It is these challenges that we wish to discuss and leave our readers not only with Amma Darko's perspective, but also shed light on unanswered questions about whether men are only at cause of it all. Sociocriticism and post-colonialism are the lenses through which this study is conducted.

2. Definition of the concepts

According to the *Merriam Webster online Dictionary*, "sugar daddy" is defined as a rich, older man who gives money, gifts, etc., to someone (such as a younger woman) in exchange for sex, friendship, etc. It is a well-to-do usually older man who supports or spends lavishly on a mistress, girlfriend, or boyfriend. Likewise, a very older woman in a relationship with a younger man is called "cougar" or "sugar mummy". But, the African woman, in a recent period, was not supposed to be active because women have been forbidden the right to have their own fun unless labelled "prostitutes".

Until just a few years ago many people had "the misconception that a "sugar daddy" relationship was a forbidden affair between a wealthy older gentleman and an attractive, but "naïve" younger woman. Such a liaison was thought to be improper as the rich, experienced and mature gentleman was in fact taking an unfair advantage of the girl by enticing her with an upscale way of life that she could never experience on her own. This consisted of glamorous vacations, dining in five-star restaurants and cramming her with incredible gifts. This is a complete fallacy as the great majority of these relationships are built on trust and respect with the goal of a mutually beneficial relationship. Within a society, all individual attitude counts either to cause the syndrome or be at risk of it. However, many studies situate some of the main causes of the syndrome that we should talk about.

3. Causes of the practice

Many causes lead men and women to become "sugar daddies" or "sugar mummies" in African societies. Among the principal causes, we have the male oriented society which insidiously gives permission to men to have all rights over women and not to give opportunity to women to express a different idea. This is what Chimamanda N. Adichie calls "The Danger of a Single story" which explains the notion of power over other beings in society.

3.1 Patriarchy

According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, patriarchy is "a social system in which men have all the power". It is a structure of a set of social relations with material basis which enables men to dominate women (Stacey 1993; Kramarae 1992; Lerner 1986; Humm 1989). Furthermore, it is a system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex, which provides material advantages to males while simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of females. It appears that patriarchy is that form of social organization in which males exercise power and thus create for females an inferior status. In all societies, as James Currey puts it, "men have traditionally been the subject of

history” (1990: 3). In Nigeria for example, the national anthem calls compatriots to serve their Fatherland not their Motherland, consequently excluding implicitly all the valuable women from all spheres of nation building ignoring in fact the outstanding and dominating role of African women in their community.

For Aina (1998: 6), men do not participate in domestic work including child rearing, such tasks are considered to be the exclusive domain of women. Males are categorised as having the following qualities: strength, vigour, virile / powerful courage, self-confidence and the ability to meet the outside world. Those qualities are reflected in the kinds of works that men engage in. Men are responsible for much of what is thought of as ‘heavy’ labour.

In *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Chinua Achebe presents the male character Okonkwo as one of the most powerful men in the Ibo tribe on account of the number of his wives, children and his personal achievements. In his tribe, Okonkwo is both feared and honoured. This is evident through this quote, “Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond [...]. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his tribe by throwing Amalinze the Cat”. (p. 5). In Okonkwo's patriarchal society, social advancement is attained through personal achievements or merits. Thus, any less successful individual, lagging behind, is pigeonholed as “a woman” by Okonkwo (p. 21). Indeed, Okonkwo, a misogynistic character, unhesitatingly and haughtily says to a man without any title stuck to his name: “This meeting is for men” (p. 5). This reveals Ujowundu’s idea in such a society where women are victims of dehumanisation, negligence, maltreatment, marginalisation, oppression, subjugation, exploitation, objectification, humiliation and even isolation, all of which emanate from aspects of the people’s culture (2013).

In this study, Amma Darko’s contribution to the writing of fiction is nothing but empower African women and drive them from marginalisation to the foreground. She confronts patriarchy and other forms of marginalisation of African women in her works. She creates female characters who are actively engaged in the production of oppositional ideologies to counter the overriding patriarchal principles. Those female characters created by Amma Darko are not ready to accept like lambs every word from their venerable husbands. They are aware that their inactiveness can bring about their own degeneration. Amma Darko presents them as passive victims of patriarchy. Patriarchal system compels women to believe that their inferior status is natural and irredeemable. Besides, patriarchal philosophy holds that men are naturally superior to women and male characters portrayed by Amma Darko have the same frame of mind. Such ideology justifies male domination and forms the foundation for patriarchy. On this score a scholar posits that: “Women’s subordination refers to cultural claims and customs, which maintain that men are primary and pre-eminent, and that women are secondary, subordinate and under men. It is a belief, which excludes women from public leadership of family, church and society” (Uchem, 2001, p. 23). Darko’s writing is an effort to voice internal knowledge and needs of women in a way that challenges the status quo. Yet, she does not work images of African women projected by patriarchal order and figures female characters. Amma Darko exposes the female passiveness versus her possibility of retaliation in *Not without flowers* (2007).

