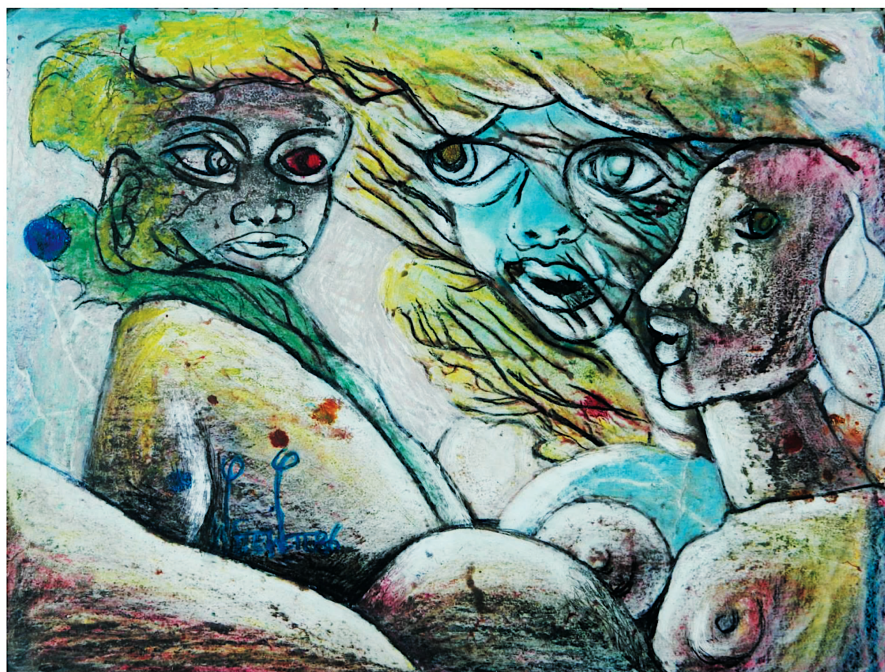


Sous la direction de  
KOUADIO MARIETTA LAURE KACOU  
ZOHIN SYLVIE GOHOU  
K'MONTI JESSÉ DIAMA

# *Féminisme et Féminité : Entre Usages, Idéologies et Praxxis*



# FÉMINISME ET FÉMINITÉ : ENTRE USAGES, IDÉOLOGIES ET PRAXIS

Actes du colloque "Féminité, féminisme, métaféminisme et  
transféminisme dans les arts et les discours : usages esthétiques et  
argumentatifs d'une identité en lutte" du 6 au 8 juin 2023 à l'Université  
Alassane Ouattara de Bouaké

## Tome 2

Textes réunis sous la direction de

KOUADIO MARIETTA LAURE KACOU  
ZOHIN SYLVIE GOHOU  
K'MONTI JESSE DIAMA

## Nos remerciements à nos partenaires





## **ONVDP ÉDITIONS**

Éditions universitaires de l'Observatoire National de la Vie et du Discours Politiques  
Université Alassane OUATTARA – Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire

Sous la direction de

**KOUADIO MARIETTA LAURE KACOU  
ZOHIN SYLVIE GOHOU  
K'MONTI JESSE DIAMA**

**FÉMINISME ET FÉMINITÉ :  
ENTRE USAGES, IDÉOLOGIES  
ET PRAXIS**

**(Tome 2)**

Couverture Werewere-Liking, "Enigmes de Femmes"  
Acrylique et craies à la cire et à l'huile. 65 x 50 cm. 1986

Copyright © Janvier 2024 ONVDP ÉDITIONS

Tous droits réservés.  
ISBN 978-2-487331-02-0  
EAN 9782487331020

## COMITÉ SCIENTIFIQUE

**ABOMO-MAURIN Marie-Rose**, Professeure, Université de Yaoundé 1 (Cameroun).

**ABBOU Julie**, MCF, experte des études sur le genre, Université Paris 13 /& Aix-Marseille.

**AMOSSY Ruth**, Professeure, Université de Tel-Aviv (Israël).

**ASSI KAUDJHIS Joseph**, Professeur, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire).

**ARDELEANU Sanda-Maria**, Professeure Université «Ștefan cel Mare»–Suceava (Roumanie)

**AZOUMANA Ouattara**, Professeur, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire).

**BAH Henri**, Professeur, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire).

**BAMBA Assouman**, Professeur, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire).

**BONI Tanella**, Professeure, Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny, ASCAD, (Côte d'Ivoire).

**BOUAZZA Merahia**, Maître de conférences HDR, Université de Relizane (Algérie).

**BRICCO Elisa**, Professeure, Università di Genova (Italie).

**COQUERY-VIDROVITCH Catherine**, Professeure émérite, Université Paris Diderot (France).

**DADIÉ Djah Célestin**, Professeur, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire).

**FLOQUET Oreste**, Professeur, Université La Sapienza de Rome (Italie).

**KOREN Roselyne**, professeure, Université Bar-Ilan (Israël).

**LÉPINARD Eléonore**, Professeure associée à l'Institut des sciences sociales (ISS) et au Centre en études genre (CEG), Université de Lausanne (Suisse).

**LEZOU KOFFI Aimée Danielle**, Professeure, Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny (RCI).

**NACHTERGAEL Magali**, Professeure, Université Bordeaux-Montaigne (France).

**NAJATE Nerci**, Professeure, FLSH Mohammedia, Université Hassan II (Maroc).

**N'GORAN POAME Marie Laurence Léa**, Professeure, Université Alassane Ouattara (RCI).

**NYECK Sybille Ngo**, Ph.D. multidisciplinary Associate Professor in Africana/Gender Studies in the Department of Ethnic Studies, University of Colorado Boulder (USA).

