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Globalisation and African women's bodies: Some fictional representations

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Gender as an important resonance in the transnational dynamics of globalisation significantly compels African women to transgress orthodox boundaries and traditional spaces which often limit them to domestic spheres. Particularly in the global south, for instance, the gendered forces of globalisation, complexly restructures people and spaces such that African women's identities and sexualities are profoundly altered. How then do female African writers represent this highly sexualised phenomenon in their artistic productions? This essay examines the specificities of the gendered forces of globalisation from the perspectives of two contemporaneous female West African writers—Amma Darko and Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo in their novels *Beyond the Horizon* and *Trafficked*. The route of this literary study is a trajectory that attempts to reveal some of the emerging patterns of globalisation especially on African women's bodies. The essay also demonstrates, among other things, how the sexualities and the psychology of these women subsequently constrain new directions in the theorisation of African women's identities.

Key words: Identities, sexualities, globalisation, West African women's fiction, gender.

INTRODUCTION

Female African bodies at the confluence of globalism

Globalisation is not exactly a new cultural, economic, political or transnational phenomenon. Indeed, it has morphed synchronically and diachronically and in its various reformulations, it continues to brand contemporary modern societies. Today, even in the most remote corners of the world, globalisation and its capitalist imperatives continue to impact individual lives,

entire populations and nations in profound ways, remapping and reconfiguring these into new entities that defy orthodox or conventional meanings of "well-bounded narratives".

In other words, world maps and other such demographic delineations are currently being remapped as a result of globalisation. In her attempt to capture some of the dimensions of this current trend, Stephanie Newell (2006) suggests the idea of "West African-scape"

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(14) as a metaphor for the emerging new world order in which West Africa is both an absence and a residual presence in other parts of the world. To some extent, the border of Newell's trajectory is extended in this essay. The immediate concern in this essay is to illustrate how this process of modernisation maps new contours in identifications, values and cultures for the human populations caught in the intense economic, cultural, psychological and political pressures that it precipitates.

Given the rapacious desire for capital in global economies, a wide variety of commodities become the items of transnational trade and exchange. These items sometimes include human bodies or fragments of it as witnessed in the growing commercialisation and scramble for vital human body organs in many countries including South America, Asia, India and several other locations. However, for small-time players in the emerging global economy, capital may be very scarce. For instance, for impoverished people, including African women, their natural endowments; their bodies freely feed the predatory capitalist systems of global economies, and this is only a fragment of the toll that globalism seems to exact from African women.

Undeniably, globalisation works on a process of uneven and inequitable distribution of capital, power, knowledge and material resources, sustained and worked through grand narratives that rationalise its underlying ideologies of domination and consumerism. In this formulation, the seeming superior powers map others as negative, inferior, and subordinate leaving them, especially women, vulnerable, exploited, derogated and impoverished.

African women's bodies in particular have thus become visible scripts of the complex processes of globalisation. And for the theory of African women's identities, the complexities of globalism and how they implicate African women's lives and experiences must continually be the subject of critical examination and several African feminists, writers and gender theorists critically engage with the exploitative effects of globalisation on women. The seminal studies of Amina (2001), Filomina (2005) and Nawal (2008) among many others illustrate this concern. The consensus of these studies demonstrates that the economics of globalism being gendered provoke new challenges for women in the impoverished economies of many developing African countries. Steady (2005) for instance, succinctly points to the polarisations of racism and globalisation when she posits that:

The overwhelming evidence seems to suggest that gender-based hierarchies and gender subordination combined with structural racism are being reinforced by globalisation (313).

