

**Université Marien Ngouabi**  
Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines  
Département de Langues Vivantes Etrangères

*Revue Lettres et  
Sciences Humaines*

# La saison des pluies



N° 10 - Juillet 2014    Brazzaville - Congo

**LA SAISON DES PLUIES**  
Revue Lettres et sciences Humaines  
Université Marien Ngouabi  
Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines  
Département des Langues Vivantes Etrangères  
BP 2426 Email : *lasaisondespluies@gmail.com*  
Brazzaville- Congo

**COMITE DE REDACTION**

Directeur de publication : Dr D. Arcade **Loumbouzi**, *chef de département*  
Rédacteur en Chef : Dr Basile Marius Ngassaki, Pr  
Rédacteur en chef adjoint : Dr Jean-Pierre Nkara, MC

**SECRETARIAT DE REDACTION :**

Dr Jean- Marie Soungoua  
Dr Edouard Lonongo  
Dr Philippe Samba  
Dr Edouard Ngamountsika, MC.

**COMITE SCIENTIFIQUE**

Basile Marius Ngassaki, *Pr*; Charles Bowao, *Pr*, Jean-Pierre Missié, Pr Jean-Luc Aka Evy, Pr Yolande Berton Ofoueme, Pr Benjamin Evayoulou, Pr Jean-Pierre Nkara, MC, Dieudonné Tsokini, MC, Gertrude Ndeko, MC Scholastique Diazinga, MC, Omer Massoumou, Anatole Mbanga, MC, Yvon-Pierre Ndongo Ibara, MC, Edouard Ngamountsika, MC.

**ISSN 1012-7062**

Dessin couverture *Ekani*  
Conception maquette et mise en pages: *Edouard Ngamountsika*  
Courriel: *ngamountsika@gmail.com*

## TABLE DES MATIÈRES

AKANOKABIA Akanis Maxime, La responsabilité de l'homme dans les changements climatiques et ses conséquences dans les pays du bassin du Congo.....	5
KAMITEWOKO Edwige, La micro-entreprise au cœur du tissu économique,.....	21
ZIDI Joseph, Entre l'ethnie et la nation : l'état, une impasse historique ? .	41
NTARY CALAFFARD Asta Rose, La « république » face aux royaumes et chefferies au Congo depuis la fin du XIX <sup>e</sup> siècle .....	63
ITOUA Joseph, La dimension religieuse du pouvoir dans les anciennes monarchies congolaises.....	65
NIANGUI-GOMA Lucien, La France et de Brazza dans les stratégies commerciales, de prise de possession territoriale et de colonisation au Gabon-Congo (1837-1899) ,.....	99
NIAMA Célestin Désiré,  L'avènement de Youlou et l'accélération de l'histoire politique du Congo.....	117
KPLI Y.K. Jean François,  The operators “ <i>under</i> ” and “ <i>below</i> ”: differential properties and systemic order.....	135
IRIE BI GOHY Mathias, L'énoncé publicitaire : un langage particulier par la transgression systématique de la langue.....	153

OUATTARA ZIE Yacouba,	
La douleur dans les mots: cas de <i>dans la Guinée de Sékou</i>	
<i>Touré. Cela a bien eu lieu</i> de Camara kaba.....	165
AGBROFFI Diamoi Joachim,	
Le mariage chez les N'zima, creuset de culture ordinaire,	
civique et politique.....	177
LOUMBOUZI Didier Arcade,	
John Steinbeck's portrayal of poor mexicans.....	199
GBAGUIDI Célestin,	
Relatives' Gatecrashing in their Offspring's Private Life: A	
Study of Tunji Ogundimu's <i>The Insiders</i> and Amma Darko's	
<i>Beyond the Horizon</i> .....	213
KOUACOU Jacques Raymond Koffi,	
Rôle et symbolisation de l'oiseau dans les contes africains	235
MAKOSSO Alphonse Dorien,	
The Paradox of the Sleeping Lions: The Physical Setting	
as an Allegory of Dissent in Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o's	
<i>The River Between</i> .....	255



***RELATIVES' GATECRASHING IN THEIR OFFSPRING'S  
PRIVATE LIFE: A STUDY OF TUNJI OGUNDIMU'S THE  
INSIDERS AND AMMA DARKO'S BEYOND THE HORIZON***

**Célestin Gbaguidi**

Université d'Abomey-Calavi

[ggbaguidicelestin@yahoo.fr](mailto:ggbaguidicelestin@yahoo.fr)

**Abstract:** *This paper lays bare the injustice and relatives' interference in children's love affairs leading young lovers to a conflicting relationship, which causes their marriage bonds to break up through Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* and Tunji Ogundimu's *The Insiders*. It aims to bring to light the suffering children often endure when their parents or the extended family impose on them the companion that they have to marry and make people aware that marriage is after all an individual concern.*