**PAVEAU Marie-Anne**, Professeure en sciences du langage à l'université de Paris 13 (France).

**RASCHI Natasa**, Professeure Agrégée, Université de Pérouse (Italie).

**SJÖBLOM Margareta Kastberg**, Professeure, Université Bourgogne Franche-Comté (France).

**TCHASSIM Koutchoukalo**, Professeure, Université de Lomé (Togo).

## COMITÉ DE LECTURE

**KOFFI Ehouman René**, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)  
**SAMAKE Adama**, Université Félix Houphouët Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire)  
**ADJASSOH Christian**, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)  
**ADOU Amadou Ouattara**, Université Félix Houphouët Boigny (RCI)  
**BLÉ Kain Arsène**, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)  
**KOUASSI Oswald Hermann**, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)  
**DIAMA K'Monti Jessé**, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)  
**DIAWARA Youssouf**, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)  
**DODO Jean-Claude**, Université Félix Houphouët Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire)  
**HOUESSOU Dorgelès**, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)  
**KOUAKOU Ange Valéry**, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)  
**MAMBO Serge Pacôme**, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)  
**SIDIBÉ Ousmane**, Université de San Pedro (Côte d'Ivoire)  
**YAO N'guessan Alice**, Université Félix Houphouët Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire)

AMMA DARKO'S WRITING OR THE FEMININE IN PERPETUAL  
TRANS- IN *BEYOND THE HORIZON, THE HOUSEMAID AND*  
*FACELESS*

Kouadio Pascal KOFFI

University of San Pedro, Ivory Coast

[koffi.pascal@usp.edu.ci](mailto:koffi.pascal@usp.edu.ci) / [kpascal36@hotmail.fr](mailto:kpascal36@hotmail.fr)

**Abstract**

This study aims at showing that Amma Darko's writing portrays an instable feminine in between two spaces. Indeed, Darko's authorship is mostly read as a feminine contribution in quest of a stable image for post-colonial African women. This kind of reading restricts the state of the feminine to a dynamic and linear movement. As a consequence, transiting stances through which the feminine is played by the author are to be questioned. This is possible with the use of postcolonial feminism theory applied to the three selected novels (*Beyond the Horizon, The Housemaid, and Faceless*) by the Ghanaian female author. In so doing, the work reveals that Amma Darko portrays the feminine as a vacillating subject in-between times (the past and the present), spaces (urban and rural) and ideologies (modernism and traditionalism or North and South). It also discloses that Darko's writing settles the feminine on an intermittent struggle in a transitional society.

**Keywords:** Amma Darko, feminine, trans-, postcolonial feminism, spaces/times.

**Résumé**

Cet article vise à montrer que l'écriture d'Amma Darko figure un féminin instable d'entre deux espaces. En effet, Amma Darko est généralement perçue comme une écrivaine dont la plume contribue à la stabilisation de l'image du féminin au profit des femmes d'Afrique post-coloniale. Cette perception restreint l'état du féminin à un mouvement linéaire et dynamique. En conséquence, les instances transitaires à travers lesquels le féminin est exprimé par l'auteure suscitent des interrogations. Lesquelles interrogations consacrent la présente étude qui sera conduite à l'aide du féminisme postcolonial appliquée à ces trois romans (*Beyond the Horizon, The Housemaid et Faceless*) de l'écrivaine Ghanéenne. Il résulte de cette étude qu'Amma Darko dépeint le féminin comme un sujet vacillant d'entre deux temps (le passé et le présent), espaces (urbain et rural) et idéologies (modernisme et traditionalisme ou le Nord et le Sud). Aussi l'étude révèle-t-elle que l'écriture de Darko inscrit le féminin dans la dynamique d'une lutte intermittente dans une société en transition.

**Mots-clés :** Amma Darko, féminin, trans-, féminisme postcolonial, espace-temps.

## Introduction

Mostly read in gender perspective, Amma Darko's writing has the merit of being classified among those termed postcolonial literature. The latter is also categorised by Dennis Walder (2011) as the materialisation of a persisting nostalgia by which narratives are enticed with a vacillating memory between present and past, modernity and tradition, urban and rural, centre (metropolis) and margin (periphery). Put in this groundwork, Amma Darko's writing fits in a feminist approach whereby the feminine is sandwiched and expressed in-between times, spaces and ideologies. This writing portrays a female identity woven in a whole and complex existing paradigm which justifies the post-colonial context. In so doing, the Ghanaian female writer raises the issues of feminine stability in a world on current move, change and with its entire contingency. Tracing to such a portrayal, one can rightfully insert Darko's artistry within the policy of the African female authorship of which N. Pushpa and F. Sigma (1998, p. 36) think is preoccupied in carving an African feminine identity. Taking into account this perception of feminine writing in and about Africa, one can query about the state of the feminine in Amma Darko's writing. In fact, what is the state of the feminine in Amma Darko's writing? Or, how is the feminine depicted in Darko's feminist writing since she is quoted among the Ghanaian feminists (see A. Kumi, 2010, p. 61 and K. Anyidoho, 2003, p. ix).

Conducted to dissect this problematic, the study aims at analysing the feminine in Darko's writing as a trans-expression within a hybrid, mutational and irreversible post-colonial spaces. This objective will be pursued by the means of a postcolonial feminist reading of Darko's three first novels namely *Beyond the Horizon* (1995), *The Housemaid* (1998) and *Faceless* (2003). Postcolonial feminism is a counter-reading of both universalist/white feminism (Hazel Carby, 1982) and postcolonialism (R. K. Mishra, 2013) aiming to redefine the "subaltern" within several scales of oppression basically coined as the "double colonisation" (G. Spivak, 1985, 1988, 1993 and C. Mohanty, 1997). Thus, one can argue in accordance with R. Tyagi (2014) that postcolonial feminism is a full (literary) theory which explains the feminine subjectivity in a reformist discourse mostly delivered by women who are ex-colonised. Using two reading axes such as the feminine in-between the present and the past and the feminine in rewriting between the North and the South, the work will consist of unravelling the state of the feminine in Darko's writing.

## 1. The feminine in-between the present and the past: a nostalgic vacillation

Beforehand, it seems important to clarify the use of the term trans- in this dissertation. Trans- as a central terminology in this study is less conversant with Alexandre Baril's umbrella coined terminology *transitude* (2015, 2018a) referring to the state of being trans related to gender and gender identities. But it is not far since it takes on the meaning of transit understood as 'passing over, across or through something'<sup>1</sup> or being in-between different times or spaces. The feminine in *transitude* or in transit in Darko's writing is a reading of the feminine in-between modernity and tradition, urban and rural, metropolis and periphery, national and transnational with feminist lenses focusing on diverse experiences of women living "within, between, at the margins or boundaries of nation-states" or "transcending nation-state boundaries" (C. Z. Enns et al., 2021, p. 11). In short, trans- as a prefixing term, is used to insist on the instable figure of the feminine as well as feminism in terms of raising consciousness in Darko's writing.