Steady (2005) thus compellingly points to the centrality of gender in any discussion of the realities of globalisation

on the African continent. There are also serious economic dimensions to the inequities of globalisation on women and there is a surfeit of scholarship on the subject. Sassen (2002) in her consideration of the economics of globalisation and its impact on women in several locations of the developing world, suggests the term "counter-geographies" as the alternative circuits created within the context of spatial strategies for survival in a shrinking world economy. As she further explains, through a process of "feminisation of survival" men, women and even governments have to devise new strategies in their various attempts to cope with the tyranny of globalisation. She avers that it is "increasingly on the backs of women that these forms of making a living, making a profit and securing government revenue are realised" (89). The implication is that the feminisation of survival translates to the feminisation of labour and women bear these burdens. Similarly too, Lai Olorode in "Gender, Globalisation and Marginalisation in Africa" (2003) proposes that African women as a result of the economic processes of globalisation are more disadvantaged (71). Olorode calls attention to the moral deficits of globalisation and shows how its processes promote domination and disempowerment of Africa as well as of African women in particular.

Following these new economic arrangements in the global process, the "backs" of these women, ultimately become the rock of other peoples' survival and the conventional characterisation of African women's femininity and sexuality insidiously, alter. Also, as phenomenal geopolitical spaces of global dimensions which far exceed their usual limitations to domestic places are opened up to them, women are forced into new roles and these intersect with both their sexualities and identities. Collaborating with these exploitative global forces are also the typical African patriarchal cultural traditions. Mercy Amba Oduyoye in her important book, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (1995), calls attention to the numerous problems women encounter in patriarchal African culture. It seems therefore that the new configurations of space and its economies cannot be decontextualised in the theorisation of women's identifications within globalisation discourse.

These delineations continue to catch the attention of several African women writers who as aesthetes and theorists contribute to the current women and globalism discourse. For instance, Egyptian feminist and writer, Nawal El Saadawi, makes valuable comments on the global trend of consumerism especially as it impacts on women. She declares that "the unscrupulous god of the free market, Profit, drives its completely amoral trade ethics" (8). In her concerns for the complex contradictions that prevail in the present modern capitalist world, El Saadawi (2008) finds it worrisome that the majority of the people are deluded by the deceitful workings of these world systems, and she is particularly concerned with its

outcome on the daily lives of women and the poor. In summation, she observes that:

One of the main profits of the Free Market comes from women's bodies, to cover it or to uncover it, nakedness and veiling of women increase the profit, cosmetics and make up powders, advertisements trading in women's bodies to satisfy sexual needs of patriarchs...The eye of the gaze of the Free Market is mainly on women, like the gaze of religious fundamentalist men (El Saadawi, 2008).

El Saadawi (2008) thus calls attention to how the lecherous symbolisms of global capitalism, patriarchy and authoritative religions are subliminally etched into the bodies of unsuspecting women. Similarly, Juliana (1997) succinctly captures the interconnections of African women's sexuality with the economics of this new order and surmises that:

There can be no clear-cut separation between sexuality, history, economics, and politics in texts that are written about women's lives in a post-colonial context, where some flexible gender ideologies have been replaced by less flexible ones, and where power relations have shifted drastically and have put women in more disadvantaged conditions (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997).

Both El Saadawi and Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi correctly observe that African women's bodies, sexualities and their ultimate identities are inextricably woven into the economics of the new world order of globalisation thus corroborating Moghadam (2005) position that globalisation is gendered (ix). As active participants in cultural productions, African women writers with varying degrees of acuity, discursively narrate the pertinent issues of globalism into their works. In particular, they are producing texts visibly encrypted with women's bodies from which they narrate the negative processes of globalisation.

The body of literary mediations on the issue of globalisation and its nuances is, indeed, significantly growing thus calling attention to the interplay between the moral and socio-political realities of globalisation, art and the emerging identities and sexualities of individuals and groups, especially women. The two novels, *Beyond the Horizon* and *Trafficked* purposively selected for discussion in this essay generate trenchant meanings which are immensely useful in the consideration of the new directions of African women's identities in the age of globalisations. Both Darko and Adimora-Ezeigbo in these novels lend their imaginative energies to the on-going discourse of how the disruptive interruptions of globalisation impact the daily life-cycles of African women. As both novelists interrogate the changing sexual roles of men and women in their novels, their

consonant thematic trajectories, the textual and cultural signifiers embedded in their symbols, motifs and images capture some of the gendered realities of globalisation. Adimora-Ezeigbo's novel which comes more than a decade later resonates with Darko's making it an inter-text of the earlier novel, indicating also the kindred spirit between both writers as they respond to the social, economic and political crises emerging from globalisation. The representations and materiality in the two novels are, therefore, of immense value especially, in the theorisation of African women's changing identities in the face of globalisation.