When someone is born in African traditional community, the person is taught its values, which are transmitted all along the person’s life. In *Not without flowers*, the wealthy and famous Pesewa is one of the children of that culture. Amma Darko depicts the male character Pesewa as an antinomic character for ‘sugar daddies’ that is to say “old and rich”. In this vein, Pesewa is not that kind of man flitting around and multiplying concubines and

girlfriends. He is faithful in his multitude. Pesewa is a “lucky fellow. Sixty, plus; filthy rich; multiple wives; good life! No concubines though; lovers, girlfriends, chicken-soups, concubines” (Darko, 2007, p. 57). All this sort of debauchery life is not that of Pesewa. If he wants a woman, he simply makes her his wife and this continues up to five wives because African society condones this male attitude of a man’s taking on several wives, but condemns it if it comes from women. In African traditional society, women are more considered mere domestic servants than equal or complementary partners to their husbands even the most educated ones. The most surprising thing is that some of them “have to live silently with domestic violence, domestic enslavement, marital infidelity as part of what means to be wife, a mother and a woman in a patriarchal setting”. (Ilo Chu, 2006, p. 5).

3.2 Poverty

Elaborating on the root causes of death in developing countries, Korankye (2014) points out that “poverty is the oldest and the most resistant virus that brings about a devastating disease in the third world or developing countries. Its rate of killing cannot be compared to any disease from the genesis of mankind. It’s worse than malaria and HIV/AIDS which are claimed to be the highest killer diseases” (pp. 147-48). It can also be defined as the condition of having scarce resources or income. Poverty is the lack of basic human needs to survive as useful and working efficiently such as adequate and nutritious food, clothing, housing, clean water and health services. The United Nations Human Development Report (1998) defines poverty as a complex phenomenon that generally refers to inadequacy of resources and deprivation of choices that would enable people to enjoy decent living conditions. Therefore, in most undeveloped countries, poverty is hunger with no way to satisfy it; it is lack of shelter and cloth, with no way to have them. Poverty is the fact of being sick with no means to go to a doctor. It is to be thirsty with no way to have clean water and in this sense, several people pass away due to inadequate living conditions and health facilities. Interestingly, McBagonluri (2011) points out that misery is so rampant in some South Saharan African countries that it is tolerated: “Here, in the corridors of sub-Saharan Africa, poverty manifested as decayed vehicles, skewed like kebabs into sand. Landmarks were old school buses stuck in sand and again never moved. These artefacts of the past, symbols of failed leadership, accentuated the current dire state of our collective misery” (p. 9). Then why does Amma Darko not point out the problem of poverty with 5th Wife’s case, though knowing that it is one of the root causes? She lets us know that 5th Wife loves her position of being treated like a queen, a normal and noble intention. Amma Darko presents this female character beyond that devastating difficulty, but portrays Maa Cherie’s apprentice differently. The narrator puts that:

Madam, some girls are compelled to do it out of genuine financial need. My sister and I lost our mother when we were very young. Our father married again, but our stepmother was hell. Yet our father was so much in love with her that it blinded him to what was going on. She used to starve us. At sixteen, my sister, who was older, became involved with her first sugar daddy. He broke her virginity. He was so excited about that and swore to care for the two of us till his death [...]. He apparently had an appetite only for girls below eighteen. He dropped my sister like a pest two years later and went in for a fifteen year old. My sister never fully recovered from that passion (Darko, 2007, p. 287).