**Key words:** *Gatecrashing – marriage – selfishness – private life – poverty – literary works*

**Résumé :** *Cet article met à nu l'injustice et l'ingérence de la famille dans la vie privée des enfants conduisant les jeunes amoureux dans une relation conflictuelle provoquant la rupture des liens conjugaux et ceci à travers les œuvres littéraires *Beyond the Horizon* d'Amma Darko et *The Insiders* de Tunji Ogundimu. Cela vise à mettre en lumière la souffrance qu'endurent les enfants lorsque leurs parents ou la famille étendue leur imposent le ou la partenaire qu'ils doivent marier et à faire prendre conscience aux gens que le mariage est après tout une question individuelle.*

**Mots clés :** *Ingérence - mariage - égoïsme – vie privée – pauvreté – œuvres littéraires*

**Introduction**

Gatecrashing is the attitude of interfering in other people's life without being invited; by extension, the involvement of an 'outsider' in a private or personal domain. This paper raises the crucial issue of the conflicting relationships between lovers and the breakdown of the family unit due to parents or relatives' intrusion into children's love

affairs as seen through Tunji Ogundimu's *The Insiders* and Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*.

Indeed, the issue of the choice of the marriage companion by the partners themselves or not has been the concern of African literature for ages. As to the different attitude of life, people belonging to the older generation always wonder what has gone wrong with the younger one. They feel that during their time, young boys and girls were better behaved, more obedient and had greater respect for the elders especially as regards the choice of the marriage partner. Definitely, sometime or other, every responsible adult feels the need to find the soul mate with whom to share his or her life with a view to perpetuating human race. Generally, the protagonist makes the choice of this soul mate based on the passionate feeling of romantic desire and the sexual attraction he or she feels for the other half. This soul mate may be chosen in the living or working environment of the sweetheart or during fortuitous encounters, or better still at school or university, to name only a few. Many criteria quite often guide people to choose the soul mate like being on good terms with each other, sharing of viewpoint, distinctive qualities, tolerance, or after a thorough knowledge and scrutiny of the person set to share one's life. Nevertheless, in Tunji Ogundimu's *The Insiders* and Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*, the younger generation has a feeling that 'foreign bodies' meddle in the choice of their marriage partner without their consent and consultation.

This paper is built around (1) relatives' interference in children's love affairs, (2) the causes of parents or relatives' gatecrashing, and (3) the consequences of parents or relatives' gatecrashing. Sociocriticism will serve as backdrop to tackle this topical issue. In fact, how does gatecrashing in progeny's love affairs occur in the novels under scrutiny?

### **1. Relatives' Interference in Children's Love Affairs**

In some traditional African societies and other parts of the world, it is quite often noticed that the elders and relatives do not leave their progeny free to choose their sexual partners. In other words, relatives do have their say or worse still the last word regarding their offspring's

choice of who must share the rest of their lives with them so much so that a bone of contention quite often arises between stakeholders.

It is worth noticing that marriage is the relationship between two people especially a man and a woman, who join to set up a couple. According to Ayisi “*marriage is [...] the means by which a man and a woman come together to form a union for the purpose of procreation.*”<sup>1</sup> Within the context of *The Insiders*, for relatives, marriage is perceived as a common issue or rather a matter to be discussed by the families on behalf of the ‘contractors’. As the character Baba, Bayo’s uncle, defines it: “*marriage is a two-party contract in which the two families are central of more consequences than the contractors themselves*”.<sup>2</sup> According to him, with his traditional view, marriage should not be the concern of two individuals only but a relationship woven by the communities and blessed by the elderly people of the families involved. As literature is the manifestation of social life in its various fields,<sup>3</sup> marriage, in some traditional African societies, is not only the concern of just the prospective spouses but it is the primary concern of their respective families as well. In *The Insiders*, for Bayo, however, wedding is his and his bride’s concern only; he thus posits, “*the two families are mere witnesses, and I do not know of a witness who can claim prominence than the contractors themselves*” (TI, p. 51). Bayo’s posture vis-à-vis the extended family’s active involvement or rather intrusion in children’s love affairs demolishes the view held by the guarantors of tradition. Love counts a lot for Bayo and Kudi to set up their family. Likewise, Christoph Kreitz puts forward that “*Marriage was designed by God as a union between a man and a woman that leads to a more meaningful and fruitful life. Our spouse is our prime*

1. Eric O., Ayisi, *An Introduction to the Study of African Culture* (London: Heinemann, 1980), p. 7.

2. Tunji Ogundimu, *The Insiders* (Abeokuta: Campus Publications Ltd., 2010), p. 51. Further references to the same edition will be referred to as TI followed by the page number in the main text.

3. Bertin C., Yèhouénou, “Sociocriticism and SFL or when both ends justify both means: a case study of Wole Soyinka’s *The Road*”, in *Particip’Action* Vol. 5 N°1 Janvier 2013, p. 98. (Lomé: Imprimerie St. Louis)



*address for finding comfort, help, truth and growth.*”<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, how will spouses attain such a goal when they are not let free to choose their companion?

In Amma Darko’s *Behind the Horizon*, the concept of marriage seems to have much more traditional connotation. Mara’s and Akobi’s fathers, according to customs in Naka village, perfectly arrange their offspring’s marriage. Mara’s father does not allow his daughters to choose their husband by their own, nor does he care whether they love or appreciate the one chosen for them. It appears clear to specify whether the marriage for Mara is arranged or forced when taking into consideration the following passage:

*In arranged marriages, the families of both spouses take a leading role in choosing the marriage partner; but the choice of whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses. In forced marriage, there is no choice – one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage or their consent is extracted under duress*<sup>5</sup>.