Both Darko and Adimora-Ezeigbo belong to the second generation of women writers in Ghana and Nigeria following after canonical writers such as Ama Ata Aidoo, Efua, T. Sutherland, Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta respectively. Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* (1995) is her debut novel which was first published in German in 1991 before it was translated and published by Heinemann in its African Writers Series. She has since published other novels—*The Housemaid* (1998), *Faceless* (2003), and *Not without Flowers* (2007). Quite importantly too, the young writer is currently receiving much critical attention as demonstrated in such works as Maria Frias' "Women on Top: Prostitution and Pornography in Ama Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*" (2002). Other seminal studies on Darko include Kofi Anyidoho's introductory essay to *Faceless* (2003) and the collection of critical essays edited by Vincent Odamtten in *Broadening the Horizon: Critical Perspectives to Amma Darko* (2007) published by Ayebia Clark. Other important essays that illuminate Darko's work include Agho's "Living in the Fast Lane": A Comparative Study of Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and Nwoye's *Fetters and Choices*" (2008) as well as Mawuli Adjei's "Male-bashing and Narrative Subjectivity in Amma Darko's first three novels" (2009).

Adimora-Ezeigbo began her writing career sometime in 1992 which makes her contemporaneous with Darko and she has published in almost all major literary genres. Her recent novel, *Trafficked* (2008) is selected for consideration here. Adimora-Ezeigbo's thematisations, like Darko's, include discursive critiques of the socio-political, religious and cultural problems and the divisive issues that threaten the unity and progress of their respective national polity. Other contentious matters such as patriarchy, inequitable gender relations, sexual exploitation of women leading to their abuse, mistreatment, rape and other violent acts against them are interrogated by these novelists. Adimora-Ezeigbo's critical profile is also on the rise, especially, with the recent publication of *The Fiction of Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo: Issues and Perspectives* (2008) edited by Patrick Oloko and her latest novel, *Roses and Bullets* (2008). *New Perspectives on a literary Enigma: a festschrift in honour of Adimora-Ezeigbo* (2008) has also recently appeared.

Representations of the stripes of globalism on African women's bodies

In the considerable displacements of goods, resources, and persons, crises of identity cause transmogrification of African women's subjectivities. For example, in the dynamic movement of people, pockets/communities of people erupt and women's bodies and sexuality become symbolically and physically the sites of intense conflicts for control or access. This point is validated in the novels under analysis.

Adimora-Ezeigbo's novel is perhaps the more versatile in this regard. *Trafficked* as a novel, traverses several geo-physical spaces in which several subplots are loosely connected with the main narration of Nneoma, the protagonist's life-story. One of the locations in which her stories vacillate is Ihite-Agu, a small village in Enugu State of Nigeria which is Nneoma's natal home. The rest of her family, her father, Ogukwe Eke, a retiree of the Inland Revenue Department of the Ministry of Finance, her mother, Adaeze, a farm-produce retailer as well as her sisters, Hannah and Mma and other extended family members live there. Rural Ihite-Agu is juxtaposed with the metropolises of Rome and London where Nneoma and her colleagues are trafficked into the sex trade. Finally, it is to Lagos that Nneoma is deported and where her story begins as the author tells the tale *in-medias-res*. It is significant that whereas Nneoma escapes the destiny her father maps for her, which would have confined her to the village, her older sister, Hannah remains in Ihite-Agu, all too elated to become wife to Elias, a self-proclaimed predatory prophet who feeds off the poor villagers. Nneoma's sudden disappearance from the village ruins the prospects of a turnaround for good in the family's finances. Hannah worsens the dwindling financial situation by abandoning home to join Elias' ten-woman harem without the all-too-important bride price. In Elias' sprawling harem, Hannah is a punching bag for her husband's pent-up emotions. Hannah's lacerated body is the evidence that she has had to pass over the "the river of misery and trudged on the road that led to Death's land" (171). Unable to bear the burdens of her wild misadventure any longer, Hannah returns to her parents' home "damaged and disconsolate". It is therefore, ironical that while Nneoma flees Ihite-Agu and the destiny her father, had mapped for her, Hannah, her sister, is unable to escape the misery of its patriarchal authority. Yet, Nneoma's experience abroad is dogged by the mantra of violation, exploitation and abuse and the bodies of both sisters and those of the other young women at the Oasis are one and the same script of assaults, mistreatment and exploitation by men.

