



## From Imposed Altruism to Self-Determinism : Similarities in the Depiction of Mara, in Ama Darko' s *Beyond the Horizon*, and Celie, in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

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### Abstract

The present study analyses the depiction of the main characters in Ama Darko's novel, *Beyond the Horizon*, and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. The aim of the article is, to highlight the similar ways in which the two authors portray characters who move from an imposed altruism to defining their own path to liberation. First, the article analyses the characters as people who become altruistic by force, because the altruism is imposed on them by the systems and cultures they live in. Then, it examines their journey to liberation and what it takes to undertake the journey to become self-determined women. The analysis is undertaken from a postcolonial feminist angle. The findings show that when oppression reaches a certain degree, the oppressed women get the strength to fight. In the fight, the inter-relation between women becomes a key factor to freedom and self-determinism.

**Key words:** altruism, self-determinism, patriarchal oppression, survival strategies, freedom, wholeness, postcolonial feminism

### I. Introduction

The aim of the current article is to bring out the similarities in the depiction of Mara and Celie, respectively the main characters of Ama Darko' s novel *Beyond the Horizon*, and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. Darko's novel deals with the plight of the woman in three different oppressive environments: in rural and urban Ghana, and in Germany. As for the *Color Purple*, it deals with the plight of a black girl in the American rural South of the 1930's. Both novels center on the intersection of various oppressions that force the main characters to be altruistic and develop coping strategies in the hostile environments. But in their journey, life experiences teach them to search for freedom and wholeness despite the harsh hostilities.

The study is conducted from a postcolonial feminist angle. In other words, it relies on both postcolonialism and feminism. This two sided-angle is suitable because the two theories share the

common goal of fighting historical injustice, its consequences and claiming freedom for the oppressed. As Vazquez rightly states "both theories share common features: the political conception of literature as a weapon to fight against social inequalities, the re-writing of history from previously silenced perspectives and the positive valuing of previously marginalised figures and literatures" (Vazquez, 264). The critic further argues that the identity of women was constructed in a similar way to the identity of colonised people. Arguing for the need of cross-fertilisation between postcolonialism and feminism, Ashcroft uses the phrase intersecting marginalities to refer to feminism and postcolonialism because "Both are articulated by resistance to dominant authoritarian and neo-authoritarian orthodoxy and both speak from their position within the hegemonic language to subvert that language" (Ashcroft, 23). Thus, the feminist postcolonial stance is appropriate for the study because the novels deal with the struggle of main characters who find themselves in an intersection of oppressions. The authors show how they move from an imposed altruism to self-determinism. To be able to understand the behaviour of these characters, it is important to recall the socio-cultural environments that have forced them to be altruistic.

### II. Mara and Celie as altruistic characters in their environments

Altruism is defined in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, as the consideration of the happiness of other people before one's own (27). This definition might imply that the altruistic people willingly put other people's interest before theirs. In the case of Mara and Celie, it is not the case because they are forced to be so, as they have no other choice, if they want to survive. Both characters live in patriarchal environments that teach them that the role of the girl is not to think about herself. Rather, she should care about how her behaviour would make other people happy. In the case of Mara, these people are her parents and her future husband. In the case of



celie, they are her mother, her stepfather, her brothers and sisters, her future husband and his children.

As stated above, in both novels the altruism is not by choice but it is imposed on the characters. For example, in the case of Mara, it is Akobi's father who has chosen her for his son. Her father being satisfied with the dowry and notoriety of Akobi's family has settled the matter. No one bothers about Mara's acceptance because there is no room for her opinion. In such a patriarchal culture, good girls simply do not question parents' decisions. As Nutsukpo points out, Mara « is 'sold' to Akobi, a clerk, for two white cows, four healthy goats, five lengths of cloth, beads, gold jewellery, and two bottles of London Dry Gin » (Nutsukpo, 138). The matter is settled and Mara's father is happy. Her mother only tells her « Your father has found a husband for you » (Darko, 4).

In the *Color Purple*, Celie is also forced to marry Albert, because the father has decided so. Albert accepts to marry her because he needs a woman who can take care of his family. Celie's father convinces Albert about Celie's altruistic qualities and lack of sense of self in the following quotation :

I can't let you have Nettie. . . . But I can let you have Celie. She the oldest anyway. She ain't fresh tho, but I spect you know that. She spoiled twice. . . . She ugly. He say. But she ain't no stranger to hard work. And she clean. And God done fixed her. You can do everything just like you want to and she ain't gonna make you feed it or clothe it (Walker, 9).

