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LIGNE EDITORIALE DE *PARTICIP'ACTION*

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Une courte présentation en note de bas de page des auteurs (es) ne devant pas dépasser 100 mots par auteur. On doit y retrouver obligatoirement le nom de l'auteur, le nom de l'institution d'origine, le statut professionnel et l'organisation dont il relève, et enfin, les adresses de courrier électronique du ou des auteurs. L'auteur peut aussi énumérer ses principaux champs de recherche et ses principales publications. La revue ne s'engage toutefois pas à diffuser tous ces éléments.

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Une liste de cinq mots clés maximum décrivant l'objet de l'article.

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-La structure d'un article, doit être conforme aux règles de rédaction scientifique, selon que l'article est une contribution théorique ou résulte d'une recherche de terrain.

-La structure d'un article scientifique en lettres et sciences humaines se présente comme suit :

- Pour un article qui est une contribution théorique et fondamentale :

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Titre,

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Résumé en français. Mots-clés, Abstract, Keywords,

Introduction, Méthodologie, Résultats et Discussion, Conclusion, Bibliographie.

Par exemple : Les articles conformes aux normes de présentation, doivent contenir les rubriques suivantes : introduction, problématique de l'étude, méthodologie adoptée, résultats de la recherche, perspectives pour recherche, conclusions, références bibliographiques.

Tout l'article ne doit dépasser 17 pages,

Police Times new roman, taille 12 et interligne 1,5 (maximum 30 000 mots). La revue *Particip'Action* permet l'usage de notes de bas de page pour ajouter des précisions au texte. Mais afin de ne pas alourdir la lecture et d'aller à l'essentiel, il est recommandé de **faire le moins possible usage des notes (10 notes de bas de page au maximum par article).**

- A l'exception de l'introduction, de la conclusion, de la bibliographie, les articulations d'un article doivent être titrées, et numérotées par des chiffres (**exemples : 1. ; 1.1.; 1.2; 2. ; 2.2. ; 2.2.1 ; 2.2.2. ; 3. ; etc.**).

Les passages cités sont présentés en romain et entre guillemets. Lorsque la phrase citant et la citation dépassent trois lignes, il faut aller à la ligne, pour présenter la citation (interligne 1) en romain et en retrait, en diminuant la taille de police d'un point. Insérer la pagination et ne pas insérer d'information autre que le numéro de page dans l'en-tête et éviter les pieds de page.

Les figures et les tableaux doivent être intégrés au texte et présentés avec des marges d'au moins six centimètres à droite et à gauche. Les caractères dans ces figures et tableaux doivent aussi être en Times 12. Figures et tableaux doivent avoir chacun(e) un titre.

Les citations dans le corps du texte doivent être indiquées par un retrait avec tabulation 1 cm et le texte mis en taille 11.

Les références de citations sont intégrées au texte citant, selon les cas, de la façon suivante :

- (Initiale (s) du Prénom ou des Prénoms de l'auteur. Nom de l'Auteur, année de publication, pages citées) ; - Initiale (s) du Prénom ou des Prénoms de l'auteur. Nom de l'Auteur (année de publication, pages citées). Exemples :

- En effet, le but poursuivi par **M. Ascher (1998, p. 223)**, est « d'élargir l'histoire des mathématiques de telle sorte qu'elle acquière une perspective multiculturelle et globale (...), d'accroître le domaine des mathématiques : alors qu'elle s'est pour l'essentiel occupée du groupe professionnel occidental que l'on appelle les mathématiciens (...) ».

- Pour dire plus amplement ce qu'est cette capacité de la société civile, qui dans son déploiement effectif, atteste qu'elle peut porter le développement et l'histoire, S. B. Diagne (1991, p. 2) écrit :

Qu'on ne s'y trompe pas : de toute manière, les populations ont toujours su opposer à la philosophie de l'encadrement et à son volontarisme leurs propres stratégies de contournements. Celles-là, par exemple, sont lisibles dans le dynamisme, ou à tout le moins, dans la créativité dont sait preuve ce que l'on désigne sous le nom de secteur informel et à qui il faudra donner l'appellation positive d'économie populaire.