Back to the analysis, one can argue that Amma Darko's writing falls in this 'trans-bordering' writing from which the feminine is always located between the present and the past. From *Beyond the Horizon* to *Faceless* passing through *The Housemaid*, Darko's reader comes across an *ultima res* narrating approach taking him/her to past events necessary for understanding the present ones. It is a permanent flash-back whereby the narrator goes from a decaying situation to a past which is afar and difficult to get access. In so doing, Darko (1995, p. 3-4) inserts the feminine on nostalgic vacillation as one can read in the incipit of *Beyond the Horizon*<sup>2</sup>:

I remember the day clearly. I returned from the village well with my fourth bucket of water of the day when my mother excitedly beckoned to me in all my wetness and muddiness, dragged me into her hut and breathlessly told me the 'good news'. 'Your father has found a husband for you,' she gaped, 'a good man!'

*The Housemaid* is narrated in the same line with an opening narrative drawing a severe conclusion from ill-treatment the feminine goes through in a male dominated society: "In Ghana, if you come into the world as a she, acquire the habit of praying. And master it. Because you will need, desperately, as old age pursues you, and mother nature's hand approaches you

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.wordsense.eu/transit/#English>

<sup>2</sup> From now on I will use abbreviation while quoting the three elements of the corpus. Thus, *Beyond the Horizon* will be *BH*, *The Housemaid* is *H* and *Faceless* will be *F*.

with a wry smile, paint and brush at ready, you with wrinkles” (*The Housemaid*, 1998: 3). As for *Faceless*, the narrator goes from consequences to causing reasons of children presence on the street with the case of Fofó:

She chose to spend the night on the old cardboard laid in front of the provision store at Agbogbloshie market place because it was a Sunday. It had nothing to do with Sunday being a churchgoing day. The reason was simply that if she hadn't, she would have stood the risk of losing her newly acquired job of washing carrots at vegetables wholesale market (A. Darko, *F*, 2003, p. 1).

These three excerpts shed light on a flash-backing narrative approach which is froth of meaning when put in postcolonial feminist paradigm. In fact, postcolonial literary critics such as R. Crownshaw (2014) W. Drag (2014) D. Walder (2011), to quote but a few, view retrospective narration as a vacillating narrative in-between times, spaces and cultures. Read in this assumption, the quoted passages disclose a feminine in/on between two locations. While Mara's "I remember the day clearly..." reconnects the present to the past, the "In Ghana, if you come into..." in *The Housemaid* inscribes the feminine in/on different places constituting a showcase of mobility and trans-expressivity. In the same vein, starting *Faceless* by Fofó's choice "to spend the night on..." is 'a present to past' narrative by which the feminine is viewed from consequences to causes. This reversibility, which is deliberate, leads to affirm that Amma Darko uses a retrospective stance while writing the feminine.

This reversal stance questions the feminine in/on a constant binary opposition of times, spaces, cultures and ideologies. Here, the notion of "in-between" is clearly attached to the status of the feminine treaded by a nostalgic movement of narration. It unravels a loss and justifies the search of an ideal which is mostly thought to be in a farthest past as advocated by some postcolonial feminists such as H. Chuckuma (2006), A. A. Aidoo (2003), O. Oyewumi (2011 et 1997). Drawing from this postcolonial feminist claim of the past, it is neither reductive, nor overstating to say that Amma Darko is the writer whose attempt to question today's feminine status derives from a transitional redefinition related to times, spaces and culture.

Having acknowledged the particularity of this authorship, one can understand that Mara is used to question both the present and the past. It means that the vacillation of the feminine between Germany and Ghana, Accra and Naka and within Accra is about raising bitter questions to the relationship between post-colonial and the colonial, the colonial and the pre-colonial, the modern and the tradition and the urban and the rural. It is all

about realising the scope of viewing the feminine in post-colonial society. Following Mara's retrospective narrative, Darko's reader discovers different feminine statuses according to time, space and culture. Thus, the prostitute, the house-holding mother and the village girl constitute more important steps whereby the Ghanaian author queries the feminine. In other words, the nostalgic vacillation recalls times and avenues through which the feminine is visualised and redirected by Darko's retrospective writing.

Read on these oppositional times and spaces, the feminine takes on an unstable state and figures statuses that mirror vicissitudes inherent to the fact of being female in a male world. Following the memory recollection of *Mara in Beyond the Horizon*, Darko's reader realises that from Naka to Accra (Ghana) and Accra to Hamburg (Germany) Mara goes through 'trans-itional' states with specificity at each level in feminine condition. But the permanent characteristic of this feminine figure is the growing uncertainty and instability as Mara goes along. Thus, from Naka to Accra, there is an anchor of disillusion when Mara reveals:

To say I was shocked when Akobi brought me to his home in the city would be an understatement. I was stunned. Our homes in the village were of mud and leaves but no one needed to tell a visitor they were homes. Akobi had to tell me this was his home before I believed it. First, there wasn't the group of huts with large compounds about them and backyard gardens that I was used to in the village, but a cluster of shabbily-constructed corrugated-iron sheet shelters that look like chicken houses, while all about and between them shallow, open gutters wound their way. (A. Darko, *BH*, 1995, p. 8)

Memory from Accra to Naka or from city to village examines the feminine in the two different spaces. Yet, there is a physical move and change, but the initial space exerts an over-domination on Mara's psychology. It means that Naka is a past that does not pass in Mara's mind. This is a significant characteristic of nostalgia of the past of which J. Stern (1996, p. 18) thinks it echoes an anteriority which refuses to pass, to go off and let the present have its full holds on the subject. The above excerpt illustrates this conflicting relationship between village and city in Mara's reminiscing recalling of her anterior life. In fact, the reader of *Beyond the Horizon* can dissect a double opposition in Mara's story-telling. It is spatial-temporal exclusion with a comparing narrative of both past space and time embodied in the village of Naka and a present space and time represented in the city of Accra.