The father claims that God has fixed Celie the way she is. But in reality, the person who has turned Celie into a selfless character is not God as the stepfather claims, but him. A deciphering of the quotation shows that the older man is the incarnation of evil and a child rapist. He accuses the narrator Celie of being *spoiled* twice, when he is responsible for her so called spoiling. He has made her pregnant twice and taken the children away from her. These acts prove that his relationship with Celie is similar to that of a master and his female slave. During slavery time, it is the kind of relationship that existed between many slave owners and the black women slaves who were at the mercy of the masters. In the institution of slavery, « a slave woman is neither pure nor virtuous, existing in circumstances of sexual subordination, women were literally forced to offer themselves willingly to their masters » (Blassingame qt. in Carby, 21). Carby points out the ironic juxtaposition of the words willingly and forced as a historical reluctance to condemn the white masters acts of rape. In that sense, the slave woman is not

seen as a victim but as a loose woman and a temptress.

In *The Color Purple*, it is a similar scenario in which Celie is forced to act. The stepfather presents her to Albert as a spoiled condemnable woman, rather than a victim of rape. She is forced to serve him sexually. It is this imposed altruism that he uses to convince Albert to marry Celie. The stepfather's language conveys that he even objectifies Celie by stating that « You can do everything just like you want to and she ain't gonna make you feed it or clothe it » (Walker, 9).

The result is a hard blow on the girl who develops a sense of worthlessness. Her life is reduced to pushing the "barbed-wired wall of ignorance and despair" (Désiré, 268). She says pathetically that it took Albert the whole spring to make up his mind to marry her. When Albert comes to their home, Celie is presented to him the way slaves used to be shown to their potential buyers at slavery auctions.

This imposed altruism denies both Celie and Mara a sense of self, agency and a voice. Worse than that, they are reduced to non-humans. The critic Nirjharini stresses that by telling herself, "I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you are a tree", Celie "modifies herself into a non-living thing" (Nirjharini, 219). This solution is part of Celie's survival strategy in a powerlessness situation. Once Celie finds herself in Albert's house, she is forced to take care of the man and his children though she herself is a child. She undertakes all the household chores without complaining. It is the survival strategy she has found for herself. When her sister Nettie tells her she needs to fight Albert's children who oppress her, she says : « I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive » (Walker, 18). She has been raised to serve without complaining because she does not know about protest, as to be able to complain one has to have some sense of self.

Even her mother who, in normal circumstances, is supposed to sacrifice herself for the welfare of her daughter, does not seem to care about Celie. The mother-daughter relationship is so distorted and reversed that it is the little girl who sacrifices herself for the mother. For example, after giving birth, the mother claims she is too sick to sleep with her husband Alphonso. It is Celie who becomes the mother's substitute for satisfying the man's sexual drives. In fact, the very first letter introduces a distorted family in which life for the woman means living to satisfy the man's desires. Celie says in her first letter :



Last spring after little Lucious come I heard them fussing. He was pulling on her arm. She say It too soon, Fonso, I ain't well. Finally he leave her alone. A week go by, he pulling on her arm again. She say Naw, I ain't gonna. Can't you see I'm already half dead, and all of these children.

She went to visit her sister over Macon. Left me to see after the others. He never have a kine word to say too me. Just say You gonna do what your mammy wouldn't. First he put his thing up against my hip. And sort of wiggle it around. Then he grab hold my titties. Then he push his thing inside my pussy. When that hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying You better shut up and git used to it (Walker, 1).

Celie describes in the above quotation, how Alphonso, the man she has thought is her father, traumatises both mother and daughter. One can easily see that even with his wife, the man is a rapist, considering how he treats her. Celie is traumatized by observing the relationship of her parents.