Mara and Akobi are undoubtedly victims of the deal made by their respective families. As Claire Robertson puts it, “*The overall good of the families was considered to be more important in making a marriage than the desires of the two individuals involved*”.<sup>6</sup> It appears that contrary to Bayo and Kudi in *The Insiders*, Akobi and Mara in *Beyond the Horizon* do not make any stand against their parents’

4.Christoph Kreitz, “Boundaries in Marriage” from [http://www.cs.cornell.edu/home/kreitz/Ch...ristian/Boundaries/all.htm](http://www.cs.cornell.edu/home/kreitz/Christian/Boundaries/all.htm) (consulted on 08/08/2014)

5. Nicola Sharp, *Forced Marriage in the UK: A scoping study on the experience of women from Middle Eastern and North East African Communities* from <http://refuge.org.uk/files/1001-Forced-M...-East-North-East-Africa.pdf> (058/08/2014)

6.Claire Robertson, “Social Change in Contemporary Africa” in *Africa* (third edition) by Phyllis M. Martin and Patrick O’Meara (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 316

arrangement; they just swallow their rulings. Overall, the offspring's welfare should override all others regarding the choice of the marriage partner to avoid unfortunate situations prevailing, for instance, between Mara and Akobi in Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* in which Mara, whose wedding has been arranged, is constantly battered by a spouse imposed upon her. Mara's father's attitude results from the fact that he is not only poverty-stricken and heavily indebted<sup>7</sup> but he also wants to raise his social status by marrying his daughter to "*the first child of Naka to earn a Form Four General Certificate*".<sup>8</sup> Hence Mara's and Bayo's unions fall within forced marriage as their respective parents or relatives do not leave them free to choose to marry the partner after their own heart. It is in the same vein that the reflection of Paul Kyalo on marriage in Africa should be construed. He posits that,

*In some parts of Africa parents choose marriage partners for their children even before they are born. This is to make it absolutely sure that they do get someone to marry. In other parts the choice is made for the young people by their relatives, while another custom is to let the young people themselves find the person they wish to marry and then inform their parents or other relatives.*<sup>9</sup>

---

7. Mara's dowry comes in handy because it comes just at the right moment since her father owes somebody money and the man has been putting pressure on him to get his money back. Consequently, as soon as Akobi's father approaches Mara's father to marry her to his son, the insolvent debtor eagerly jumps at the opportunity and uses his daughter's bride price as repayment (*BH*, pp. 6-7).

8. Amma Darko, *Beyond the Horizon* (London: Heinemann, 1995), p. 5. Further references to the same edition will be referred to as *BH* followed by the page number in the main text.

9. Paul Kyalo, "A Reflection on the African Traditional Values of Marriage and Sexuality" in *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, April 2012, Vol. 1, No. 2, P.214

As sociocriticism traces the “*relationship between culture and society, political practice and writing*”<sup>10</sup>, there is indeed a thin line between Tunji Ogundimu’s imaginary world and practices prevalent in a Yoruba community. Undeniably, the reader would agree that in *The Insiders*, the way Mama Tunde pokes her nose in her nephew’s private life is a true-life Yoruba reality. In other words, Ogundimu has used African / Yoruba facts as backdrop to write his fiction. In this wake, Mama Tunde urgently turns up at her nephew’s bedsitter only to notify him that any project of his to take a wife must meet the consent of his relatives. The intruding relative’s sermon to Bayo, the ‘presumptuous’ nephew, rings as follows:

*The problem? .... Well, it is simple: there is more in a woman than her looks. You cannot base the choice of a partner on good looks alone. I do not believe that Kudi is the kind of girl you should marry and that it is why we are here [...] Now open your ears and let me tell you something: this Kudi you are running after has a curse on her head. You hear? She has a curse on her head: she fell from her mother’s back when she was a baby. Now will you step back from self-destruction or not? [...] You will not commit suicide: you will not marry Kudi, if I am living. Falling from the back of one’s mother is not a joking matter (TI, pp. 16-21).*

Even if experienced relatives do have a say in the choice of their ‘children’s’ company, are they entitled to impose themselves upon the alleged ‘erring’ progeny? I think, not. Experienced relatives might serve as enlighteners or guides to their offspring not as intruders hampering the psychological and social blooming of children. Any knowledgeable observer might say that family members have good grounds for advising or enlightening a madly in love bridegroom