Beyond using physical location in delineating the thematic topos in both novels, the authors also use the emotional platform of matrimonial relationships to explore the psychological states of their protagonists. While

globalism affords the crossing of physical and economic borders or boundaries, the two young girl-protagonists—Mara and Nneoma—discover that crossing borders is mere physical relocation without any material gains. This loss significantly acts on their minds and bodies. For instance, readers encounter Mara and Nneoma after they have both gone full-cycle in their different paths of life. Both Darko and Adimora-Ezeigbo disrupt chronological time to indicate some of the fragmentary and disorderly characteristics of globalism on the lives of their protagonists as they seek new meanings and interpretation to their identities suddenly criss-crossed by the currents of global capitalism.

While Nneoma is deported, Mara chooses to remain in Germany continuing to ply her trade and unable to face up to and own up to her new life in Munich. Jude (2008) argues that Mara is "incorrigible", preferring the physical and emotional separation from her two sons and mother, and is in this regard "culpable" (350). However, Nneoma in Adimora-Ezeigbo's novel takes the opposite path to Mara's. Nneoma, unlike Mara strengthens her resolve to turn her life around. Even when she is moved from Rome to London by Baron, she continually seeks every opportunity of escape.

Upon her deportation and return to Lagos, Nneoma sees her life as no different from the jagged landscape of the homeland that thrusts itself at her as she descends the gangway from the plane. The author captures Nneoma's state of mind and trepidation as "she felt she was beginning a long walk back to the landscape of her beginning, with all its jagged points and potholes. The difference was that the landscape which powerfully epitomises Nneoma's spent life, seemed even more treacherous now" (5). This image similarly compares with Mara's experiences as she sits before her oval mirror, scarred, tired and unable to return home. Mara takes a long, hard look at "the road of life". Having walked her road, she is left with a deep feeling of "friendless[ness], isolation and cold" (1) and the reader is compelled to contemplate the starkness of Mara's reality through the image of her body. In both instantiations, the deprecatory physical scenario compares with the deep emotional scars of the women.

The confluence of foreign ideas and cultures transform local traditions and beliefs systems and some of the interjections of globalism may be seen in the transformation of marriage as a cultural institution in these novels. Both Mara and Nneoma are young girls, hardly out of their teens, when their parents or, more precisely, their fathers make clandestine arrangements to marry them off. As young girls whose world does not, initially, extend beyond their respective villages, Mara and Nneoma find themselves thrown into the small towns. They then over-extend themselves, aspiring for the possibilities of city life. Before they get over the harsh realities and struggles of city life, they find themselves

inordinately exported beyond the shores of their homeland. Exploitation is what follows. Neither Mara nor Nneoma arrive in Europe, the land of their sexual enslavement, with any mental or financial preparation for the demands of such a life. Suddenly sequestered from the supportive communal hearth of their home communities, they are thrown into the strong currents of exploitative host communities that use them in the most despicable manner.