Later, with her husband Albert, it is the continuation of the same forced altruistic service of being used by the man. Celie refers to sex within marriage as Abert climbing on top of her and doing his business. Talking about love-making, she says : « I don't know nothing about it. Mr \_\_\_\_\_ clam on top of me, do his business, in ten minutes us both sleep » (Walker, 69). In this sexual relationship, « the body constitutes the site of oppression and becomes the source of permanent anxiety. The body dominates the novel ... The central character has no control over her body and her physical environment » (Griffin, Qt. in Raajitha, 114).

In *Beyond the Horizon* too, sex within marriage becomes an expression of violence in which the woman is at the service of her husband. This one way relationship is what Mara considers as the meaning of marriage. She fails to understand that even in the patriarchal logic, marriage is not the negation of all the aspirations of the woman. Mama Kiosk, the older woman who later on becomes her mentor, tries to teach her that. Houndjo Theophile and Renee-Kinee Allamagbo, in their article, *Mara's Rise from Total Submissiveness to Absolute Emancipation in Beyond the Horizon by Amma Darko*, argue that « Mara is a well-mannered woman. In order not to disappoint her demanding husband, she accepts to lose part of her 'turn over'. Mara cuts down her daily quantity of eggs just to be at home in time to satisfy her husband's needs (Houndjo, 5668). In reality, this is not a question of Mara being well-mannered. She is forced to do so as a survival strategy that she has developed, because

she knows how her husband will have no tolerance if she fails to fulfill his expectations.

The way Mara narrates her sexual experience with her husband Akobi, reflects an experience similar to that of Celie who states: « Wordlessly, he stripped off my clothes, stripped off his trousers, turned my back and entered me. Then he ordered me off the mattress to go and lay out my mat because he wanted to sleep alone » (Darko, 22). Akobi treats Mara as if she were his slave. Discussing the negative portrayal of the male characters in *Beyond the Horizon*, Kammampool opines that « Amma Darko, through her narrative, exhibits powerful anti-patriarchal tendencies ... by reducing men to worthless and irresponsible beings. » (Kammampool, 2). One wonders whether what the critic refers to as a reductionist depiction, is unrealistic. If men such as Akobi and Mara's father are plausible in the culture, then the author is just being realistic by choosing to show the readers this reality, even if it is not good to see.

Alice Walker also has faced the same reaction when the *Color Purple* was published. Some readers claimed that it is the kind of novel white people would like to read and wonder where the good African-American men are. If rape and other illtreatments of women are realistic, it is necessary for women writers to be strong enough to shed light on these issues. The women writers should be strong enough to face the intimidation politics and rhetoric of some readers and critics. The woman writer has to take care of the « dirty » job of speaking up for oppressed women.

In these hostile environments, the narrators develop their own survival strategies in order to cope with the situations. In the case of Mara, she engages in a bad faith strategy. It consists in using the patriarchal logic of trying to convince herself that a wife is meant to sacrifice herself for her husband, when she has to face Akobi's illtreatment, as we see in the following quotation :

Initially, many things that happened in my marriage appeared to me matter-of-course things that happened in all marriages . . . since, 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 (Darko, 12).

Discussing Mara's logic in trying to cope with her illtreatment at the hands of Akobi, in the article entitled *The Exploitation of African women : A feminist exploration of Darko's Beyond the Horizon*, Nutsukpo argues that :

Socio-cultural exploitation involves the social conditioning of women to accept patriarchal



notions and values which de-value them, reinforce their supposed inferiority to men, and leave them open to manipulation and exploitation. Socio-cultural exploitation plays a major role in the victimization of Mara, the protagonist of Darko's novel. As a girl, Mara is denied an education which would have equipped her with knowledge, skills and self-confidence, thereby facilitating her positive participation in contemporary society. Instead, she is subjected to early marriage, exploited by a father who marries her off to the son of a wealthy man in their village. (Nutsukpo 138).

Nutsukpo even stresses how Mama Kiosk tries to convince Mara that she should not accept illtreatment at the hands of her husband, but Mara refuses to listen to the older woman. Even when she realises that in the village, many women are not suffering at the hands of their husbands like her, she continues to sustain her

survival bad faith. She states that she is not going to allow Mama Kiosk to spoil her marriage. Thus, one cannot fully explain Mara's behaviour by her culture's patriarchal aspect only, as some critics do. For example, Ummezurike argues that the ideological conditioning explains Mara's acceptance of her illtreatment in the following quotation :

Ideology so shaped her subjectivity that she couldn't see her husband for who he really is, a brute. Yet it is this desire to cling to her marriage at all cost - when textual evidence shows otherwise, that the marriage is a sham, a scam from the onset - which further motivates Mara into accepting and expecting the beatings everyday (Ummerurike, 296).