- Le philosophe ivoirien a raison, dans une certaine mesure, de lire, dans ce choc déstabilisateur, le processus du sous-développement. Ainsi qu'il le dit :

le processus du sous-développement résultant de ce choc est vécu concrètement par les populations concernées comme une crise globale : crise socio-économique (exploitation brutale, chômage permanent, exode accéléré et douloureux), mais aussi crise socio-culturelle et de civilisation traduisant une impréparation sociohistorique et une inadaptation des cultures et des comportements humains aux formes de vie imposées par les technologies étrangères. (S. Diakitè, 1985, p. 105).

Pour les articles de deux ou trois auteurs, noter les initiales des prénoms, les noms et suivis de l'année (J. Batee et D. Maate, 2004 ou K. Moote, A. Pouol et E. Polim, 2000). Pour les articles ou ouvrages collectifs de plus de trois auteurs noter les initiales des prénoms, le nom du premier auteur et la mention "et al" (F. Loom et al, 2003). Lorsque plusieurs références sont utilisées pour la même information, celles-ci doivent être mises en ordre chronologique (R. Gool, 1998 et M. Goti, 2006).

Les sources historiques, les références d'informations orales et les notes explicatives sont numérotées en série continue et présentées en bas de page.

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Les divers éléments d'une référence bibliographique sont présentés comme suit : NOM et Prénom (s) de l'auteur, Année de publication, Zone titre, Lieu de publication, Zone Editeur, pages (p.) occupées par l'article dans la revue ou l'ouvrage collectif.

Dans la zone titre, le titre d'un article est présenté en romain et entre guillemets, celui d'un ouvrage, d'un mémoire ou d'une thèse, d'un rapport, d'une revue ou d'un journal est présenté en italique. Dans la zone Editeur, on indique la Maison d'édition (pour un ouvrage), le Nom et le numéro/volume de la revue (pour un article). Au cas où un ouvrage est une traduction et/ou une réédition, il faut préciser après le titre le nom du traducteur et/ou l'édition (ex : 2^{de} éd.).

Ne sont présentées dans les références bibliographiques que les références des documents cités. Les références bibliographiques sont présentées par ordre alphabétique des noms d'auteur. Il convient de prêter une attention particulière à la qualité de l'expression. Le Comité scientifique de la revue se réserve le droit de réviser les textes, de demander des modifications (mineures ou majeures) ou de rejeter l'article de manière définitive ou provisoire (si des corrections majeures doivent préalablement y être apportées). L'auteur est consulté préalablement à la diffusion de son article lorsque le Comité scientifique apporte des modifications. Si les corrections ne sont pas prises en compte par l'auteur, la direction de la revue *Particip'Action* se donne le droit de ne pas publier l'article.

AMIN Samir, 1996, *Les défis de la mondialisation*, Paris, Le Harmattan.

AUDARD Cathérine, 2009, *Qu'est-ce que le libéralisme ? Ethique, politique, société*, Paris, Gallimard.

BERGER Gaston, 1967, *L'homme moderne et son éducation*, Paris, PUF.

DIAGNE Souleymane Bachir, 2003, « Islam et philosophie. Leçons d'une rencontre », *Diogène*, 202, p. 145-151.

DIAKITE Sidiki, 1985, *Violence technologique et développement. La question africaine du développement*, Paris, Le Harmattan.

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NB2 : La quête philosophique centrale de la revue *Particip'Action* reste : **Fluidité identitaire et construction du changement : approches pluri-et/ou transdisciplinaires.**

Les auteurs qui souhaitent se faire publier dans nos colonnes sont priés d'avoir cette philosophie comme fil directeur de leur réflexion.