---

10. Bertin C., Yèhouénou, “Sociocriticism and SFL or when both ends justify both means: a case study of Wole Soyinka’s *The Road*”, in *Particip’Action* Vol. 5 N°1 Janvier 2013, p. 99. (Lomé : Imprimerie St. Louis)

over marriage issues inasmuch as love may blind him. In this wake, Mama Tunde is sent to Bayo's as the envoy of the Kudoros to deter the dauntless and foolhardy nephew from moving out with an ill-fated girl whose mother might have dubious morals. It is noteworthy that the Kudoros' emissary has endured a bitter defeat as Bayo defiantly tells his troublesome and intruding aunt "*I love the girl, she has agreed to marry me, I shall marry her*" (TI, p. 17). Despite the allegation that Iyalode, Kudi's notorious mother, has a bad character, Bayo's willpower to marry the girl of his dreams should move mountains. One might point out that Bayo's attitude towards his aunt conveys the idea that the younger generation feels that they are capable enough to learn on their own rather than lean heavily on the older generation for any guidance. Bayo's determination or pigheadedness to wed the woman of his choice despite all the obstacles, also expresses the fact that the young people do not like to be spoon-fed by their elders – 'out of touch' –. Mama Tunde seems very resolute to turn Bayo away from Kudi by smearing Kudi's mother. This is how the dauntless aunt strives to put off Bayo from sticking to Kudi: "*I do not expect you to tie yourself to the daughter of a woman of doubtful reputation .... True, I cannot afford financial contribution towards your marriage. But I shall not, on that account, run away from my responsibilities, when I see your future threatened*" (TI, pp. 18-19). Mama Tunde's 'humanitarianism' might make critical readers sceptical since Ranti, a female character with whom Bayo is having a platonic friendship, is Mama Tunde's heartthrob. What are then the causes of parents or relatives' intrusion into their offspring's love affairs?

## **2. Causes of Parents or Relatives' Gatecrashing**

Taking into account the novels under study, I have identified two causes behind parents or relatives' intrusion into their progeny's private life.

### **2.1. Parents' Selfishness and Poverty**

Parents' selfishness is one of the causes of the arranged or forced marriage in African fiction. In one of her papers, Laura E. Chasen writes, "*Darko emphasizes that it is neither the institution of marriage nor*

*local tradition that puts women in danger, but rather the ways in which ubiquitous capitalist desire influences these domains*".<sup>11</sup> The fact that parents send their offspring into an arranged or forced marriage is not only tradition-based but for economic reasons too. Obviously, Mara's father is more obsessed with the gain he will get from his daughter's bride price than the daughter's welfare. Mara, the victim of her father's egotism, resignedly remarks, "*But father, it appeared, had a different formula for choosing or accepting husbands for his daughters, which took more into consideration the number of cows coming as the bride price than the character of the man*" (BH, p. 4). Selling his daughters off that way, Mara's father surely hands them over to the goodwill of sons-in-law who might think their wives are just there to do their bidding because they have heavily paid for them. This is noticeable with Akobi's inhuman attitude towards Mara, the 'wife' given to him. Indeed, Mara's father is a patriarch who attaches little importance to female children. He does not care about their schooling either. From that point of view, one can easily assert that Mara is perceived by her father as useless nuisance to get rid of by means of a forced marriage. In this vein, Wanjohi clearly states, "*The African marriage today is still characterized by [...] certain cases where some selfish parents force their daughters to get married against their will, even at the expense of leaving school*".<sup>12</sup> This attitude from self-centred parents or relatives often hampers the blossoming or bliss of the daughters they have 'bartered'.

In Ogundimu's *The Insiders*, Bayo's relatives are trying to build up his household in defiance of his consent. Bayo's happiness with Kudi is not their concern, only his abidance by their wish counts for them. A very deep analysis of such attitude leads me to say that they are simply selfish. Though Mama Tunde thinks that it is her

11. Laura E. Chasen, *Dislocated Subjects: Transnational Forced Prostitution, African Female Bodies and Corporeal Resistance*, a thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English. Washington, DC, April 23, 2010, p. 14

12. Gerald J. Wanjohi "African Marriage, Past and Present" from <http://www.crvp.org/book/Series02/II-10/CH5.htm> (15/08/2014).

responsibility to care for Bayo's welfare, she seems to forget that Bayo should also have his decision to make. Mama Tunde's sense of responsibility towards her nephew rings as follows: "*True, I cannot afford financial contribution towards your marriage. But I shall not, on that account, run away from my responsibilities, when I see your future threatened*" (TI, pp. 18-19). One may rightfully wonder what type of responsibility is there in making up a story just to prevent two sweethearts from marrying. It is worth noticing that when Bayo loses his two parents, no relatives care about his future; they abandon him to his sad fate. Being very livid with his relatives' intrusion in his love affairs, Bayo addresses the 'gatecrashers' relevantly thus, "*Now, in this case, what has anybody done [after the tragic death of my parents]? ... Yes, tell me, what have you done? .... Nothing. When my parents died, you all gathered and made a thousand and one promises to beguile me. But, thereafter, nobody knew I existed ...*" (TI, pp. 51-52). The heterodiegetic narrator<sup>13</sup> in Ogundimu's *The Insiders* rightfully points out Bayo's bitterness towards his people in this way,

*It was this mischievous duo [Moji and Baba] that wilfully denied him the golden opportunity of receiving University education. That year, when he left the secondary school, his name had appeared on the merit list of admission into the only accredited Federal University and, more importantly, he had made his seven papers in the School Certificate Examinations; these include two credits and five distinctions. Unfortunately, however, the offer of admission lapsed because he could not raise enough funds for registration, in spite of his personal efforts.*

*He had laboured in Grandpa Kudoro's cocoa farm with daily-paid workers to pick cocoa hoping that the labour would earn him about a thousand naira out of the five*

---

13. The narrator of the story in Tunji Ogundimu's *The Insiders* is heterodiegetic because he is absent from the story he tells [Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (trans. Jane Lewin, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp 244-45].