It turns out that the underage female character gives herself to this sugar daddy out of abandonment and destitution; in such a liaison sex becomes just a physical activity for her sister. Since they have lost all kind of emotion, these underage girls have sex to make both ends meet, their passion having been killed and buried due to poverty. In the same stream,

Finkelhor and Browne (1985) point out that child sexual abuse leads to feelings of betrayal, powerlessness, stigmatization, and the sense that sex is a commodity. These feelings often make children vulnerable to re-victimization, including child prostitution. That is the reason why the apprentice's sister continues to have sex with people three times her age without caring and "never had a boyfriend her age, only sugar daddies. Her last one was so wealthy and generous it was unbelievable. He showed her with cash like he did his beer belly" (Darko, 2007, p. 287). When for the first time, children have sex with people older than them to survive, they are likely to continue this sexual activity. In this wake, Finkelhor and Browne (1985) argue that the feeling of powerless strengthens their desire to get entangled and the prevailing destitution renders these children more victims of it.

To Amma Darko, poverty is the root cause of such a predicament in Africa. The victims of these sexual predators are needy, particularly financially. As a matter of fact, facing the economic uncertainty that awaits them upon graduation, some young female students begin to look for other, rather unorthodox, sources of income. Interestingly, so as to pay their loans and house rent, young graduates and undergraduates get dated by men twice or three times their age. Thus, they reluctantly indulge in the phenomenon to make both ends meet. Literature being generally the reflection of the society from which it emanates, in the focus novel, Amma Darko depicts poverty as something concrete, physical and material. Specialists of sustainable development call it "chronic poverty" which leads some parents in developing countries to dump their beloved progenies on streets or to let them have sex with older people for cash or in kind. Yet, poverty is not the only reason why some young characters in *Not without flowers* give themselves to precocious and hazardous sexual relationships with older people.

3.3 Lust for fantasies and money

There is a popular African saying that it is boring and tiresome to taste all the time the same "soup", the same "meal", the same "thing". All these are meant to caricature the African woman. To avoid a monotonous relationship some men then look for other new and passionate pleasures. For instance, in the novel *Not without flowers*, the character Idan, although married to Aggie, is portrayed as a very hard worker but a womaniser. One evening, on his way back home, he bumps into a beautiful woman only to fall in love with her. This fortuitous encounter leads to a very sumptuous love story and fantasies. Opportunistic men like the character Idan take advantage of all situations to entice their prey. The Ghanaian novelist depicts a situation in which both Idan and his victim in the car seek an opportunity to talk and get involved in an intimate position. The cordial harmony between Idan and his victim is presented as follows: "The young lady smiled. She still didn't say anything [...]. The young lady saw his irritation. She laughed slightly [...] She shrugged [and said] 'If a young female is not looking for a long-term affair, why not go in for one with the lowest risk of such an expectation?'" (Darko, 2007, p. 78).

Besides, the elements in Amma Darko's fiction show that the spread of the syndrome in recent years in Africa is due to the fact that more and more African women leave their traditional role of housekeepers to find jobs in cities in a fit of emancipation and consequently abandoning some of their traditional roles as dutiful wives. On this score, the narrator in the focus novel puts forward that when a woman "has a job of her own, then what energy would she be left with at the end of the day to dream and live out any sexual fantasies?" (Darko, 2007, p. 80) In doing so, such women attach themselves to their emancipation, autonomy, making boring and tiresome their home and bed. They transform their family role to a routine even in sex and thus are ostracised. In this wake, Obbo (1980)

postulates that “Elite women who wish to improve their legal and economic status must expect to lose honour and respect” (p. 3). Likewise, to react once more against that negative change of attitude of African women, the omniscient narrator in the focus novel reveals that:

“Pa began to toy with the idea of one permanent pleasure provider. A young and attractive mistress with whom he could share and live out his sexual fantasies and cravings without shame, guilt or fear. Someone who would nurture him and with whom he could even interconnect emotionally” (Darko, 2007, p. 330). As a consequence, Pa looks around and sets his heart on Agnes also called Aggie. Oddly enough, Aggie is always passionate in her revulsion and disagreement with Pa’s perception of things. She loves her job with passion that sometimes leaves Pa feeling jealous. Through the female character Aggie, Amma Darko explores the reverse way of female contemporary and urban quest for financial freedom through self-assertion, self-fulfilment. This attitude gives way to a male interpretation that a woman coming from her workplace is exhausted, so cannot afford some more bothering.