La Rédaction

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**AMMA DARKO'S *THE HOUSEMAID* OR THE DECLINE OF MAN AS A
STAKEHOLDER OF AFRICAN CULTURE AND TRADITION**

Kouakou Antony ANDE*

Résumé

L'objectif de cet article est de montrer l'importance du respect des valeurs africaines par l'Africain. En effet, l'homme et la femme, pendant les rites initiatiques, bénéficient d'enseignements différents et chacun selon son sexe. Pendant que les jeunes gens apprennent comment devenir des hommes accomplis, les jeunes filles sont initiées aux tâches ménagères et au respect de leur futur mari. On attend donc de chaque individu une ligne de conduite selon son sexe. C'est pourquoi quand l'on constate l'inversement des valeurs ou des rôles, on s'interroge sur le bon fonctionnement de la société africaine. C'est effectivement ce que l'œuvre *The Housemaid* d'Amma Darko nous démontre. Dans celle-ci, les femmes ont pris la place de l'homme et vice-versa. Cette situation extraordinaire, nous pousse à nous poser un certain nombre de questions. Pour mener à bien notre recherche, nous avons convoqué la sociocritique de Pierre Zima.

Mots-clés : Crise des valeurs- esthétique du choc- femme – homme- valeurs africaine

Abstract

The aim of this study is to show the importance of respect for African values by Africans. Indeed, men and women, during initiation rites, receive different teachings and depending on their sex. While young men learn how to become accomplished men, young women are taught household chores and how to respect their future husband. Each individual is therefore expected to follow a different line of conduct according to his or her sex. This is why, when we see the reversal of values or roles, we wonder about the proper functioning of African society. This is what Amma Darko's *The Housemaid* shows us. In it, women have taken the place of men and vice versa. This extraordinary situation prompts us to raise a number of questions. To carry out our research, we turned to Pierre Zima's sociocriticism.

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Keywords: Crisis of values - aesthetics of shock - woman -African values-man

Introduction

Africans have always given pride of place to their culture and tradition. These values are so dear to them that even in childhood they have to go through initiation rites to get to know and learn them better (J. Kenyatta, 1938, p.133-134). It is during this initiation that the male or female child learns the rules of society, and each child is instructed according to his or her sex. F. Ngunzo et.al. (2012, p.2) state that 'For boys, they further learned how to defend their societies, among other social responsibilities while girls were in a corresponding manner inducted into household chores and other socially constructed roles and duties'. Clearly, the teachings were different. It should be pointed out that it is these teachings given by African society that consider the man to be the supreme leader (J. Kenyatta, 1938, p.8), the one around whom all decisions revolve. This is why some authors such as K. Frank (1982, p.478) recognise "the inherent sexism of African culture". K. Frank goes so far as to state that "Such customs and mores, in fact, are actually institutionalized forms of male oppression. (K. Frank, p.483). In short, tradition makes men into little kings in society. However, when a man's authority is flouted, many questions are raised about the way society functions. In Amma Darko's *The Housemaid*, the dignity of the 'leader' is trampled underfoot. It is as if we are witnessing a reversal of values: the roles formerly played by women are now being played by men. They are the ones who are beaten, humiliated and even excluded from decision-making processes. Even if today women are struggling to be equal to men, such a behaviour is negatively interpreted by a native African person. Faced with this loss of the values of yesteryear, the question is: why this reversal of roles in Amma Darko's text? What message is she trying to get across? To answer this series of questions, we

will draw on Pierre Zima's sociocriticism which wonders about how literary texts react to the problems of society. We will resort to concepts such as social discourse and the crisis of values. The study has three sections. The first one is titled The disqualification of the leader, the second one is titled A contempt for African values and the third one is Amma Darko's *The Housemaid* or shocking in order to challenge.