*thousand needed. He was not paid. Meanwhile, the harvest had fetched a total sum of forty-two thousand naira. But unfortunately, just as Mama Tunde had earlier been edged out, the share-out did not extend to him. The registration period had coincided with the time when Moji was putting finishing touches to her storey-building which she claimed she had agreed to let out to some impatient quarry workers. (TI, pp. 248-49)*

This telling quotation typifies the fate in store for orphans in some traditional African societies in which they are abandoned and worse still stripped of what is theirs by rights. Bayo's uncles and aunts have grown sadistic and selfish since they could have used his grandfather's fortune to pay his registration fees but wicked as they are, they have preferred to help their sister, Moji, with Grandpa's harvest receipts. One therefore understands the reason why Bayo has been hard on Mama Tunde and her friend Alaba trying to convince him to drop Kudi pretending she is not the right woman to marry. Following Alaba's awkward remark aimed at him, "*you will see that we are trying to save you from an embarrassing shock*" (TI, p. 18), Bayo replies, rather sharply, "*I've made my choice without [sic] any recourse to consultancy services. I want to sustain the choice without any interference; I will not need your advice*" (TI, p. 18). However, Mama Tunde thinks that she is quite within her own rights to do what she is doing, as that is what her late brother – Bayo's father – would do if he were still alive. Considering this, though one might imply that Mama Tunde is truthful and sincere in her approach, Bayo condemns his aunt's attitude due to the bad previous history between them. For him, she vents hatred on him that is why she wants to control him from a distance. Furthermore, his uncle, Baba, is not trying to jeopardise and wreck his life for nothing. He is a selfish head of family who wants to have all the properties of Grandpa Kudoro without share. Bayo Kudoro, being a legitimate and potential heir to Grandpa Kudoro's properties, is a real and fearsome threat. The heterodiegetic narrator in *The Insiders* best sums up the deprivation and hardships that the



character Bayo endures after the death of his parents thus,

*Enough ought to have been enough. But Moji and Baba had felt differently and had shown it. For instance, what did they want that they did not get? He was still wondering. They had inherited Grandpa Kudoro's farm: they were selling the produce and enjoying the proceeds. He was claiming no kobo and was complaining to nobody. They had driven him out of the family house: they had taken in more tenants and were sharing additional rent. He had not raised his eyebrows. They had always had their way and he had left them alone. Why they did not also leave him alone, he did not know. Why they sat on his tail to muddle and derail his plans, he did not understand. At least then. (TI, pp. 248-49)*

Their real intention is not to spare Bayo from bad companion as they pretend. What they really mean is to torment Bayo and maybe finally kill him as they have killed his father, Liadi, to get hold of their father's belonging all by themselves. Selfishness alone does not account for parents or relatives' intrusion into their offspring's love affairs as seen through the novels under study.

Indeed, poverty is a critical factor leading to arranged or forced marriage. Some parents encourage their children to marry a person who can assure their [both children's and parents'] future. Iyalode, Kudi's mother, urges her daughter to marry a man that can afford her needs as wife and at the same time that can take care of her as mother. When Kudi talks about Bayo to her mother, she raises the following questions:

*The boy is a clerk, isn't he? How much does he earn? How can a couple live on seven hundred naira a month? .... How will you feed the children? [...] I will expect financial assistance from you. Or do you want to forget me when you marry? Look, you will not marry a clerk. (TI, p. 32)*



It comes out that for Kudi's mother, the financial base of a companion is a determining factor in the decision to marry him or not. Facing her daughter's pigheadedness to marry a mere clerk whose financial base is not reassuring, Iyalode tolls Bayo's knell thus, "*You will not do such a thing in my lifetime. The best husband in the world can only offer what he has. Now, what does a clerk have? What can he afford? Look, I won't allow you to plunge into voluntary destitution*". (TI, p. 32) Unfortunately, giving in to her mother's constant and tendentious observations, Kudi pushes Bayo to one side and eventually, they part for good.

Furthermore, a young girl may sometimes be regarded as an economic burden for her parents. Therefore, her marriage to a man who is believed to be 'well-off' can be seen as a good riddance. Indeed, in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*, Mara's father does a sort of transaction with his daughters. He believes that keeping them home implies having many mouths to feed, but marrying them at an early age will yield many benefits. In this wake, Mara's father eagerly leaps at the opportunity to barter his daughter Mara for eleven goats as dowry. The opportunistic father uses part of the bride price to repay a creditor and the funny part of it is that, as the autodiegetic narrator ironically puts it, "*father had used the goats and cows to remarry*" (BH, p. 29). Talking of parental choice in marriage due to poverty, Umeh asserts that

*"Le père, Benfa, a choisi Famagan, un marchand, comme époux pour sa fille. Or, sa fille, Kany, n'aime pas Famagan et ne peut pas l'épouser parce que celui-ci est vieux et en plus polygame."*<sup>14</sup>