Subsequently, it indirectly leaves the floor to “chicken soup” ready outside there to walk in. The chicken soup is definitely as being taken care of by the men in need of fresh air, fresh flesh, fresh sex because she has no responsibilities and is available on just a clap of fingers. It is the expression of the energy that the wife lacks while coming from work, which the young and good-looking girl has in abundance. The sugar daddy adds to that energy with the time and attention and responsiveness he lacks at home or in bed. Unlike other women who get to their sugar-daddy’s home to have babies and thus fill the existing list of progenies, 5th Wife has an alternative hidden reason to marry Pesewa who has already had in his directory four wives and countless children. The omniscient narrator in the focus novel reveals that:

She was in secondary school and had fallen head over heel in love with a fellow student. Their first unprotected sex got her pregnant. She was shocked. How could that have happened? [...]. Then something inexplicable happened during the surgery. Instead of severing the one fallopian tube in which the fetus was developing, both were severed. She only found this out several years later. She had no idea why that happened (Darko, 2007, p. 261).

Amma Darko’s interest to give another way out to African women facing such a predicament is surprising. However, her sole motive is to solve women’s problem of childlessness. She justifies it ironically through the character Dina as follows: “If a woman in our society has no child, it is most likely because she cannot conceive a child. Not because she doesn’t want to. A woman’s failure to procreate in our society is seen as a tragic failure on her part to partake of life’s cycle at its very basic level, and is perceived as unnatural and unwomanly” (Darko, 2007, pp. 95-96). Amma Darko’s medical revelation proves to the common readers that a woman’s childlessness can be accidental and lasts forever. It becomes glaring that Darko is defining fate against bad intention.

From a different perspective, the Ghanaian female writer Amma Darko gives a particular and exceptional role to Pesewa’s first wife. She is the first, yet has accepted without any complaint from the other four wives in Pesewa’s mansion. Here Amma Darko dehumanizes polygamy ever loved in the past. First Wife is dumped by Pesewa as soon as other wives make their entrance in his mansion. Instead of striking back, the woman becomes silent, patient and supports the change in Pesewa’s intimacy. She upholds the virtuous woman the patriarchal society wants to see in all women. Darko’s intention is to prove that some women are trained to support the burden of frustration and humiliation in a male-dominated society.

In order to make the reader understand the reason for her choice, Amma Darko opposes her to the second wife. In that sense, the narrator reveals that:

Gradually a kind of emotional osmosis began to manifest itself. An in and out flow. A loss of endearment to the husband she shared with two other women added to the gain of the intoxicating power that her social and financial freedom and independence from her successful trading business gave her. The initial loathing she had harboured for their husband's third wife turned into indifference. Her jealousy waned and shrank (Darko, 2007, p. 273).

Second Wife is directed by her feelings of vengeance but clumsily because she wants to prove that the phenomenon is not only confined to men. Women's lifestyle morality is also questioned in the fiction. Just like men, sugar mummies expect sex in exchange for their regular allowance and frequent gifts. Generally, it is not customary for a woman to date a man in a traditional African society. The novelist subsequently decides to subvert that traditional way of doing things. As wealthy women are in contact with money they think that everything can be bought including hot sexual times from young men they employ for that job. Like Second Wife in *Not without flowers*, who cannot bear her husband's marital infidelity, leaves her marital home to start afresh. She becomes involved in a business which obliges her to exchange sex for money. The second Wife also becomes 'sugar mummy' wandering in hotels on the outskirts of Accra. Though knowing that it is severely forbidden in patriarchal societies, Amma Darko gives her character the role of a rebel, a prostitute being here considered as an individual who does not want to follow the society's rules and regulations in terms of sexual morality and corporeal decency. According to Amma Darko, since self-rule is not in a patriarchal society, there is no freedom for African women in sex. If a woman accepts to be in a polygamous family, therefore she accepts to undergo all its frustrations and constraints. The example is given through First Wife. Only 5th Wife comes up with all that and has her word reckoned as the battle over her body control is won. The lesson about this attitude is that a woman should decide the direction her own life should take in order to be proud of herself.

Earlier, we have remarked that in a sugar-daddy relationship, cash and lavish gifts are the great lubricants and when they are lacking it slowly but surely brings along trouble, insult, fury and even blackmails from the other part. The passage below epitomises this:

Initially, the intervals between their encounters were not long. But that was before he made the mistake and committed the crime of complaining to Flower about her excessive financial demands. Flower set out to deliberately punish him. Eventually he had no choice but to give in to her suggestion of a compromise. When he wanted her, she didn't want him, she would take her of him on the telephone (Darko, 2007, p. 341).