1. The disqualification of the Leader

It should be noted that in African culture, the man is respected. As the head of the family, everything must go through him. He is seen as a little king in his family to whom everything belongs. J. Kenyatta (1938, p.8-9) explains the role of the man in the family very well: "The father is the supreme ruler of the homestead. He is the owner of practically everything, or in other words, he is the custodian of the family property. He is respected and obeyed by all the members of his family group." This reference clearly shows that the man or father is indispensable in his family and even in the community where he lives. However, the situation seems very different in Amma Darko's *The Housemaid*. In this work, the man who was once respected and revered has lost his position or throne. He is humiliated and ridiculed. Several cases corroborate this statement. First, there is the case of Dada, Tika's father, who had lost his position in his family. He is humiliated by his wife, who not only insults him publicly but also beat him at the slightest opportunity, often in the presence of his daughter Tika:

Litte Tika remembered the fights and arguments she had witnessed between her parents. All the screaming and yelling had come from her mother; the imploring and pleading from her father. She remembered her mother's hands flying at her father's face in time with her insults. It was her father who had wept (A. Darko, p.19).

This quote helps understand that African society is really changing. Indeed, behaviours that were once impossible, or even perceived as difficult to

admit, are now challenged before the eyes of everyone. As P. Zima (2000, p.148) suggests, the crisis of values in African society is underway.

Here, the man, Dada, has lost his dignity to the woman, to the point that when he hears his wife's footsteps, he pulls over to avoid being insulted or beaten: « On such days her [Tika] father had become a completely different person, playing and laughing with her. All it had taken was the sound of her mother's arrival for the gaiety to halt abruptly, as if the light of her father's life had been extinguished by the flick of a switch" (p.191). Yes, as the last sentence says, Mrs Sekyiwa extinguishes the life in her husband Dada. She gives him a hard time, and the role reversal is underway. Unlike Ifeyiwa in *Dangerous Love* (B. Okri, 1996, 101), who takes refuge in the foul-smelling toilets just to escape her husband's presence, here it is the man who is fleeing away from his wife's presence.

There is also Owuraku, a young man who is Tika's fiancé. Owuraku was so poor that he could not fulfil his role as a man. He could not find the money to pay his fiancée's dowry, which prompted the young girl to offer him money to pay her own dowry. The narrator points out that when Tika offered to pay the dowry, he pretended to complain: "Why wait that long ? I'll provide the cash,' Tika offered.' In response, Owuraku replied: 'Outrageous!' Owuraku snarled, feigning shock.' (P.24). This exchange between the two lovebirds is pregnant with meanings: the fact that the young woman wants to pay the dowry shows that Owuraku has failed as a man. In fact, in African society, this is the man's job, as explained is by Hodgson (2002:4). On this ground, Owuraku, as a man, firmly believed that this task fell to him, and his reply to his fiancée makes sense: "Outrageous ! (...) Only a shameless, desperate woman who wanted a husband for the sake of earning the title of a married woman would do that. Have you incinerated your pride and dignity?" (p.19). No doubt he had sensed the trap that his fiancée wanted to set for him in order to control him

better. Indeed, paying her own dowry would have been used as a strong argument to belittle her husband and show his irresponsibility once more.

In the end, men are seen and treated as irresponsible. In fact, the word 'irresponsible' crops up frequently in the exchanges (p.6, p.11), with offensive and hurtful words like "you are nothing but a miserable piece of potato" (p.20) which are addressed to the man, the head of the family to whom the whole community owes respect and obedience. These same men have failed so badly that instead of being the ones who "control" the women, they are those who are "bought." (p.18, p.29).

For this reason, men, in this novel, are sidelined in the decision-making process and the decision is left to women. Indeed, when Efia had to go to the city to work as a maid for Tika, her mother did not think it necessary to wake the girl's father, who was asleep in the room. She took the decision herself, concluding the deal in her husband's absence (p.41-42). The narrator tells us that when he woke up, his wife calmly informed him that her own daughter had gone to town: "Then, she calmly informed him that Efia was due to leave the next day for Accra. The man yelled with anger, yelled obscenities, and hurled the bowl of water at his wife" (p.43). The father's anger was justified by the fact that he felt diminished and belittled by his wife, who didn't give him the position he thought he naturally deserved. What is more, this approach clearly shows that the woman did not need her man's opinion in this matter. She thought she was capable, mature and responsible enough to decide what was best for her daughter. The expression "calmly informed him" also makes it clear that the decision was not up for discussion or debate. The decision had been made and nothing her husband could do would change the situation. This points to a society where everything is possible, an ambivalent society where everyone does what they want without worrying about anything.