Père Benfa, in Seydou Badian's *Sous l'Orage*, as is the case

---

14. The father, Benfa, has chosen Famagan, a dealer, as a husband for his daughter. And yet, his daughter, Kany, does not love Famagan and cannot marry him because he is old and polygamous as well. (Translation, mine) Ambrosse O. Umeh, « Le problème de l'autorité paternelle sur le mariage de l'enfant en Afrique noire », *Éthiopiques : Revue Socialiste de Culture Négro-Africaine* N° 26, avril 1981, from <http://ethiopiques.refer.sn> (15/08/2014)

with Mara's father in Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*<sup>15</sup>, is certainly looking for a wealthier partner for his daughter not a man that will necessarily make her happy. Most of the time, children are coerced into arranged marriage due to sociological impediments and parents' unawareness.

## **2.2. Traditional Coercion and Ignorance**

Traditions and sociological requirements are root causes of gatecrashing in some traditional societies. As the literary work and society are inextricably related<sup>16</sup>, in this paper, I have shown how in Africa, some traditional and sociological rules are to be observed before official ceremonies of marriage. These ceremonies, in fact, help to stay in lines with what the involved families have been doing. Iyalode's refusal to see Bayo marry Kudi stems from what she has heard from Moji. She has been told that Bayo falls from his mother's back when a baby and required ceremonies are not performed to remove the curse. Consequently, the first nine wives of Bayo are doomed to die. At this very level, Akoété Amouzou made the point that

*"While everywhere Man seems to be devising ways to break all the chains that maintain him under domination, the people in this impressive story display stagnation, making for their lives unbelievable myths which through superstition create traditions and customs that destroy life".<sup>17</sup>* Any sensible mother that observes such customs and prohibitions will react as Iyalode has done. She believes

---

15. In fact, Akobi's father is seen as a prosperous man in Naka as he is a great farmer and the only undertaker at the village. So marrying one's daughter to the son of such a man is prestigious for the villagers.

16. Barthélémy Kotchi, *Méthodologie et Idéologie*, Abidjan CEDA, 1989, p. 66.

17. Akoété Amouzou, "Operative Myths and the Requirements of Cultural Emancipation in Asare Konadu's *Ordained by the Oracle*," in *Particip'Action: Revue internationale de littérature, linguistique et philosophie* (Lomé: Imprimerie ST. Louis, 2011), p. 169.

that “*His [Bayo’s] first nine wives will die in succession as he marries them. That is inevitable*”. (TI, p. 109)

If Moji has not raised the issue, Iyalode is already convinced that her daughter has chosen Bayo and she must give her consent as promised.

In addition, ignorance remains an unavoidable cause of sending girls into marriage. Fathers could react otherwise if they were aware of the potential that they have. Mara, in *Beyond the Horizon*, is too naïve and ignorant to know something about her right. If only she were schooled, she would claim for her rights and stand firmly to call into question her father’s intrusion and the countless ill-treatment she endures from Akobi, the husband imposed on her. But how could she if she has not been schooled? What are then the consequences of being coerced into marriage?

### **3. Consequences of Parents or Relatives’ Gatecrashing**

#### **3.1. Lovers’ Suffering**

Parents or relatives’ untimely gatecrashing in children’s love affairs outmost consequences result in the couple suffering or dislocation. Both the bride and the groom are morally affected. In Ogundimu’s *The Insiders*, much has been said about the conflict due to external intrusion. Intrusion in the relationship between Bayo and Kudi brings about dispute and hatred. They promise to get married in the name of their love. Nevertheless, Iyalode’s opposition to Bayo and Kudi’s union, for selfish reasons, utterly shatters Bayo, who ends up in jail due to Moji’s frame-up.

In Darko’s *Beyond the Horizon*, the relationship between Mara and Akobi is the rough one. This is logic insofar as the two are not in love when they marry. They abide to their respective family’s wish. This lack of love is then the basic reason for Mara’s suffering and ill-treatment. Truly, Mara is not happy with her living conditions with Akobi in town. It is hard for her to satisfy her basic needs because Akobi does not care for her; in a nutshell, “*Akobi is exploitative, heartless and brutish.*”<sup>18</sup> The only thing Mara deserves is carelessness

18. Mawuli Adjei, “Male-bashing and Narrative Subjectivity in Amma Darko’s First

and humiliation. As a matter of fact, Mara suffers humiliation through her married life. As Adjei points out,

*In all, Akobi is presented as a man without any edifying human emotion, least of all, love. He performs his sexual duties in a primitive, perfunctory manner; without any sensual attachment, conjugal bonding or expression of love; a man who would "wordlessly" and authoritatively "strip" off his wife's clothes, have sex with her in a hurry and then order her "off the mattress [...] because he wanted to sleep alone" (BH, p. 22)<sup>19</sup>.*

Where there is love, there should be peace, tenderness, and understanding. It is then strange enough that a wife is chased off the bed by her husband pretending that he wants to be alone after having sex; this cannot be called love, 'rape' instead. Indeed, Akobi pounces literally on his supposed wife whenever he wants to satisfy his sexual lust. For Mara, it is not good being treated such a way by one's own husband, she is aware. All the same, she pitifully bears it because before being sent into marriage, she has gone through a sort of brainwashing that has made her that way. She confesses,