The feminine is thus attached to a past that has its own success and failure and to a challenging present. It seems difficult to orient the feminine

toward an emotionally satisfying inclination to the past in such a reading. It is also complex to argue that Amma Darko inscribes the feminine exclusively in an act of regretting the past while refusing the present. But, it may be understandable to affirm that the perception of the feminine out of Darko's writing is closer to J. Anderson (2011, p. 13) and A. Bolzinger's (1989, p. 312) definition of nostalgia as both expression of pain and relief. If this assertion is quite accepted, one can contend that Darko portrays a feminine which is scattered from one space to another and one time to another. In all, it is not a fully "taking back control" being hallmark of "literary act" and today's life redefinition as S. Caleb and N. O Cuileagain (2020) assert in their insightful work on the prevailing traces of nostalgia in literature.

The complexity around the feminine in nostalgic appraisal in Darko's writing entails a trans-expressivity of the female from past to present and from tradition to modernity and home to abroad or rural to urban. When *Beyond the Horizon* gives a trans- and pluralistic views of the feminine, *The Housemaid* and *Faceless* portray the same wandering figure of the feminine to the extent they question the feminine on an extended time and space. Therefore, the understanding of Tika, Efi and Akua's present life depends on their past life may be in rural area or within the city. Idem for Maa Tsuru and her children life which is linked to a past as the old lady Naa Yomo discloses to the representative the NGO *Mute*:

Do you know how many of children I have buried? Five. Eleven, the good Lord gave me. And five he took away. The same good Lord. And not one of them did I send out onto the streets. So do I complain about the five I buried? No! I thank Him every day. I thank him for the husband He gave me, and who became their father. He was a good man. A good man would never say to his child, there is no food, go out onto the street and find some money for food. He would say: "there is no food, so we'll all drink lots of water and go to bed. Tomorrow is another day. you will go to school and I will make sure there is food to eat when you return home. (A Darko, *F*, 2003, p. 87)

In her address to members of *Mute*, the old Naa Yomo, witness of Maa Tsuru's plight, recalls her own situation. It is a testimony whereby the old lady pinpoints the loss of good parenthood in today's life. But the reader can note that Naa Yomo's time is not utterly glamorous as she tries to make her audience believe. Even her numerous maternities with five loss children shed light on a less radiant feminine condition. From this deduction, one can afford to say that the Ghanaian writer questions the feminine in both past and present. In so doing, she materialises a mix-feeling about the African past read by famous afro-centric scholar such C. A. Diop (1959) and V. Sertima (1984)

in a gleaming axe as a loss paradise. It is also a moderate perception of an African past where gender issues may be less severe than present day as chanted by some African feminist scholars namely I. Amadiume (1987), Ogundipe-Leslie (1994), C. Ocholunu (1995), O. Nnaemeka (1999) to quote but few. The praise of the past with gender equilibrium supposed to be invaded and subverted by a Victorian patriarchal mindset as defended by Mhando Mikidady (2022) falls aside in Darko's perception.

Reconnection to the past, as analysed in previous paragraphs, showcases a feminine which is inscribed in/on different contextual locations so as to raise and resolve specific and different problems. This portrayal evokes a kind of feminine transiency synonymous to impermanency and the inevitability of change. More importantly, it puts the feminine on a transiting consciousness from which nostalgia is seen as remembrance of pain and relief. *The Housemaid* reveals this impermanency and contingency about the feminine condition as one can read in the following lines:

The young men, when they could no longer stand this bland, grey life, would leave for Accra, Kumasi, and Takoradi, to work as shoe-shine boys, truck pushers [...] The girls, in contrast, were sent for by relations or contacts in the cities to work as housemaids and babysitters, though many eventually ended up as ice-water sellers and prostitutes. One day, four years ago, Akua, frustrated and itching to leave Kataso, but seeing no prospect at all of being sent for, did what only one girl before her had done. [She] left Kataso, continued through Braha, the next village, arrived at Osiadan, and walked through town to position herself on the Accra-Kumasi highway, armed only with her determination to make it to the city. (A. Darko, *F*, 1998, p. 29-30)

Unfortunately, life in city becomes a disillusion for young men and women supposed to run away from a decay social environment in their village as the same omniscient narrative voice tells us:

Life as porter in Kumasi was not what a normal person would call living. It was survival. Like her mates, Akua had no regular home. They all lived in unfinished buildings. Thanks to bribes of cash and sex, workers at the building sites regularly tipped them on the next place available for occupation (A. Darko, *F*, 1988, p. 32).

The two excerpts, of course, illustrate a transiting move. But they depict at the same time two different spaces portraying diverse female conditions. Looking into the anterior life of female characters make discover that from the village to the city, there is constancy in the subjugation of the feminine. But, there is a prevailing notion of transiency or transitude and nostalgia because Darko's narrator tells the feminine in-between the rural and the urban. If rural

condition is difficult to stand, urban condition imposes other harsh challenges to the feminine exposed to prostitution, capitalism and over-male domination. In other words, Darko's writing seems to argue that remembrance in postcolonial feminism goes with a realistic and sincere portrayal of the feminine. This realism, if viewed in *The Housemaid*, questions the feminine in an irreversibly transitional post-colonial Africa where the village and the city plays differently upon the feminine.

The same realism presents the city in different appearances divided into centre and margin. While the centre underscores specific issues to the feminine as depicted within Kabira's family, the margin is painted as the cradle of misery and deprivation of all sorts. As a consequence, when Kabria tries to find the right path for a better transition on/in-between the mother-wife status and the professional, Maa Tsuru and her daughters are regarded with the search of a strong purchase power in the city (A. Darko, *F*, 1998, p. 10-11 and p. 17-21). The bridging line linking Kabria and the Maa Tsuru's is the feminine which is scattered to different spaces and levels of consciousness. That is why Fofu's consciousness and Kabria's should not be compared regarding their respective age, but their respective environment, social conditions and daily challenges. If Fofu quits the streets to a proper living standard, she will have to fight some other injustices done the female. This idea not only reaffirms the transiting perspective of the feminine, but it also confirms the statement that backward narrative in postcolonial feminism cannot be read only as a dreaming to a loss paradise.