As said above, Mara's behaviour is not due to the patriarchal conditioning only. In her culture, patriarchy makes room for some basic rights for women but Mara is denied those rights. Feminists critics tend to ever-generalize the issue of patriarchy which becomes a big umbrella for all cultures where women suffer unjust treatment. But a serious analysis of paratrarchy ought to consider the culture under study. We see very well that in Mara's village women are taken care of by their husband and they expect respect from them. It is more because Mara engages in a survival bad faith that she refuses to listen to Mama Kiosk who is from the same culture. Mama Kiosk explains to her that patriarchal values are not respected by her husband. If Akobi and Mara live according to the patriarchal norms of Naka, she would not have to provide for herself, let alone feed a man. Also, it would not be possible for Akobi, her own husband, to be her pimp, because in the patriarchal ideology, a married woman must be protected against other men by her husband.

Celie too, uses the same bad faith logic in order to cope with the maltreatment at the hands of her husband. Talking about the repeated raping by Albert, her strategy to support the situation is to pretend she does not exist. As she says to Shug « He git up on you, heist your nightgown round your waist, plunge in. Most times I pretend I ain't there » (Walker, 81). She engages in bad faith too when she says to Shug that she does not care whether the latter sleeps with her husband. It is bad faith because about hearing her husband and his lover Shug make love, she says : « But when I hear them together, all I can do is pull the quilt over my head and finger my little button and titties and cry. » This is an expression of jealousy that she refuses to acknowledge.

But all these survival strategies would not last long because, just like in any oppressive situation, with life experiences, the oppressed person will end up finding the means for resistance and struggle. Celie and Mara have to move from imposed altruism to a struggle to look for freedom and wholeness.

### III. Mara and Celie in their journey to become self-determined women

According to the philosopher Richard M. Byran, self-determinism « is concerned not only with the specific nature of positive development tendencies, but it also examines social environments that are antagonistic towards these tendencies » (Ryan, 69). In examining Mara and Celie as selfless characters, the study has shown that the environments they live in are antagonistic to their self-fulfilment. This section of the study, demonstrates how the two women manage to have the development tendencies they need to be self-determined. In the current article, the compound word self-determinism implies that in spite of adversity, the characters under study will end up making their own decisions that will have positive impacts on their lives.

There are significant similarities in the lives and journeys of the protagonists Mara and Celie. At the beginning of both novels, the authors reflect a lack of complicity between mothers and daughters. In celie's case, even though Celie feels sorry for her mother who is illtreated by the stepfather, there is no strong link and complicity between the two victims. Alice Walker does not deal with the relationship between Celie and her mother in terms of mutual support. Rather, we feel a silence that might even imply the mother knows about the relationship between her husband and daughter. In fact, when the mother refuses to sleep with Alphonso because she is not feeling well, she never bothers about finding out that the man has found a substitute for her. Moreover, when Celie tells her that God is responsible for her



first pregnancy, the mother does nothing to find out the truth about the situation.

In *Beyond the Horizon* too, there is a lack of mutual support and complicity between Mara and her mother. Even if Mara's situation is not as terrible as Celie's, in *Beyond the Horizon* also, Mara's mother does nothing against the reasons for giving Mara to Akobi. The result becomes a slave-master relationship between Mara and her husband especially when she follows him in the city. Akobi even turns upside down the patriarchal logic according to which, it is the husband who must take care of his wife, not the opposite, as stated earlier. Once Mara finds herself in the city, she becomes Akobi's slave because she lives and works to serve him. When he takes her to Germany, the situation becomes worse as he becomes her pimp. But despite the harsh adversity the narrators have to face, they manage to free themselves from their slavery shackles and move from the imposed altruism to self-determination.