*... after all, mother had taught me that a wife was there for a man for one thing, and that was to ensure his well-being, which included his pleasure. And if demands like that were what would give him pleasure, even if just momentarily, then it was my duty as his wife to fulfil them. So that even those nights when he ordered me to sleep on the thin mat on the hard floor, even if I laid there and could not sleep and suffered a splitting headache the next day because of lack of sleep, I still regarded my suffering as part of being a wife. ... I saw also as falling under 'obey and worship your husband', as my parents and family elders stringently repeated to me at the end of the*

Three Novels" in *SKASE Journal of Literary Studies* [online], 2009, vol. 1 n° 1, p. 50.

19. Idem.

GBAGUIDI Célestin

*marriage rites. ... Tradition demands that the wife respect, obey and worship her husband... (BH, p. 13).*

Besides, one can notice that Akobi himself suffers if I take into consideration his exploitative behaviour towards Mara. Not only does he rape her but he makes her a prostitute as well; only a demented husband can behave such a way. For instance, because he does not want to pay extra fees to Osey, his friend who smuggles Mara into Germany, he agrees that Osey ‘tests’ his wife to see whether she fits perfectly for the job, prostitution. Oddly enough, once in Germany, after concocting a Machiavellian scheme in which he drugs Mara, Akobi invites strange men to rape his ‘wife’,

*Akobi returned some minutes later and brought me a glass of wine. Then I was left on my own again for a long, long while during which I finished off my wine and waited. Then something started happening to me. I was still conscious but I was losing control of myself. Something was in the wine I had drunk. It made me see double and I felt strange and happy and high ... so high that I was certain that I could fly free. Then suddenly the room was filled with people, all men, and they were talking and laughing and drinking. And they were completely naked! There must have been at least ten men for what I saw were at least twenty images. Then they were all around me, many hairy bodies, and they were stripping me, fondling me, playing with my body, pushing my legs apart, wide, wide apart. ... Then some held my two legs wide apart while one after the other, men, many men, white, black, brown, even one looked Chinese, took turns upon me. All this was captured clearly on the video film. And this was what Osey and Akobi blackmailed me with so that I agreed to do the [prostitution] job at Peepy [a brothel]. (BH, pp. 111-15)*

The critical reader cannot be surprised to see Akobi develop such an inhumane and perverse attitude towards Mara, given to him free as wife by his father. If Mara has been Akobi's own choice, he will overwhelm her with tenderness, tokens of his affection. Such an attitude often brings about conflicting relationships in the forced marriage and most of such a union hangs by a thread.

### **3.2. Conflicting relationships and dislocation**

It generally happens that when 'outsiders' intrude in love affairs, the aftermaths are dramatic and immeasurable. They turn joy into sorrow and peace into conflict. Bayo and Kudi have been intimate before the conflict arises. They have disputed on the grounds of what intruders put in their mind. Indeed, Moji is the 'beautiful liar' who has mixed everything up. She has made up the petty idea that Bayo and Kudi have fallen from their respective mother's back when they are babies. Then she narrates to her friend Mama Dele how Kudi falls when a baby. Mama Dele on her turn brings the information to Mama Tunde who puts pressure on his nephew, Bayo. As a double-edged sword, she has also gone to Iyalode reporting how Bayo falls in his babyhood. When analysing her behaviour, I see that her goal is to prevent the two lovers from getting married. That is why she has used Iyalode and Mama Tunde to reach her goal. Although Bayo overcomes, Kudi finally gives in. Unfortunately, Bayo's relatives and Kudi's mother play an intrigue just to separate them. As a result, their relationship has been smeared with dispute and violence and finally they break up. Bayo discovers that Kudi has a new lover in the name of Rotimi.<sup>20</sup> It appears that Bayo's relatives and Kudi's mother's intrigues "*create social malaise, destroy hopes and human bonds and affect*

---

20. Bayo has been 'invited' to Kudi's place only to discover that Kudi has been playing pranks on him; indeed, Kudi is caught in flagrante delicto making love with Rotimi in her bedroom. By then, the hope of seeing Bayo and Kudi set up home and start a family fizzles out forever. Worse still, being in cahoots with the landlord, Kudi and her mother give evidence against Bayo and he is jailed for invading "*a private residence to provoke a breach of peace*" (TI, p. 126).

*development and self-fulfilment ...*"<sup>21</sup> As a result, Kudi's love for Bayo turns into hatred. They could not get on with each other anymore. The discovery Bayo has made has been woeful. The two rivals have fought and finally Bayo has been arrested after Iyalode has lodged a complaint at the Mortuary Police Station. When Bayo has been released, he does not return with Kudi anymore. They have separated and this is due to intrigues perfectly played by Moji and her accomplices. As Moji herself confesses, she has not acted alone. It is the idea of Baba that she has put into actions. When Bayo asks her whether he is cursed or not, she answers: "*Neither of you was cursed. The allegation was a mere ploy to separate you. It was Baba's idea*". (TI, p. 243) The love story of Kudi and Bayo ends up after this series of intrigues. They do not get married as they have promised. What happens to Kudi after is not mentioned by the narrator. As far as Bayo is concerned, he has to start a new life with Ranti, his first love.