2. A contempt for African values

Amma Darko's *The Housemaid* exposes a society where African values have been desecrated. In fact, when we read that novel, we realise that certain roles that used to belong to men in society are now being played by women. Firstly, we know that in African culture, the man is the only intermediary between the dead and the living. It is the man who is responsible for sacrifices and rituals, and it is also the man who makes the libations. In other words, the woman is not entitled to do this even in the absence of the man, no matter how perfect she may be. J. Kenyatta (1938, p.13-14) had this to say:

If a man dies without a male child his family group comes to an end. This is one thing that the Gikuyu people fear dreadfully, and it can be said to be one of the factors behind the polygamous system of marriage. There is no doubt that perpetuation of family or kinship group is the main principal of every Gikuyu marriage. For the extinction of a kinship groups means cutting off the ancestral spirits from visiting the earth, because there is no one left to communicate with them. And so when a man has more than one wife and many children, his soul rests in peace with the feeling that, after death, it will not be wandering in the wilderness or lose contact with the earth, for there will always be someone to hold communion with.

Though this reality does not apply to all the Africans, the Gikuyu just like a large number of Africans feel “obliged” to practise polygamy hoping to have a male child who will maintain contact and connection with the ancestors. This proves that men, in many African cultures, are irreplaceable whatever the circumstances.

Let us just say that Africans pay very special attention to their relationship with their ancestors. The reason is that ancestors hold a special place in the heart of Africans. Even though they are no longer with us, they still live in our environment. N. Sobania, (2017, p.34) is saying that : “Ancestors are not worshiped, but they are revered and understood as being able to play an active part in the everyday lives of the living. Because ancestors who remain close at hand can influence events, they are regularly

offered gifts.” This reference means that the ancestors have the capacity to always act in the lives of the living. This is why they deserve the respect and fear of the living. For that reason, when they are angry, the only one who can appease them is man.

Unfortunately, in the work, an old woman broke with the status quo and decided to make a libation to the gods or ancestors, despite her daughter's warnings:

‘If libation must be poured, then my husband should do it, mother. You are desecrating the gods and ancestors. Old though you are, you are still a woman who once menstruated. And not even menopause cleanses you enough to qualify you to pour libation. And maybe things are beginning to go wrong because you broke a few rules” (p.72).

The background to this action is that the old woman had taken a number of steps to improve her condition, but nothing seemed to go the way she wanted. Remember that it was she who had sent her daughter Efia to town without her husband’s consent because he was sleeping right next to her. She did it although she knew that in traditional Africa, women were excluded from many of the authority and decision-making processes, as explained by B. Heike (2006, p.31) : “women are, by and large, excluded from traditional authorities and customary courts; this is taken as an indication of their ‘undemocratic’ and ‘traditional’ nature.” This means that any woman who goes against this provision is breaking a law and cannot win her case. This is certainly why all the old lady's ventures had failed. This can also justify Efia's failure in her business: she was unable to prosper in the city because she had not benefited from her father's blessing. Efia, therefore, was unable to accomplish the task for which she had been sent and failed. She had yet to return to the village with a pregnancy. The old woman, seeing all her hopes dashed, realised that she had broken the rules and wanted to appease the ancestors through a libation. But her daughter

refused, arguing that her husband, a man, was in a better position to do what she was about to do, namely pouring libation.

This stubbornness in wanting to perform this act, which is a man's responsibility, shows her contempt for culture and even for men. It also proves that the head of the family or the man has fallen. He is reduced to nothing and even considered useless. In fact, this is one of the words the women use in the novel to describe their men: "useless" (p.45). So we can agree with P. Zima (2001, p.131) that 'the established order is in peril'. If this old woman has taken the liberty of taking the man's place and making the libation, it is precisely because she is convinced that man in this textual society is nothing, worthless and plays no role. In other words, this role that man claims to play, she can also play it better. This woman thinks she can do whatever she likes without the services of men. Clearly, her attitude shows that she is campaigning for a society without men, since she can and wants to do everything. It also shows that African society has fallen and lost its bearings. On this basis, we can agree with C. Achebe, who recognised that the world is collapsing or that the foundations of African tradition are being shaken. Ngugi wa Thiong'o would simply say that the world is upside down (2006, p.499). In reality, we know that the person of the man is respected in tradition.