When the flow of cash comes to short, Pa's Flower also fades in desire and graciousness. She becomes stranger and stranger and harsh in talk. Darko lets the reader overhear the telephone call between Pa and his Flower: "Money! [...] That's what I want us to talk about, Oldie. Not sex and our next encounter. Money!" (Darko, 2007, p. 347). Undoubtedly, Flower is a moneygrubber and constantly blackmails Pa when he fails to pamper her with money, she threatens to break off their 'love affairs': "Look Oldie, don't ever call me again, do you hear? And banged the telephone. The sound felt like an explosion inside Pa's ears (Darko, 2007, p. 357). To cap it all, Amma Darko shows the reader that while accusing men of being sex-directed at all age, one has to look also to women who do that. Knowledgeable observers

have noted that one of the attractive features of older men or women is their social influence and the opportunities they can offer to their victims always young, naïve, jobless, destitute, or students. These people are affluent and well off and exploit their victims and the latter swap their sex for economic support, access to education and higher standard of living, the high life, holidays and getting gifts, clothing, money or encountering affluent men and women of the sugar daddies' clubs and surroundings.

To Chinua Achebe, the novelist is without doubt a representative of the people at large and his/her story is the story of the people. The novelist is a teacher (Achebe, 1975) and in the same vein, Helen Chukwuma states that the novelist does more than simple storytelling in a beautiful manner, "he arouses in the reader a true sense of himself, evoking his past and linking it to the present" (Chukwuma, 2003). Amma Darko's fiction really gives us an insight about the rapid growing of demography, modernization and urbanization in Africa and shows its consequences on families and the society men create with their own hands, a society which is bankrupted, morally corrupt, and in serious delinquency. This sort of society is in agony to blast. Amma Darko portrays all that reality to be stuck to what surrounds her and as a taxwoman she is more concerned and even anxious about the future.

4. Consequences of the phenomenon

Most of the time, young men or women involved in sexual relationships with older and wealthy people do not know the risks they are taking because some erroneously think that there is no risk in having sex with young people. Furthermore, young people being lured by the financial gain, blinded by the pitiable financial status of their parents, their personal socio-economic living standards, peer pressure, school amenities, prestige from peers, enter into arrangements with older men or women (sugar daddies or sugar mummies). It is now common in African countries that schoolchildren often resort to sex with men or women older than them or sleep with the most influential men or women in the administration to help pay their school fees, cloths, rent charges, etc. It is evident that all these sexual transactions have their terrible consequences.

4.1 Family dislocation and emotional decline

To Amma Darko, the implications of careless sex lust with different women about whom one knows no virtually anything, apart from its risky alternative, can result in "Loss of job! Destruction of his family! Eternal humiliation!" (Darko, 2007, p. 330). As a matter of fact, we understand by family dislocation when there is no talk, no complicity between partners. Both are nurtured by suspicion and distrust. For example, Aggie's husband, who is used to picking his phone calls in front of his wife, has started behaving very strangely while making a call to one of his countless casual lovers; he is always on the alert:

Idan rose like a zombie from the armchair. Aggie's upper body jerked. She knew the ritual. She watched him.

He strode to the bedroom for his mobile phone. Leaving it there was also part of the ritual. [...]. Because if the mobile phone was beside him in the living room, where the landline was, and upon the signal, he proceeded to the bedroom to make the call, it would look suspicious (Darko, 2007, p. 105).

This atmosphere of 'catch-me-if-you-can-game' leads absolutely to an emotional decline in the family due to Idan's numerous infidelity games. The situation worsens as Aggie:

plunged her hand back into the soapy water and brought out the first item she got hold of. Fate could be cruel, for yet again, in her hands, were Idan's underpants. She wondered. Had he ever worn that and removed it to make love to Randa and put it back on and brought it back home with the scent of their lovemaking, for her to wash?" (Darko, 2007, p. 106).

It is visible that the male character Idan is unfaithful as his wife makes a strange discovery of his underpants and in the pocket of the clothes to wash. Yet, although Aggie has the tangible proof of her husband's infidelity, Amma Darko shows the readers that she cannot enquire directly about her husband's glaring infidelity due to her inferior status as a barren wife; she has to suffer in silence. In addition, Idan's response to his wife's enquiry about his possible unfaithfulness is just a "helpless gaze at his wife. [...]. He wanted to beg her to endure and allow him to live through Randa till he was back in control of himself and strong enough to completely submit to his wife again" (Darko, 2007, p. 107). Then as if to deride unfaithful husbands, Amma Darko writes the following passage to show the change of attitude between partners as soon as one is caught red-handed in an extramarital sexual relationship:

They had been married for over two decades [...]. Children conceived from a lovemaking dutifully expended [...]. But descending from the giddy heights Flower always sent him to the normalcy and sameness of routine with Ma on the holy ground that was their marital bed, became increasingly difficult for Pa [...]. She sensed her agony at forcing passion where it had ceased to exist, his desperate attempts to right the wrong done her by clamoring to inject life into what was long dead as its roots (Darko, 2007, pp. 338-39).