The backbone of their awakening is two-fold: their progressive awareness through some major events and their relationship with other women, who help them gain a sense of self in order to undertake their struggle. In *Beyond the Horizon*, one can identify a few major events that have contributed to Mara's awareness. The first major change occurs when Mara who used to think that « not obeying and worshipping Akobi would make me less than a wife, just like no menstrual periods would make me less of a woman » (Darko, 16), changes her philosophy. When Akobi is beating her for paying his loan without interest, she cries out loud because she wants the neighbours to understand what kind of man he is, that is, a wife batterer. It is because she is aware that her husband worries about other people's negative judgement of him. As she says: « he was a man who craved recognition as a civilised person and a gentle man, whatever that meant, and as the saying went in the city, only bushmen beat their wives » (Darko, 22). That day, Mara has even thought of leaving Akobi if he sets his hands on her again. It is a big change coming from the altruistic Mara. She is becoming self-confident. She even starts asking questions about the husband's orders.

The next major event is her fight with Esiama. She has beaten Esiama, the lover of the boss of the truck drivers. She claims that she has beaten her as if Esiama were both her father and Akobi. Thus, Esiama becomes the symbol of her two oppressors. After the fight, the boss of the truck drivers orders his people, not to pick up any passenger who buys Mara's eggs. Despite her financial difficulties Akobi refuses to feed her. Mara

has changed so much that she has made up her mind and decided to leave Akobi to go back to her village.

The next stage happens when she comes back from the village and finds that Akobi has sold her jewellery. This has turned her into a rebellious woman. When the husband asks her to go and see to his porridge, she reacts violently:

« 'No Akobi,' I hissed threateningly, 'this time I am not going to do what you say. You are going to tell me what you did with my property.' And I aimed the concrete piece directly at him. For the first ever time in my whole married life I saw that Akobi was unsure. He was unsure whether to take my threat to hit him with the concrete piece seriously or as a bluff (Darko, 33).

After this interaction, Akobi changes his strategy of terrorizing his wife. To convince her to accept the selling of her property, he resolves to his diplomatic and persuasive skills, instead of threatening Mara. He manages to convince the still naive Mara, with a dream-like plan of their future life in Europe.

The last stage which represents the peak of her awareness is, when she realises that she too, may earn money to use the strategy of arranged marriage that enables immigrants to access certain privileges in their country of destination (Okache, 40). She manages to work for herself and earn the money. She then pays for a detective's service to find out all the details about Akobi's betrayals and evilness. This stage represents the final blow that has made her take her revenge on Akobi. She sends him to jail and gets Comfort deported back to Ghana.

Just like Mara, Celie also goes through some major events in order to reach the awareness necessary for undertaking her liberation journey. The first stage is when her younger sister Nettie visits her at Albert's. Nettie tries to teach Celie to fight Albert's children who do not respect her. Celie claims she does not know how to fight, but only how to survive in hostile environments. Her younger sister's visit becomes an opportunity for starting to gain some sense of self. Nettie breaks the negative socialisation through which Alphonso has made her think she is worthless, ugly and silly. Her sister helps her to regain some self-confidence by teaching her the alphabet through the utensils of the house. This is a highly symbolic action that has a positive impact on Celie. She starts to be proud of her learning success. Nettie also teaches her that fighting can be an option under certain circumstances, as she tells Celie that their younger brothers might fight their stepfather when they become older.

Learning about Sofia's lifestyle is another lesson and eye-opener about fighting. Celie who



lives an isolated life, learns about the story of the amazons in Sofia's family. Through Sofia, she learns that some women cannot be beaten. Sofia tells her that she comes from a tradition of women fighters and that all her life she has had to fight with men in her family. She also teaches Celie about female bonding and how supportive that is. Celie has seen an example when Harpo and Sofia have had a fight. All her amazon sisters have come to support her and leave with her.

A third factor of Celie's liberation is the peak of the oppression. The same oppression that has made the protagonist develop some survival skills, has also taught her to struggle for freedom. In her article entitled *The Theme of Resistance : A Critical Analysis of Alice Walker's The Color Purple*, Beena Khati stresses Walker's belief in « the twin concepts of 'survival' and 'wholeness' which she has rendered in the novel *The Color Purple* through the journey of Celie, from an invisible voiceless girl to an evolved and awakened soul » (Khati, 35). The oppression reaches its peak with the narrator's discovery that her husband has been hiding Nettie's letters from her. For Celie, no criminal offense can reach the hiding of the letters of the only family member she is so attached to. In fact, Celie realises how criminal her husband has become in hiding all her sister's letters from her. She becomes so mad that she has thought of killing him. It is the stage that represents the climax of the story. From this moment, nothing could stop her way towards rebellion and freedom.