In Amma Darko's *The Housemaid*, the discovery of the body of a new-born baby in an advanced state of decomposition prompted the people to pronounce words of curse against the mother, a stranger until then. The words that come out of people's mouths bear witness to the shock caused by this odious act: "Who did this? Whose child was it? What a hideous and unforgivable deed? And why did the gods allow it to happen?" (p.4). These questions show that the character who is speaking is confused. He seeks answers to his many questions, in vain, and describes the act as hideous and unforgivable. He even wonders why the gods let it happen. Man is sacred,

and so is his body. The traditional man cannot bear to see an innocent man thrown away and his body rotting. In African tradition, life is very important. C. M. Chukwuemeka (2015, p. 178) has this to say in this connection:

The *Igbo* say that life is of supreme importance: (*Ndu bu Isi*). This important belief in the primary value of life is reflected both in the cosmological order and in the day to day life and activities of the African people. In their daily life one sees the importance attached to life especially in marriage, death and funeral ceremonies. It is reflected in their prayer life, in their sacrifices, in their possession of charms and amulets and in the tapping of the vital forces of another. When a man sneezes, both he and those around him would wish that his life be preserved.

This means that to take the life of a human being is to desecrate life, because life is sacred. To do so is also to arouse the wrath of the gods. This is why many people wonder why the gods let it happen, and even the newspapers asked the same question: “WERE THE GODS ASLEEP ?” (p.20). To kill one's neighbour is to go against the will of the gods. This image shows ‘the triumph of nature (animal character) over culture (human character)’ (P. Zima, 2001, p.113). It also helps us to understand that ‘use values, i.e. qualitative, material, cognitive, ethical or aesthetic values’ are overturned in this society. We are therefore witnessing a society in crisis, an abnormal society.

3. The Housemaid by Amma Darko: Shocking to challenge

Reading Amma Darko's novel makes it easier to understand the direction the author wants to take. It is clear from this work that men and women have each specific roles in African society. There is a kind of limit that everyone must set for themselves. There are tasks that rightfully belong to the man and others that fall within the competence of the woman. To put it more clearly, one cannot do without the service of the other. Afisi, Oseni Taiwo (2010, p.230) rightly said: “This therefore shows that traditional Africa was not based on gender inequality but a complement of gender,

because each gender had a role to play in contributions to societal development.” In other words, men and women have complementary roles in society.

It is important to understand that for society to develop, everyone has to do what he/she has to do. Trying to go beyond these limits could create imbalances in society. Efi's mother, in Amma Darko's novel, wanted to change these roles and the rules. She put herself in a man's shoes to do what, in African most African societies, is rightfully a man's job. Faced with opposition from her daughter, who did not want her to violate the law of the ancestors, the narrator points out that the old woman was shocked:

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

The old lady judges her son-in-law, her daughter's husband, on the basis of his behaviour. He is a drunkard who spends all his time drinking. Since she does not drink, she thinks she is better than the man. What she does not know is that a man remains a man and a woman remains a woman, whatever the circumstances. Whether a man drinks or not, in this textual society, he is the one chosen by the ancestor to communicate with them. A woman, whoever she may be, cannot replace a man. The narrator points out that while his daughter went out to look for her husband to perform the libation, the old woman, believing herself to be in a better position to do so, committed the irreparable: “The moment her back had disappeared, the old lady went for the calabash of water and slipped off the back of the compound” (p.73).