Mara's unconscionable father, having received a "handsome" bride price in respect of his daughter does not care a hoot about her. He sells off as "wife and property" to Akobi (7). He thus becomes both complicit and culpable in the issue of Mara's mistreatment and abuse by her husband. Mara is subjected to domestic or marital rape by her husband as a matter of regular occurrence. For instance, she gets treated as his handmaid, who must wait on him hand and foot whether at home/Accra or in Hamburg, Germany. Although a wife, Mara in real emotional terms equals Akobi's property. As property of a poor and stingy man, her fate is sealed and she endures all kinds of abuse by Akobi, taking all these stoically, as she would her menstrual pain.

The metaphor of Mara's blood flow is important because it connotes the substance of her life and its waning simultaneously points to her physical pain as well as signifies her painful loss of self-autonomy. Not only does she experience bodily changes, Mara's sexuality is also transformed as she is divested of any claims or rights to her own body by Akobi. Jessica Horn in "Re-righting the sexual body" (2006), observes that:

Our bodies are our primary means of participating socially economically politically, spiritually and creatively in society. They are the beginning point of the practical application of rights: the place in which rights are exercised, and for women in particular, the place where rights are most often violated (8).

In the light of Horn's assertions, Mara is stripped of any rights, claims or control over her body and sexuality. Further to this, her implicit belief in the traditional concept of mutual respect in a heterosexual marriage is completely thrown overboard by Akobi. Mara in Hamburg finds a completely perverted Akobi who is consumed by greed and driven by the immoral ethics of the commercialisation of women's bodies, even his wife's. Mara becomes Akobi's regular butt of physical and violent abuse and Darko captures the frustration and confusion Mara feels when in exasperation she says:

"I understood the world no more" (11).

As it happens to both protagonists, the men in their lives wield tremendous power over their lives and bodies. However, it is in Europe that the exploitation and

derogation of these young women appear more accentuated and there Mara and Nneoma simultaneously, experience both racism and sexual domination by African men and their non-African consorts. Although it appears that many African societies and cultures seem to normalise the exploitation of women, (and the women merely resort to fatal stoicism and religiosity to rationalise their age-long mistreatment) it is a complex cultural contradiction to find the degrading exploitation of African women in Europe and the other parts of the developed west as illustrated in these novels by Darko and Adimora-Ezeigbo.

Monumental movement of people, especially the forced type is one of the inevitable conditions of globalisation. In both novels, young girls are thrown into the sex trade, and their bodies feed the insatiable, highly sexualised sex industries of Europe and other major cities in the west. Thus, this trade transcends racial boundaries especially because in these cities, young girls are not merely exoticised, they are eventually cannibalised as the scars on the bodies of the protagonists suggest. At the Lagos-based *Oasis Youth Centre*, a government-run shelter or safe house for trafficked girls, Alice, Efe, Fola and Nneoma share their experiences first-hand in Adimora-Ezeigbo's novel. With bodies and minds scarred by their experiences, healing and rehabilitation is uppermost in the minds of these girls.

This healing process is initiated by Efe who believes that "finding their voices would help" heal (97). Efe's travails suggest that neither race nor place prevents African women from the interminable cycle of sexual exploitation, derogation and oppression as their lives and bodies are sites of struggles for authorisation and control. Efe like Nneoma is barely nineteen years old when she left her family in Benin. Efe details graphically how she is first "sold" to Madam Gold, works for her for four years, and then "sold" to a pimp—a white man. Continuing in the first person narrative she recalls:

[I] worked for my 'new owner' for two years before I escaped. Then I fled to Verona and teamed up with a prostitute there and worked independently for about another year because I wanted to save some money to return home (*Trafficked*, 100).

Literally passed from one slave-master to another, Nneoma is persistently raped and abused for four years working for Madam Dollar, Captain and Baron in Rome and London. Although traumatised, these girls use the deportation experience as the opportunity to transform and reorder their lives.

Tropes of fragmentation: Metaphors of dislocation

In both novels various aspects of culture collapse.