The discovery is similar to that of Mara, when she learns from the detective, how Akobi has brought Comfort in Germany and is taking care of her at her expense and that of his wife Gitte. He has lied to the two women that he is building them a house. In reality he is building it for his one and only love, Comfort. The consequence of Mara's discovery is rage and revenge.

But in the *Color Purple* the most important factor to Celie's liberation is her relationship with her husband's lover, Shug Avery. Celie does not see Shug much as a rival. The female bonding between the two women subverts the patriarchal logic according to which the two women should see each other as rivals. On the contrary, they become more than friends and sisters. They develop a love relationship that neither Albert nor Shug's husband can think of. Shug teaches her to develop a sense of self, to discover her own body, to learn about sexuality, and more importantly to free herself from Albert and be economically independent. According to Kaman, « The strongest friendship or bonding can be seen in the relationship between Celie and Shug Avery. The novel portrays the character of Shug in

such a way that it breaks the conventional society where women are always dominated by man » (Kaman, 550).

The relationship between Celie and Shug is similar to that of Mara and Mama Kiosk, in terms of how these relationships help the main characters achieve their freedom. Both relations are between mentors and their students. The protagonists learn various aspects of a woman's life thanks to their experienced mentors. Both mentors are economically independent women who cannot have domineering men in their lives. They are free to act and live the way they want. In the case of Mama Kiosk, no mention is even made about a man in her life. As for Shug, she is so free that she can have a woman to woman relation with Celie.

Mama Kiosk's role in Mara's life is manifold. She plays the role of Mara's mother when she teaches her about her body. She is her teacher and mentor who teaches her about life in the city, and how to be economically independent. She also teaches her about husband-wife relationship. As for Celie, Shug teaches her about her own body, her sexuality and more importantly how to be economically independent too.

Apart from Mama Kiosk and Shug, other minor female characters, help the narrators in their quest for freedom. In the case of Mara, in Germany, it is through other women that she progressively turns into a free woman. First, with Vivian, Osey's wife who becomes her second teacher, after Mama Kiosk. Vivian has taken time to tell her lifestory to Mara. This has made her a little comfortable with her new situation, finding herself in Germany at the mercy of her oppressor-husband. In fact, through Vivian, she learns about the cult of domesticity and how a woman might miss it. When Mara asks Vivian whether she is happy, she answers :

Hmm. I do miss little things, you know ; little wifely things, like washing and ironing his shirts, like going to bed with him, sleeping beside him all the night through and waking up in the morning with him beside me. Like waiting at home for him and worrying my head about when he would at long last come home and eat the food I've cooked for him. You know, petty things like that (Darko, 86).

Through Vivian, she also understands that her marriage with Akobi is far from the normal husband-wife relation. Vivian teaches her that love-making should be pleasurable for the woman, not painful. Listening to the story of her friend, she also learns about sexual slavery, the new life awaiting her. All these teachings are future awareness lessons.

Another woman who plays a key role in Mara's journey to liberation, is Kaye, the wife of the



owner of the brothel, where Mara will be taken by her own husband, to be used as a sex slave. Here again, it is by sharing her lifestory that Kaye has won the friendship of Mara. They become so close that she teaches Mara about the final struggle to free herself from Akobi. Mara has gone beyond worrying about the sex orgy video that Akobi and Osey use as a blackmailing threat. She decides to work for her own benefit rather than be used by Akobi. She and her friend Kaye make a plan that will free her from the shackles of her slave master. The plan is to convince Peepy, the owner of the brothel, that Mara is sick and can take only one client per day. Kaye has used her persuasive feminine skills to convince her husband Peepy. But instead of reducing the number of customers to one, they have rather increased it to seven. Arrangements are made for Mara to meet some of the clients in hotels. Whenever she has to meet a customer out of Pompy's brothel, Vivian covers her up. She tells Peepy that Mara has to go to a Turkish woman who treats her with herbal medicine, because she has problems with her private part.