Mara justifies that the narrative vacillation between present and past positions the feminine in transitional stances in between spaces, times and consciousness. The recollection of her father's choice in marrying his daughters tells more:

All I did was grin helplessly because I clearly remembered the same good news as this that mother had given my old sister two years before. Found, too, by father. And my sister was now a wreck. Naturally, not all husbands made wrecks of their wives. Many women in Naka were extremely content with their marriages and their husbands and wouldn't exchange them for anything in the world. And some such good men still existed in Naka. (A. Darko, *BH*, 1995, p. 4)

Looking at the above passage triggers the perception of the feminine in-between present and past as an act of remembering. But not only as gleaming one that is most of the time celebrated in some nationalist discourses. Here, it is a purely feminist interrogation of present, past, modernity, tradition, centre and margin. As one can notice in Mara's narrative, the present consciousness

accuses some past deeds and practices, even if it values some others. All these recollections conclude the fact Darko's writing extends the feminine upon different times and spaces in a nostalgic move materialised by pain and relief. This nostalgic vacillation is about bearing a disillusioned present (J. Stern, 1996, p. 20) and realising the different levels of consciousness transiting the feminine from all points of view such the relationship between the North and the South.

## 2. Rewriting the feminine between the North and the South, the art of identity ambiguity

For G. Spivak (1993, p. 55) in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* "Human discourse is the play of language, world and consciousness." This contention is among many other theoretical constructs whose target is to deconstruct an epistemic violence imposed upon "other", distinct from the West (see E. Said, 1977) and seen as the "darkest" side of the world to be enlightened. The same darkest-side of the world called the Third-World or developing World and politically conceived as *the Global South* (see A. Wolvers et al<sup>1</sup>) is the part of the world under imperialistic perceptions distinguishing a conceptual North from a conceptual South. The third wave of feminist reflections includes this dialectical opposition of parts of the globe with a paradigmatic shift in the conception of the feminine.

This paradigmatic shift subverts all attempts to preserving a feminist sorority against a nationwide patriarchy as viewed in Virginia Woolf's feminist philosophy (J. Goldman, 2006, p. 133) and severely thwarted by Adrienne Rich in *Notes toward a Politics of Location* (1984). Thus, the predilection of the feminine comes into a democratised pace so as to give wing to a third-world feminism deeply rooted in location and rationally interrogating a sisterhood that Hazel Carby has termed "White Feminism" in her strong warning against feminist imperialism entitled *White women Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood*. Indeed, this shift is the embodiment earlier feminist separatists such as the Sojourner among many others in quest of giving voice to black woman when she unveiled her nakedness to white women for them to realise black women's *woman-ness* (b. hooks, 2015, p. 214).

As for African feminists, they are on try of recreating themselves out of tremendous feminist mainstreams as counselled by Ogunidipe-Leslie

---

<sup>1</sup> In a study entitled Concepts of the Global South, available at [https://kups.uni-koeln.de/voices012015\\_concepts\\_of-the\\_global\\_south.pdf](https://kups.uni-koeln.de/voices012015_concepts_of-the_global_south.pdf), Andrea et al. argue that the Global South is a geopolitical terminology with obvious biased connotation of states and cultures supposed to be different from the North.

(1994). Their ambiguous or cautious use of the epithet “feminist”, proves their distance toward a supposed western ideology which seems to be misandrous and troublesome to African unity or uniqueness in face of colonialism. The feminine is therefore rewritten in an African version with a radical writing in Ogundupe-Leslie’s vision, but also in a transnational perception which tends to extend the feminine to western realities. This practicality of writing is well anchored in Amma Darcko’s writing whereby the reader can notice a somehow dichotomous expression of feminist identity.

Beforehand, one can insightfully argue that Darko questions the existence and the foundation of a sisterhood in feminism. This argument is based on the fact that her female characters such as Mara, Vivian, Kaye and many others known as African immigrants in Germany living in the margin, under both their husbands’ ill-treatment and society’s discrimination, receive no comfort nor aid from their ‘European sisters’. On the contrary, they survive all this hardship by seeking refuge in the ‘commonality’ which means bending over common identity as Mara reveals:

I became the responsibility of Kaye. Kaye is an African woman, too, a stunning black beauty and the wife of the good-looking man who was the owner of Peppy. Kaye was herself still partly in the trade, as we said, when time and interest allowed. Not only did she polished me up splendidly to the standard of Peppy but also soon became my trusted when, as she herself later disclosed to me, and recognised herself in me. She was the first person I told my whole true story, only to hear from her that she too had gone through a similar ordeal years ago. (A. Darko, *BH*, 1995, p. 116)

Mara’s story-telling pushes back the notion of the Universalist sisterhood and it shows the failure of women’s global solidarity. In contrast, the notion of the sameness viewed as origin and location on the basis of common ground comes out of Mara’s voice. That is to say the Ghanaian author is sceptical of the perception of global feminism. At least, she believes in a multicultural approach to feminism in which the feminine is perceived from diverse angles. In that line, postcolonial feminism as seen in Darko’s consists of rewriting the feminine relationship between the North and the South based on the perception of patriarchy and feminine conditions.

This feminine consciousness is well raised in *Faceless* through the alternative library building. Indeed, the founding reasons and mission assigned to MUTE speaks more:

MUTE, where Kabria worked, was a non-governmental organisation founded by its boss, Diana. And MUTE was just that: mute. as in silence, not an acronym. Dina was a graduate from the University of

Ghana. Her marriage to her campus boyfriend shortly after her graduation, ended in divorce after four turbulent years of childlessness. Finding herself with no child and no husband and plenty of time, she recollected her frustration during her final year research work for her major essay when she found out that regular libraries did not stock the kind of information she was looking for. And with the recollection came the idea and the birth of the idea for MUTE. [...] Every social, gender, and child issue was of interest to MUTE. (A. Darko, *F*, 2003, p. 38)

As it is observed from the extract, the non-governmental organisation founded by one of Darko's literate female characters embodies local inflection to gender consciousness rising. The intellectual vacuum and biasing production of knowledge which are mentioned justify a feminine restructuration of knowledge which is embedded in local paradigm. It means that Amma Darko tries to rewrite and rectify *herstory* conceived in the absence of third-world/southern women (H. Carby, 1982: 13). Such a writing policy footsteps Ama Ata Aidoo (2003) who claims to have learnt her first feminist lessons in Africa, and denies to have been under Western women's influence.