The psychological aspect Amma Darko wants to show the readers through the repetition is the level of misery on which Ma embarks. She is particularly anxious and cries every day. Sometime, she becomes enraged and violent while in front of "rose": "Ma's feet came crushing down on a rose. Then another rose. Then a sunflower and another sunflower and a hibiscus" (Darko, 2007, p.171). Conversely, instead of presenting Ma very strong and accepting the change like Pesewa's first wife, Amma Darko describes Ma as being very weak and tempered. At that very time, throughout much of Pa's travails in the hands of Flower, Pa finds Ma's indifference due to her mental melancholy. Ma does not have to comfort Pa the time he is in need. It becomes obvious that destiny has already shaped Pa's path to the end. As the atmosphere becomes worse and worse, Ma's children have been obliged to send her in an asylum, a psychiatric hospital, for treatment. This is the special way Darko wants her character to escape from her recurrent frustration and depression. Mental illness is certainly the status where the sufferer feels no physical and psychological pain. It is a state where the victim can laugh when there is no laughing matter, dance when there is no music, cry when the neighbourhood is laughing or talk to invisible people.

Fine, fresh, sweet and smooth sex breaks the ever peaceful family of Pa and Pesewa. Both commit suicide. Pa hangs himself because of being so mentally disturbed by the way things fall apart in his office: "His eyes remained glazed and focused on the pin slightly embedded in his thumb [...] and forefinger, leaned back casually in his chair and began to hum a funeral dirge [...]. 'Two-thirds of his monthly salary to be deducted for six months ... a directive from the Board ... didn't you say his bankers were deducting about two-thirds from it monthly already...?'" (Darko, 2007, p. 355) Amma Darko's intention is to denounce the male characters' sexual escapades, like Pa's and Pesewa's deceitful attitude. These two male characters' penises bring about more problems than they solve. Their penis here is described not only as a body part which generates life and the power to create a posterity, but also yield eternal trouble for both families.

Furthermore, the desire to possess and to conquer a vast empire to quench one's libido is embedded in patriarchal theory which leads Pesewa and Pa astray. Here, the feminist stance of the novelist is harsh to the male characters as she portrays men's craving for sex only as being their sole expression of manliness and oppression. Yet, the novelist tries to justify Idan's position as being the result of his wife's failure to conceive and therefore it produces Idan's craving for a secret love: "The secret lover would begin to nurse the hope that if she played her cards well, she could fill Aggie's position soon enough, wear Idan's ring and bear the child he so desperately desired" (Darko, 2007, p. 172). Society already bears in mind that men should long for extramarital sex even though they have a river of it in their house. As a scholar rightly points out: "The men may also feel 'shame' at not being accepted as 'real men' because of their ability to identify with women. If men do not fit into their prescribed gender roles, then they will not be seen as true members of their sex. Another issue that male authors deal with is backlash from feminists" (Williamson, 2001).

The passage gives right to men's struggle to assert their position over women's in society because it is quite not understood that they can lose it. Amma Darko gives a fair portrayal and raises awareness about the lives of men who are not left with many options in life in a male-dominated society. Idan wants to prove his sexual ability to bear child, but Aggie fails to give it. Secondly, the blame does not befall him as being the problem in that couple. Society does not usually look for a male culprit; instead, they think mistakenly that women are the major beings to bring forth fruit. Amma Darko creates a different atmosphere that insightfully reflects the mind-set of new women who stand against abuses and fight to have their rights reckoned. In this vein, Amma Darko implicitly rejects the slavish consolations of her female characters' femininity. Amma Darko discards the idea that her female characters must be considered as being female 'eunuch', to use the striking figure Germaine Greer applied to all women in patriarchal societies.