Dissonance invariably occurs and the characters experience isolation and fragmentation as there are no visible and viable traditions to reinforce a strong sense of communal values. The two novelists demonstrate that as the bastions of society implodes; shrapnel or accents of physical and emotional fragmentations become embedded into the lives of the characters. Thus, caught within the contexts of hybridised existences and decimated values and traditions, the female characters negotiate for themselves new, sometimes fragile identities.

For instance, both novelists represent the psychological fragmentation of their protagonists by transposing present reality with memories of the past thus helping the reader understand the personal tensions and conflicts between the inner self and actual experiences of the characters. Permitted to enter, intimately, into the deep recesses of the minds of the female characters, the reader fosters a close relationship and understanding with them. For instance, as the women experience bodily and mental scarification, the obscenities of their dysfunction assail the readers' sensibilities, thus, rather than cringe, the reader is compelled to come face to face with the provocative starkness of their situation. The reader understands, for instance, that while Efe is precocious and willing to take risks with her life, Nneoma is cautious, brooding and mulling over her actions in the process of trying to reinvent herself. The author says of Nneoma:

Her days were full of daydreams that took her to all sorts of places. One moment she was in Ithite-Agu the next she was in Rome or London or Lagos each with its baggage of pain or joy (*Trafficked* 240).

From the moment they arrive in their different locations, the lives of the young women become fortuitous, complicated by the imperatives of displacement and dislocation. Their experiences are symbolic of the thematic and emotional polarisations between homeland/mother countries on the one hand, and the elusive, idyllic/utopian life in the capital cities of Europe which capture the spirit and ideology of western capitalist imperium.

Also, the vast distance from the familiar gives room for men and women to practice various kinds of "deviant" sexual activities. Chris Dunton (1989) points out that while homosexuality and other sexually non-normative practices are not commonly practised in many African cultures, they are often stereotypically linked to Africa's encounter with the exploitative West. As this essay reveals, the socio-economic realities of African women's lives, whether in homeland or in international circuits, inextricably, connect with their bodies and sexualities. And both Mara and Nneoma seem pressurised by intense economic, emotional and personal forces to

compromise age-old traditions. In both novels, unsophisticated and inadequately educated village girls are suddenly catapulted into the capricious epicentres of capitalist Europe. So radical is the change they encounter that their native instinct is completely unable to save the young girls. The costs are high and, inevitably, their bodies are the only available means of survival in the rapacious faraway lands in which they find themselves.

Darko, ominously, portends this in Mara's emotional state on her flight to Germany. Once the airplane lifts, Mara feels, very palpably, an ominous sense of disorientation and, in reality, what she experiences in Hamburg is outlandish and bloodcurdling for the "greenhorn". Darko accumulates several suggestive images that portend the hurricane of calamitous experiences that eventually overwhelm Mara. She reports that "all at once [her] stomach sank inside [her] and [she] realised that we were off Mother Earth, out of reach of Her cuddling arms and now at the mercy of the skies..." (58). Torn from the warmth of homeland and the friendship of Mama Kiosk, Mara's sense of loss leaves her reeling with shock as she is thrust into the cold and predatory capitalist world in Hamburg. Shocked, betrayed, and de-humanised, it takes Kaye both patience and kindness to nurture Mara back into some semblance of self-dignity. In what seems to be the pains of "rites of passage" for Mara, her female friends nurture her into maturity. First as a young wife fresh from the village, and then as sex worker in Peepe's brothel, Mara is guided by these female figures and she gains some degree of perspicacity for herself.

However, it appears that the male characters in *Beyond the Horizon* —Akobi, Osey, Oves and Pompey - are all inevitably sucked into the macabre dance of pimps and gigolos, the colour of their skin notwithstanding. Engaged in all manner of sexual and substance abuse; these men become less than real men in the eyes of the reader as they act out their mindless perversions. They are like the women they abuse, stripped of any sense of decency or dignity, Akobi (now Cobby) and Osey being the worst culprits. As soon as Mara lands in Germany, she is confronted by Akobi's lecherous friend, Osey, who makes a pass at her on the train to Hamburg. Osey is just as unscrupulous as he is shrewd. A man of easy virtues, he brutalises Vivian on the night of Mara's arrival in their flat and yet, would coerce intimacy with her not as a symbol of love, but as a trophy of his control. As the sole agents inflicting bodily and mental harm on the women, these men in the process lose their humanity as they are all caught in the web of one of the most dehumanising moralisations of globalisation. Darko represents this metamorphosis by contracting or apostrophising their names. Hiding their real self behind abstracted identities the male characters including Captain and Baron in Adimora-Ezeigbo's novel, become pervers and caricatures.