The debate is so clear about the perception of the feminine between Northern women and Southern women. One thing which is somehow queer in postcolonial feminism is the double consciousness viewed in the "subaltern" or the female subject. This double consciousness is perceived in the denial of feminism and at the same time its inscription into a reflexive consideration of endogenous culture. From F. Nwappa with *Efuru* (1966) to M. Bâ with *A So Letter* (1979), African cultures are under feminist spotlight. The refusal of the epithet "feminist" is thus less significant since the feminist language which is hallmark of their imaginative work betrays their attempt to hide social commitment as feminist writers. The fact of considering this floppy stance adopted by most of the African female writers unveils a sort of ambiguous identity on the feminine.

Amma Darko showcases this identity in her writing locating the feminine in-between the North and the South. The portrayal of Mara on a transnational struggle illustrates the ambiguity in African woman's attitude. This is seen in her physical presence in Germany but psychologically absent there. The homesickness triggers a kind of disconnection with Mara's reality abroad. And the fact of not being capable to reach home creates both a cultural void and a psychological pain in Mara. Saying that "Material things are all I can offer them. As for myself, there is nothing dignified and decent left of me to give them" (A. Darko, *BH*, 1995, p. 140) is tantamount to rejecting herself as disintegrated identity. As such Mara sees herself as no

more fitting the African values she longing for. Yet, she lives in Germany but she stays distant to German society. She finally wonders to what/whom her non-dignified body and soul as well as her whole are going to hand over. The dilemma of identity is then viewed in Mara as the refusal of the present and the longing for a past, the refusal of a diaporic life and the difficulty/impossibility of satisfying homesickness.

In this line, ambiguity is related to the play of nostalgia and its contradicting function as what to remember or forget as S. Caleb and N. O Cuileagain (2020, p. 8) mention about nostalgic impulse in literature. It means that Mara's identity is exiled in-between reality and imaginary showing her ambiguous relation to German society as partly integrated and partly refusing. The same in-between living and dichotomous identity expression is noted in local paradigm with the play of identity in-between modernity and tradition.

Mara's mentor in Accra, Mama Kiosk reveals this aspect. Indeed, the fact of reminding traditional principles on marital relationship for husband entailing to take care of woman (*BH*, 1995: 13) shows that the modern African woman is only modern in terms of space. It means the advent of modern cities has scarcely influenced the feminine when it comes to rule the private life viewed in marriage. Marital affairs, as recollected by Mama Kiosk, posit men at the central stage in purely traditional attires and reduce the feminine to second-role player. The problem is that at the same time Mama Kiosk uses traditional values to debunk Akobi's attitude, she forgets to acknowledge that the same attitude derives from the over-power that tradition trust upon men. Mara is somehow realistic about her culture when she recognises being subservient to Akobi is quite natural as it is natural for a woman to menstruate (A. Darko, *BH*, 1995, p. 12-13). Only the contrary is abnormal or pathological. This mindset connected to tradition and hardly disconnecting daunts the feminine in a post-colonial Africa on supposed to be on irreversible move.

That is why the feminine is erected as a trembling status in-between village and city in *The Housemaid*. This novel paints one of the obscurest images about the feminine in modern Ghana. From village to city, the constancy about the feminine is the flux of unpredictable turmoil, hardship and a reflexive acquaintance between tradition and modernity. R. Tayol (2019, p. 156) posits this novel as mirror of the African women's plight when he states that "The Housemaid is a combination of diverse and difficult social position of women in the African society". It is in this novel that the Ghanaian author paints in dark the cherished image of the African grandmother linked to corruption, moral decay, falsehood and 'unethical

pursuit to wealth' as termed by F. Megbowon and C. Uwah (2022, p. 320). The same image as morally invaluable woman is seen in the character of Madam Sekyiwa and her daughter Tika who praise money over any other thing.

This depiction values the traditional image of grandmother known for her guidance and efficient piece of advices as A. A. Aidoo (1991) portrays in the character of Esi's grandmother in *Changes*. If the Sekyiwes are not good examples among the women living in Darko's fictional Accra and nor is Efi's grandmother, it means there is an acute question to what is the best approach to female empowerment. The social and economic context as portrayed in Darko's novels make the reader think of a feminism that should be in search of female economic independence. The portrayal of miserable female characters coupled with the phenomenon of street children back up this statement. Contrary to that expectation Darko centres the interest of her female characters to the preservation of social values in an ongoing "diseased society [...] dedicated to prostituting every conceivable virtue for the sake of flimsy material possessions" finally making a "topsy-turvy world" (K. Anyidoho, 2003, p. x, K. Yankah, 2007, p. 19).

This urge of preserving human dignity in African society moulds a specific feminist paradigm whereby the feminine follows the postcolonial dynamism. This dynamism leads to a moderate feminism sometimes presented as an ordinary participation into the general move of the society in accordance with male agents as the small "F" feminist B. Emecheta (2009, p. 553) puts it. Darko states the same view when she explains in an interview<sup>1</sup> that she does not announce herself as a feminist, but she writes about gender as it happens in Ghanaian make-up. This implicitly means that she opts for a Ghanaian make-up solution in spite of recognising gender as a universal topic and social reality. The political/ideological stance by the author is reflected in her books when she features Diana in *Faceless* as a female character in search of alternating solution to gender issues (A. Darko, *F*, p. 38).