With this plan, Mara has managed to save a lot of money to pay for a fake marriage with a German man and have legal papers to live in Germany. She also uses part of the money to find information about Comfort and Akobi and to take revenge on them. As stated earlier, Comfort is expelled from Germany and Akobi put in jail. But the novel ends with Mara who has become addicted to drugs and with a very low self-esteem because of her trade of prostitution. The novel closes with bitterness when she thinks about her mother, children, and relatives. She thinks : « Material things are all I can offer hem. As for myself, there's nothing dignified and decent left of me to give them » (Darko, 140).

In the case of Celie, Albert's sisters who come to visit their brother, also boost Celie's sense of feeling like a woman, in the way they praise her qualities of a good house manager. They also sensitize their brother to take good care of his wife. Their visit makes Celie feel like a human being, because Albert does not even see her as a person, as we see in his conversation with one of his sisters :

Buy Celie some clothes. She say to Mr.

She needs clothes ? he ast.

Well look at her.

She go with me in the store. I think what color Shug Avery would wear.

... I can't remember being the first one in my own dress. Now to have one just made for me. I try to tell Kate what it mean. I git hot in the face and stutter.

She say ? It's alright Celie. You deserve more than this.

May be so. I think (Walker, 22).

The conversation shows how Albert's sisters support and defend Celie. The support has arisen in the protagonist, a feeling of being human, of having a sense of self. As Kaman rightly opines,

Female bonding is not only the bonding of friendship among the women. But it can also be the bonding of sisterhood and also the bonding of motherhood among the women in the community. In the novel *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker describes all these bondings in the community of the Blacks and also how the women find their individual identity with the help of their female bonding (Kaman, 548).

Furthermore, Khati argues that this bonding is positively transformative. According to the critic,

In her artistic endeavor to bring about a transformation in the minds and attitudes of people of her race to come out of the shackles of racism, sexism, and other kinds of oppression, Walker was looking for a base to envisage a kind of living that allows and promotes individuals to grow amidst all suffering that befalls in front of them at various levels. This, Walker believed, was possible when there is a collective consciousness to live harmoniously and uplift each other whether it is in terms of female bonding as well as man-woman relationships within the community (Khati, 32).

Khama claims that Walker's message is realistic in that she does not convey that women should rely on female bonding only. For a serious transformation, men are also concerned because they are women's partners. Therefore, any deep transformation will have to revisit the relationship of the two genders too.

Female bonding has several dimensions. It encompasses all the positive and supportive sisterly, motherly, and friendly relations. One can list the bonding of the protagonist with Nettie, Sofia, her young stepmother, Shug, and her sisters in-law. Ahmed Jubair stresses that all these relations are symbolically represented by the creative activity of quilting in *The Color Purple*,

« Quilting symbolises female bonding, sisterhood, and togetherness. Walker's mentioning of the art of quilting reflects her respect and love for black cultural heritage. Speaking of a quilt that hangs in the Smithsonian Institution as the work of an 'anonymous Black woman from Alabama,' Walker has said that the anonymous woman was one of 'our grandmothers ... an artist who left her mark in the only material she could afford. And in the only medium her position in society allowed her to use (Jubair, 942).



Quilting then, becomes a survival strategy that allows the oppressed woman to retain her humanity despite all the adversity she faces. It also fosters togetherness among women. In reality oftentimes, the oppressive environment that women share, creates a certain bonding, as we see when Celie and Sofia discuss about wife-beating or when Shug and Celie discuss about how Albert treats his wife. In *Beyond the Horizon* also, the same togetherness is observed between Mara, Vivian, Kaye and the protagonist, because they live in a common oppressive environment.

#### IV. Conclusion

This study has shown that despite the different contexts of the two novels, the authors' portrayal of the protagonists have many common aspects. In their depiction of Mara and Celie, Darko and Walker unveil various layers of oppression that the protagonists suffer from. They also show how these oppressions intersect. The women find themselves in the intersection and the blows come from various adversity arrows, namely patriarchy, lack of education the socialisation of the girl, racism, sexual slavery, wife beating, and verbal abuse.

But despite all the adversity, the authors also celebrate the inner power that help the women reach wholeness. They portray the journey in various life experiences that are life lessons that forge the women's destiny. Through the protagonists' journey, both authors display a woman's sub-culture that celebrates female bonding in its various forms: sisterhood, friendship, motherhood, foster motherhood, togetherness.

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