4.2 Disguised Prostitution

The saying goes that prostitution is the oldest profession in the world and even though it seems a taboo subject and considered as queer in Africa South of the Sahara and in some areas of the world, it is practised in all forms and shapes. By depicting the syndrome of sugar daddy and sugar mummy, Amma Darko shows the moral decay in which African society vegetates after colonization. She presents the phenomenon as being a male prostitution in big cities and confronts it to the traditional life like that of Ntifor and his two wives in the village. To control male sexual insatiability, the African society accepts men to have as many wives as they can afford in their household or outside. Having many female partners, according to Amma Darko, can solve the specific problem of childlessness in some homes like Ntifor's if only it is practised in that sole purpose. But it is still very risky and difficult to come up with all that without failing. On the contrary, big towns are already corrupted by self-esteem ideas, so much so that male characters like Pa and Idan are sexually hyperactive and take on several female partners just for fantasies. A man can marry as many wives as he wishes, a woman must have only one husband at a time. Female infidelity is socially unacceptable and severely rebuked, it often results in heavy fines from both the wife's father and her lover in some communities. If she reoffends, the cuckold might systematically break with the unfaithful wife with the loss of the custody of her children. However, a man's infidelity commands no more than a rebuke from the wife's male relatives, who often politely suggest that he get another wife if he can justify his need and ability to take care of her.

According to knowledgeable observers, prostitution certainly provides no 'safety valve' for women, but controls them by labelling those who are not chaste as whores. For example,

people stop gossiping about prostitutes as soon as Randa enters Ma Cherie's hairdressing salon because they know her as being in a sexual affair with Idan, a married man (Darko, 2007, 292-97). In addition, when Pesewa's second wife intends to prostitute herself therefore she turns indifferent, shrinks her jealousy and listens to her inner but malevolent voice. Thus, she begins to look forward to being fed with good and voluptuous spurs of young blood and sex: "There he was with his sugar mummy in a hotel on the outskirts of Accra, all upset and distraught because he had caught his steady girlfriend with her sugar daddy?" (Darko, 2007, 275) Here, Amma Darko does not spare her female character a few negatively critical remarks relating to her material conditions in the mansion, she nonetheless concludes that second wife is guilty, pathetic and villain through her attitude. Right from the start, the second wife proves that she is an opportunistic woman whose sole interest is important and passes before that of the others. The present portrayal is not positive at all for all women who eject other women out of their marital home and take sit. Instead of displaying sentimentality, the novelist criticizes this attitude of some of her female characters and by the same token draws the reader's attention on the choice women have in society in order not to cause pain to other women.

Throughout the narrative, Amma Darko unveils the fact that prostitution or the sugar mummy syndrome is perpetrated for some reasons ranging from unsatisfied sexual desires with one's husband to financial security. The growing cash for intense and steaming sexual affair between the second wife and her young lover is not due to the male character's poor financial status and the woman's sexual dissatisfaction. It also explains that a man cannot sexually satisfy as many women as possible at the same time. This makes the second wife look for other men to assuage her sexual libido. Pesewa's second wife is not in a position of financial lack. She enters into prostitution because she wants to gain more influence in her business and fulfill her sexual expectations with her lovers as a tool of domination. She exposes her fondness to those young men and helps them in any financial or social difficulties. The second wife wants a male body at her slightest disposal. She succeeds in getting the body, but fails because the male body is corrupt and infected.

In Amma Darko's text, the specific place where the syndrome occurs is big cities. The cities are places where people do not respect the female body and where women use their body for trade. In this respect, Gbaguidi (2014, p. 42) posits that "The very black picture the authoress, Amma Darko, draws of the sexual hyperactivity of female characters makes of them innocent aggrieved parties to the wickedness of male characters". The sugar daddy or sugar mummy syndrome undoubtedly brings about sexually transmitted diseases as most of the time sex is practised unsafely and condoms use is barely existent. In fact, many men think that they do not need any protection not only because the want of sexual variation is so intense and burning, but also they think that young girls are scarcely at risk of sexual transmitted diseases.