These points of view insert the feminine into an ambiguous position related to both tradition and modernity. One can wonder about the prevailing importance of traditional values in feminism agenda today since the whole African society is being framed into an ongoing modernising process from all points of views. It means that the permanent cautiousness to

---

<sup>1</sup> DW News Interview on Thursday June 9, 2016 With Enalthan John and Amma Darko. Available at [youtube.com/watch?v=bbbSG3Jgc\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbbSG3Jgc_4). Accessed on June 17, 2023

western/northern feminism creates an embarrassing feminine in addition to an “embarrassing situations” or perception of African feminists as noted by M. Natsukpo (2020, p. 91) in *Feminism in Africa and African Women’s Writing*. Yet, C. Gbaguidi and A. M. Allagbe (2018, p. 50) argue that “African women need a feminism that gives way for a consistent dialogue and non-violent stratagems like the one of liberal feminism in their quest for women’s rights”, but it will also be efficient if African women realise that traditions and ancient models of living are progressively entering the archiving sphere. As such their empowering actions should be conducted toward a total redefinition of the feminine.

The blame of a so called white feminism becomes more and more a self-denial and refusal of entering global movement of development. This is ambiguous since the feminine writing as perceptible in Darko’s texts centralises traditional values while aiming at an inclusive struggle for women’s emancipation. There is a notion of dichotomous feeling in the want of both distinction and inclusion. One can understand this feeling in Mara who fails to integrate the German society and yet, nor strong enough to turn back to her homeland in *Beyond the Horizon*. It is also a failure for Tika in *The Housemaid* and Kabria in *Faceless* who are in trouble of finding the best transition between their professional status and their private family lives. This African feminism ambiguous feature alerts the critic about an unstable feminine on different front lines as observable in Darko’s writing that portrays categorical feminine figures in-between spaces and ideologies.

## Conclusion

Investigating the feminine state in Amma Darko’s writing is a problematic about questioning postcolonial feminism. In this line, the feminine is seen as the weaving tread of nostalgia. From past to present, one space to another, modernity to tradition and in-between ideologies and believes, the feminine is portrayed in Darko’s writing as an intermittent transiting movement, questioning and redefinition. If this predilection of the feminine casts the female agent in Darko’s writing as a vacillating subject, it also defines it/she in local or radical paradigm as recommended by iconic advocates of African feminism such as Ogundice-Leslie, Helen Chukwuma, Ama Ata Aidoo among many others.

But, it is worth mentioning that radical writing, as seen in Darko’s, uncovers an ambiguous identity as far as the feminine is expressed in hegemonic relationship between the North and the South. That is due to the

fact that African women in Darko's fiction are thwarted in-between tradition and modernity, a tensed reality constituting the main node of dissension between the so called white feminism and African feminism.

This dichotomous redefinition of the feminine raises interesting questions to the prospect of feminism in African paradigm. These questions range from the efficiency or effectiveness African feminisms to their sustainable existence. These queries are for good interests since the persistence of this ambiguity is being seen and analysed as obscuring/hindering African women's tendency to full emancipation. The growing interest to political activism on gender issues may help understand that traditionalist view of gender and feminism is a waste of times.

## References

- AMADIUME Ifi, 1987, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, London and New Jersey, Zed Books.
- Anyidoho Koffi, 2003, "Amma Darko's Faceless: A New Landmark in Ghanaian fiction" Accra, Sub-Saharan Publishers, p. ix-xxi.
- BARIL Alexandre, 2015, "Sexe et genre sous le bistouri (analytique): interprétations féministes des transidentités", *Recherches Féministes*, 28(2), p. 121-141. <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1034178ar>
- Baril, A. (2018a), Hommes trans et handicapés: une analyse croisée du cisgenrisme et du capacitisme. *Genre, Sexualité et Société*, 19(19). <https://doi.org/10.4000/gss.4218>
- BOLZINGER André, 1989, "Jalons pour une histoire de la nostalgie", *Bulletin de Psychologie*, Tome XLII, 389, p. 310-321.
- CALEB Sam and Niall O Cuileagain, 2020, "Forget, Remember!: Literature and Nostalgia", *Moveable Type*. Vol. 12, p. 3-16
- CROWNSHAW Rick, 2014, *Introduction: Transcultural Memory. Transcultural Memory*, (eds). Rick Cownshaw, London and New York, Routledge.
- DARKO Amma 1995, *Beyond the Horizon*, London, Heinemann.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1998, *The Housemaid*, London, Heinemann.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2003, *Faceless*, Accra, Sub-Saharan Publishers.
- DRAG Wojciech, 2014, *Revisiting Loss: Memory, Trauma and Nostalgia in the Novels of Kazuo Ishiguro*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- EMECHETA Buchi, 2009, "Feminism with a Small 'F'!" In Olanyan, T. & Quayson, A. (Eds.), *African Literature: An Anthropology of Criticism*, Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing, p. 551-557.
- ENNS Zerbe Carolyn et al., 2021, "Transnational Feminist Theory and Practice: An Introduction", *Women and therapy*, Vol. 44 (1-2), p. 11-26.
- GOLDMAN Jane, 2006, *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- JIMMY Anderson, 2011, "Defining Nostalgia and its functions". Available at