In the case of Akobi and Mara, they have got married and their marriage has been blessed with children. But their daily life is not a bed of roses. Indeed, Mara suffers a lot due to a husband imposed on her and who does not love her. Akobi could be a kind person and a careful husband if she were lucky, but she is not. Therefore, she bears all the caprice of her husband. As she puts it:

*When I didn't bring him the bowl of water and soap in time for washing his hands before and after eating, I received a nasty kick in the knee. When I forgot the chewing stick for his teeth, which he always demanded be placed neatly beside his bowl of served food, I got a slap in the face. And when the napkin was not at hand when he howled for it, I received a knuckle knock on my forehead (BH, p. 19).*

As the above passage plainly shows, any mistake made by Mara corresponds to a corporal punishment. This leads then to infer that Akobi is a kind of violent husband and Mara a sort of tireless

---

21. Akoété Amouzou, *op. cit.*, p. 169.



underdog. As Mawuli Adjei rightly puts it, “*These abuses become routine, they are parts of the daily regime of Mara's portion as a wife, so much so that when Akobi eventually leaves for Europe, instead of relief, there is rather emptiness in her*”.<sup>22</sup> Thus, if one considers that the ultimate purpose of the lovers is a peaceful relationship, one can assert that any outside intrusion generally overthrows that challenge.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout out this study, I have shown that due to poverty, selfishness, and ignorance some parents and relatives coerce their progeny into forced marriage. Their interference in offspring's love affairs slowly but surely leads to conflicting relationships and eventually causes couples to break up. Thus, limited gatecrashing and good advice to prevent misfortune with couples should be considered. In Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*, and Tunji Ogundimu's *The Insiders*, there is a wake-up call to parents and relatives' intrusion into children's married life. Although marriage remains a community matter involving two families, the choice and the desire of the partners must prevail. In my mind, it is vitally important for parents or relatives to let their progeny make their own choice but under their watchful gaze. A relative or parent may intrude into a child's love affairs but constructively after he or she has taken on his or her responsibilities towards the child, which seems to escape some of Ogundimu's and Darko's characters in their respective literary works.

### **Reference List**

- Adjei, Mawuli (2009). “Male-bashing and Narrative Subjectivity in Amma Darko's First Three Novels” in *SKASE Journal of Literary Studies* [online], vol. 1 n° 1
- Amouzou Akoété (2011). “Operative Myths and the Requirements of Cultural Emancipation in Asare Konadu's *Ordained by the Oracle*,” in *Particip'Action: Revue internationale de*

---

22. Mawuli Adjei, *op. cit.*, p. 50.



- littérature, linguistique et philosophie*. Lomé : Imprimerie ST. Louis.
- Ayisi, Eric O (1980). *An Introduction to the Study of African Culture*. London: Heinemann.
- Badian, Seydou (1972). *Sous l'orage*. Paris: Présence Africaine.
- Chasen, Laura E (2010). "Dislocated subjects: transnational forced prostitution, African female bodies and corporeal resistance" (A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Georgetown University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English.) Washington, DC.
- Darko, Amma (1995). *Beyond the Horizon*. London: Heinemann.
- Genette Gérard. (1980) *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. trans. Jane Lewin. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Barthélémy Kotchi (1989). *Méthodologie et Idéologie*. Abidjan: CEDA.
- Kreitz, Christoph, "Boundaries in Marriage" from <http://www.cs.cornell.edu/home/kreitz/Ch...ristian/Boundaries/all.htm> (consulted on 08/08/2014)
- Kyalo, Paul (April 2012). "A Reflection on the African Traditional Values of Marriage and Sexuality" in *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, Vol. 1, No. 2.
- Ogundimu, Tunji (2010). *The Insiders*. Abeokuta: Campus Publications Ltd.
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (2000). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Robertson, Claire (1995). "Social Change in Contemporary Africa" in *Africa (third edition)* by Phyllis M. Martin and Patrick O'Meara. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Sharp, Nicola. "Forced Marriage in the UK: A Scoping Study on the Experience of Women from Middle Eastern and North East African Communities" from <http://refuge.org.uk/files/1001->

*Relatives' Gatecrashing in their Offspring's Private Life*

[Forced-M...-East-North-East-Africa.pdf](#) (08/08/2014)

Umeh, Ambrosse O. « Le problème de l'autorité paternelle sur le mariage de l'enfant en Afrique noire », *Éthiopiennes : Revue Socialiste de Culture Négro-africaine* N° 26, avril 1981, from <http://ethiopiennes.refer.sn> (15/08/2014)

Wanjohi, Gerald J. "African marriage, past and present" from <http://www.crvp.org/book/Series02/II-10/CH5.htm> (15/08/2014).

Yèhouénou, Bertin C (Janvier 2013). "Sociocriticism and SFL or when both ends justify both means: a case study of Wole Soyinka's *The Road*", in *Particip'Action*. Lomé: Imprimerie. St. Louis Vol. 5 N°1.