4.3 Sugar daddy and HIV/AIDS spreading

Several studies have highlighted the role of sugar daddies or sugar mummies in HIV infection or any other sexual transmitted diseases among teenage girls. The reason is that some people believe that young boys and girls are free from HIV and rely on their infrequent sexual activity at that age. Indeed, teenage girls are easily entrapped because of the material assistance they need from older people. As stated by Nancy Luke (2001): "Several studies that examine the association between age differences and unsafe sexual behavior and HIV infection define a large age difference as 10 or more years, and others use a five-year cutoff". Correspondingly, older men, who offer gifts, money or pay for school fees in return for sex,

are more likely to be HIV positive. It is the case of Pesewa, Pa and Idan in the focus novel. Moreover, socioeconomic realities enable men to monopolize source of income and give older men more social and economic power than young men. For example, Pa is attentive and more watchful to Aggie's slightest financial needs and assists her more frequently than Dan does. To 5th Wife, Pesewa is also on the same positive verge. Anything that she wants is an order for the old man, who, apart from being rich, does not urge for children from 5th Wife. Furthermore, the younger sexual partners are less able to ask for protection sometimes because of their educational, economic or social level. Dan cannot impose condom on Pesewa's second wife because she is in need of the financial assistance that she gives him for sex. Therefore, risk behaviour, such as the non-use of condoms, depends not only on the characteristics of both partners but also on the power differentials between them. Large differentials can place the less powerful partner at risk by reducing his or her ability to negotiate safer sexual behaviour.

In a report, David Walker *et al.*, (2014) have disclosed that the study of these exploitative relationships have largely been neglected, or examined as a public health issue. The report has shown that, in Africa, more and more girl children appear to contract HIV much earlier than their male counterparts, due to sexual relations with older men. How can the power of this sexual market be reversed? To Amma Darko, education is the very first weapon against the syndrome and in this regard she portrays 5th Wife (young and loved by Pesewa) as embodying that perspective: "5th Wife here is very educated. I know of other highly educated women who have willingly gone into polygamous marriages" (Darko, 2007, p. 92). Education brings knowledge, self-esteem and enhances 5th Wife's way of tackling her conjugal problems in addition to her position as the favourite wife. Education gives her the opportunity to insist on and ensure a radical use of condom with Pesewa though it is realistically difficult to use it every day in a marital setting. This is, with no wonder, Amma Darko's technique of presenting her female characters as being able to claim for their rights, for protection and life. 5th Wife's attitude connotes all African women's ability to stand against marital subjugation in a patriarchal setting and "it was the only reason why she was negative while her four older rivals were all carrying the AIDS virus" (Darko, 2007, p. 263). Contrary to the dutiful attitude of traditional African wives towards their domineering husbands, 5th Wife avoids infection by asserting herself in front of her powerful husband. Furthermore, the other feature that Amma Darko raises here is the fear to be stigmatised and mocked at once infected. In this wake, the autodiegetic narrator points out: "My oldest sister-in-law knew it. The very fear of the disease itself was what drove my husband into what he did" (Darko, 2007, p. 98). Indeed, the character Pesewa has committed suicide fearing that tittle-tattle people might tell about his positive serological status. Pesewa's tragic death is due to his heedless attitude to have many sexual partners relying on his wealth.

5. Conclusion

This paper has shown that one cannot address the issue of sugar-daddy or sugar-mummy without addressing the crucial issue of destitution among the youth. The similar voice is raised by Amma Darko who urges Ghana and African countries to act and save African youths from HIV/AIDS. The novelist's rhetoric provides arguments which validate the experience of men and women in Africa who suffer from the disease and do not find any psychological support. The concept of gender has influenced and oriented much of feminist writing in the past three decades. It has determined writings like that of Amma Darko which has established the narration of Ghanaian social realities. Gender-based inequality remains the largest injustice and the struggle against it spans millennia. Thus, fighting gender-based inequality is the main objective of female writers like Amma Darko in *Not without flowers*. In

that range of idea, Amma Darko like many African female writers represents social issues as being the core elements which hinder African women's development in a male-dominated society. This study has elucidated Amma Darko's interests, personality and critical point of view on the patriarchal belief which admits that men should be considered as being superior to women and women taken as sex commodities. The committed female novelist takes her revenge on men by deconstructing her male characters in the focus novel in that she presents the narrative in a way that only male characters commit suicide as a consequence of their bad behaviour towards the females. So Amma Darko beams women's awareness throughout her approach by empowering them in her fiction. If fiction derives from social realities, therefore Amma Darko wants her very single fiction to reflect society and to mirror it frequently. At a last resort, this paper has identified poverty as being one of the causes which block the African woman's sustainable development and education and information as the panacea for the African woman's social welfare. In her creative writing, Amma Darko informs, teaches, raises alert, condemns, and sustains the hopes and aspirations of the African peoples by condemning social plights facing African women.

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