- <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:431783/FULLTEXT01.pdf> (consulted on June, 12th 2023) Makidady Mashaka Mahando, 2022, "Gender Inequality: An Alien Practice to African Cultural Settlement." *Universal Journal of History and Culture*, Vol. 4, n° 1, p. 1-15.
- MEGBOWON Funmilola Kemi and Uwah, Chijioke, 2022, "Society, African literature and sustainable development: An examination of Darko's the Housemaid", *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, Vol. 11 No. 10, p. 311-326.
- NARAYAN Uma, 1997, "Contesting Cultures : "Westernization," Respect for Cultures, and Third-World Feminists", in Nicholson, Linda (ed.), *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory*, New York, Routledge, p. 396–412.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1997, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism*. New York, Routledge.
- NUTSUKPO, Margaret Fafa, 2020, "Feminism in African Women's Writing", *African Research Review*, Vol. 14 (1), n° 57, p. 84-94.
- OCHOLONU, Catherine, 1995, *Motherism: the Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism*, Afa Publications, Owerri.
- OYEWIM Oyoronke, 2016, *What gender is motherhood: Changing Yorùbá Ideals of Power, Procreation and Identity in the Age of Modernity*, New York, Palgrave.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1997, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2002, "Conceptualizing Gender: the Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies", *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and Women Studies*, 2(1), p. 1–9.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2011, *Gender Epistemologies in Africa: Gendering Traditions, Spaces, Social Institutions, and Identities*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan.
- PUSHPA Naidu Parekh and Sigma Fatima Jagne, 1998, *Postcolonial African Writers: A Bio- Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, Connecticut, Greenwood Press.
- SPIVAK C. Gayatri, 1985, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 12, n° 1. Chicago, *Chicago Journals*, p. 243-261
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1988, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, (Eds) C. Nelson & L. Grossberg, Illinois, University of Illinois press p. 66-111.
- STERN Judith, 1996, "L'immigration, la nostalgie, le deuil", *Filigrane*, 5, p.15-25.
- TAYOL R. Terhemba, 2019, "Social Commitment in Amma Darko's The Housemaid and Faceless", In *Language, Discourse & Society*, Vol. 7, n° 1(13), p. 153-162.
- WALDER Dennis, 2011, *Postcolonial Nostalgias: Writing, Representation, and Memory*, New York and London, Routledge.
- YANKAH Kwesi, 2007, *Foreword to not without Flowers*, Accra, Sub-Saharan Publishers.

## TABLE DES MATIÈRES

SOMMAIRE.....	7
PRÉSENTATION.....	9
PRÉFACE.....	15
<b>CHAPITRE I</b>	
<b>REPRÉSENTATIONS LITTÉRAIRES ET SOCIALES DU FÉMINISME</b>	
1 Les origines du féminisme.....	19
<i><b>KOUAKOU Jean-Marie</b></i> <i>Professeur des Universités, Littératures françaises contemporaines</i> <i>Université Félix Houphouet Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire)</i>	
2 L'humanisme à travers l'immutabilité de la femme dans <i>La terre inquiète</i> d'Édouard GLISSANT.....	33
<i><b>KOUADIO Marietta Laure KACOU</b></i> <i>Maître-Assistant en Poésie négro-africaine francophone</i> <i>ENSEA /Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)</i>	
3 Theorizing Black Feminism in Toni Morrison's <i>Sula</i> .....	43
<i><b>N'Da Kouassi Yannick KONAN</b></i> <i>Doctoral Student, Department of English, American studies</i> <i>Université Félix Houphouet Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire)</i>	
4 Rôle et image d'Aimée Mambou gnali dans la vie politique congolaise de 1963 à 2012.....	59
<i><b>Célestin Désiré Niama</b></i> <i>Enseignant-chercheur à l'École Normale Supérieure</i> <i>Université Marien Ngouabi (République du Congo)</i>	
5 L'image de la femme et de la société dans l'écriture du tragique. Une lecture de <i>La Folie et la mort</i> de Ken Bugul .....	77
<i><b>Bénédict Léonie TIÉBOU</b></i> <i>ENS Bambili-Université de Bamenda (Cameroun)</i>	
6 La justice sociale chez Nancy Fraser, une justice démocratique .....	93
<i><b>AVONYO Sena</b></i> <i>Docteur en philosophie politique et sociale, Enseignant-chercheur</i> <i>Université Catholique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest / Unité Universitaire à</i> <i>Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)</i>	

**CHAPITRE II  
TRANS, GENRE ET SEXUALITÉ**

111

- 7 Amma Darko's writing or the feminine in perpetual trans- ..... 113  
*Kouadio Pascal KOFFI*  
*University of San Pedro (Ivory Coast)*
- 8 Libération de la femme africaine : androgynéité et transsexualité dans *In the Chest of a Woman* d'Efo Kodjo Mawugbe ..... 129  
*M'BRA Kouakou*  
*Maître-assistant, Département d'Anglais*  
*Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)*
- 9 Genre et sexualité dans la philosophie de Simone de Beauvoir..... 145  
*KOFFI Lopez Emmanuel Oscar*  
*Maître-Assistant, École Normale Supérieure d'Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)*
- 10 Les perversions sexuelles dans *Rivales* de Noun Faré..... 161  
*Essotorom TCHAO*  
*Université de Kara (Togo)*  
*Mawaya TAKAO*  
*Université de Kara (Togo)*  
*Boukary BORO*  
*Université de Ouahigouya (Burkina Faso)*

**CHAPITRE III :  
LE FÉMININ ENTRE SACRÉ, MYTHIFICATION  
ET DÉ-HIÉRARCHISATION DES GENRES**

180

- 11 Le féminin sacré dans *Raga* de JMG Le Clézio ..... 181  
*Sérifou Adélaïde Bakissia*  
*Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire)*
- 12 La mythification de la femme et sa modalité sociologique dans la dramaturgie didigaeque..... 231  
*Antoine TOKPA Germain*  
*Enseignant-chercheur-Assistant*  
*Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire)*

13	La dé-hiérarchisation des genres dans l'écriture romanesque féminine : réalité ou utopie ?.....	247
	<i>Maho Sézito David</i> <i>Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)</i>	
14	Pour un postféminisme dans l'œuvre romanesque de Marguerite Yourcenar : de l'image de la « déesse » à celle du « cyborg ».....	265
	<i>Abdoulaye DIOUF</i> <i>Maître de Conférences CAMES</i> <i>Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (Sénégal)</i>	
15	Lecture féministe d'Enfance de Nathalie Sarraute.....	280
	<i>Zohin Sylvie Gohou</i> <i>Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)</i>	
16	Corpographèse de la femme africaine à l'aune de la maladie dans <i>Elle</i> de Tchassim Koutchoukalo .....	293
	<i>K'Monti Jessé DIAMA</i> <i>Maître de Conférences, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)</i> <i>Abah Juliana KOUAMÉ</i> <i>Doctorante, Université Alassane Ouattara (Côte d'Ivoire)</i>	
	TABLE DES MATIÈRES.....	307



Achévé d'imprimer en Janvier 2024  
Abidjan, Dépôt légal : Université Alassane OUATTARA  
Bouaké - Côte d'Ivoire  
Janvier 2024