What the author also wants to make clear is that African society could move forward if these traditional beliefs are left behind in this modern

world where men and women are sharing equal rights. In the past, such a thought could proper but today, modernity has changed everything. In addition, we can see that the author is not in favour of the disappearance of African culture or tradition, but he wants the mentalities to change. That is why every time a woman deviated, the person who opposed her was also another woman. In the case of domestic violence against the man inflicted by Mama Sekyiwa, her daughter opposed her and refused to forgive when the man died (p.19).

Furthermore, when the old woman broke the traditional rules, her daughter Maame Amoakona resisted her (p.72). The author's aim with these female characters is to show that some women can take pleasure in the role played by Maman Sekyiwa, who took pleasure in making her man suffer by publicly disrespecting him. Other women too, in this context of globalisation, may claim that things are changing and that women are changing too. However, not all women reject tradition and ancient African values. For many of them, these values are still relevant today, but men and women are equal.

The fact that Amma Darko has reversed the roles in this work is also a strategy for getting across the message of the mistreatment of women. In fact, she has chosen what K. Djiman (2013, p.3) describes as the 'aesthetics of shock', defined as 'a phrase that expresses the emphasis on iconoclastic writing in keeping with the crisis facing the totality of society'.

In reality, the African woman is suffering. She is the victim of all the acts described in this work. Women were considered to be 'the property of their husbands' (C. Guillaume, 2011, p.13). For that reason, their husbands could do with them as they pleased (C. Guillaume, p.15). And as K. Frank (1982, 485) puts it: "Slavery, as we have seen in *The Slave Girl*, is for Emecheta the inherent condition of African women." Unfortunately, anybody seems to pay any attention to her suffering. Amma Darko's

decision to reverse the roles by putting the man, considered to be the head of the family, in this uncomfortable position is a message or a cry from the heart to make us understand the suffering of women. She has opted for this technique to shock readers and draw their attention to the suffering of African women. It is also a call to revalue our traditions and customs. Africa has its own values, which are also different and often opposed to those of the West. We agree that certain elements of this culture need to be reviewed. M. Fouad (2011, p.120) describes these undesirable elements of tradition as “traditionality”. If we get rid of these elements, the others can be promoted and enhanced. For Ngugi wa Thiong'o, African culture, whatever it may be, must be preserved despite what many think. In essence, this is what C. Addei, C. Osei and F. Annin (2013, p.164) think: “Ngugi believes strongly in the preservation and promotion of African cultural values. To him, culture is not static and must be maintained at all costs even when it is evidently clear that some aspects of it are reasonably outmoded.” On this basis, the preservation and promotion of African culture is essential, and this is the message that Amma Darko would like to get across. Indeed, when roles are reversed, the consequences are far-reaching. In the novel, Maame Amoakona acknowledges that her mother had broken a number of rules, which was the cause of their misfortune. Indeed, conditions deteriorated further when women, believing themselves equal or even superior to men, did what they should not. She (Maame Amoakona) cried out before her mother deflected and said: “You are desecrating the gods and ancestors” (p.72). In other words, it desacralizes the gods, making them ridiculous in everyone's eyes because those women violate traditional law.

At the end of this part, we clearly notice that there is an obvious will on the part of the author to draw people's attention to women's plight through the production of shocking pictures of men. Her message is so strong that it results in awareness raising.

Conclusion

To conclude, we can say that Amma Darko's *The Housemaid* presents us with a world where traditional African values are overturned. Man takes his place as chief. Once revered and respected, he is now humiliated and belittled by the woman who, in the past, had no right to speak in men's assemblies. In fact, in this textual universe, women have taken power; they seem to despise their husbands and spare no effort to humiliate them in public through public insults and physical violence. In addition, we noticed that the women, believing they are all-powerful and better than men, will try to replace them in certain roles, thus violating traditional African laws that gave primacy to men. Clearly, with the women in this textual society, the sacred has become trivial so that those who cannot take part in important meetings, or even speak in public, are those who exclude the decision-makers of yesteryear, namely men. We could talk about role reversals or the overturning of traditional values. But this technique used by the author is intended to shock the reader and draw attention to the suffering of women who have long been the victims of such abuse. These facts also highlight some of the dangers of modernity, even though it has brought so much to Africa.

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