The case of Akobi is perhaps the most denigrating. So senselessly driven by greed, Akobi would allow several men to rape his “wife” (Mara) and he would use the video tape of that drunken orgy to blackmail and keep her working the sex trade for his personal, material gain. Completely drained and emotionless, Mara goes through the ritual of her everyday work-life traumatised, isolated and unprotected from Akobi’s persistent violence. If Nneoma thought that Baron had come to rescue her from Madam Dollar in Italy, she soon realises her mistake. As she recalls, “he takes me and two other girls to London and says he has rescued us. In actual fact, he has brought me from Madam Dollar,” (132). On the contrary, she is virtually imprisoned by the sadistic Baron in his flat in London for special services to men.

CONCLUSION

The two novels provide critiques of the processes of globalisation as it affects African women by centralising gender, sexuality and economics in the complex frame of globalisation. Through their novels, Darko and Adimora-Ezeigbo portray how the women and their bodies, in the idiom of colonial ideology, are “re-colonised by European imperialism and indigenous patriarchal institutions” (Jonet 2007). For instance, the female protagonists capitulate to the overwhelming perverse and exploitative oppression they are forced into. Life in London and Hamburg slowly, but indelibly, mark new contours in the identities of Mara and Nneoma. Both narrations by Darko and Adimora-Ezeigbo reveal that they seem to take a counterpoint position to claimants who tout the numerous economic advantages of globalisation.

As conventional or traditional borders are constantly transgressed, crossed and remapped in the dynamism of globalisation, African women become literally unfettered physically, psychologically and culturally. This works, paradoxically, first by availing the women of opportunities that had hitherto been unavailable to them but, as demonstrated in this analysis, there are more disadvantages. However, by capitalising on and exploiting their lack of adequate information and economic capital, African women get sucked into exploitative orbits engendered by globalisation. Women’s bodies then become the sites of fierce contestations for control and domination especially by men. From their representations, the novelists uncover the tensions created in the process of this struggle. They both show that African women’s bodies are the prized trophies of brutal men who, at whatever costs to the young girls try to control them as signalled in the relationships between Baron and Nneoma and Akobi/Cobby and Mara.

At home the young women may be poor and treated shabbily by patriarchal institutions that privilege the men, but in the various metropolitan centres of the west, they

become minoritised as they are forced into a visible subculture of prostitutes. This subculture is predicated on the inequitable hierarchies which underlie globalisation. The reality for Mara, Nneoma and the other young girls is that their identities and sexualities are viscerally reconstituted or re-valued under the capitalist aegis of globalisation.

Feminist contestations of inequitable power institutions and structures used to violate and exploit other people on account of their sex, especially in global economies become critical to the issue. As this essay demonstrates, trafficked women live as minoritised sub-groups in their host communities. It is, therefore, incontrovertible that the women embody the socio-political and economic contradictions in which the various trajectories of the present postmodern age are inscribed on their bodies as dismal texts. A pertinent question that then emerges is how can the minoritised, violated and oppressed women living on the fringes of society at home and abroad overthrow the shackles of their oppression?

Perhaps some attention needs to be paid to the male figures who are the aggressors in this matter. It appears that many female African writers have a propensity for creating caricatures of men. This proclivity may emanate from a strong desire to create strong, resourceful heroines whose positive characteristics overshadow the men. They must actively participate in fostering a new world order in which women are profoundly regarded for who they are—human beings.

Conflict of Interests

The authors has not declared any conflict of interests.

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