

African Illegal Immigrants' Disillusionment in Europe: a Study of Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*

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Abstract - Many hopeless young Africans leave their home country seeking a better tomorrow in Europe. But once they get to Europe, they realise that life is very tough there. It is in this wake that I intend to focus my analysis on the characters of Mara, Akobi, Vivian, and Osey in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*, who migrate to Germany only to become disenchanted. This study shows that young Africans had better stay in their home country rather than venturing into an unknown setting as the destination is not always glorious.

Keywords: Illegal immigration, young Africans, disillusionment, well-being, Europe.

Résumé - Plusieurs jeunes africains désespérés quittent leur pays d'origine en quête d'un mieux-être en Europe. Mais une fois en Europe, ils se rendent compte qu'il est très difficile d'y vivre. Dans ce sillage, mon analyse portera sur les personnages de Mara, Akobi, Vivian, et Osey du roman de l'écrivain ghanéen Amma Darko, qui ont migré en Allemagne pour désenchanter. Cette étude montre que les jeunes africains feraient mieux de rester dans leur pays d'origine plutôt que de s'aventurer dans l'inconnu où la destination n'est toujours pas glorieuse.

Mots clés : Immigration clandestine, jeunes africains, désillusion, bien-être, Europe.

1. Introduction

Although the saying that there is no better place like home is in debate, let us show how true this may reveal in a literature context. Indeed, in Africa South of the Sahara, many young people leave their home country illegally expecting to get a better quality of life in western countries. As Mbugua Nganga rightfully points out, "*Many people from poor African countries embark on the dangerous journey for Europe, in hopes of a better life*".¹ Unfortunately, once such gullible people set foot on Europe, they become utterly disenchanted. As literature is the manifestation of social life in its various fields², in this paper, I will show how Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* describes the disillusionment of characters like Akobi and Mara, who immigrate to Germany hoping to get a better life. Life in Europe, the characters Osey, Mara, and Akobi soon realise, is not the glamorous days and nights they have seen in their dreams or that people make them believe.

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¹ Mbugua Nganga, "Tough Life of illegal immigrants in Germany" in <http://www.Migration/African Immigration to Europe - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.htm> dating August 8th 2014

² Bertin C.Yèhouéno, "Sociocriticism and SFL or when both ends justify both means: a case study of Wole Soyinka's *The Road*", in *Particip'Action* Vol. 5 N°1 Janvier 2013, p. 98. (Lomé: Imprimerie St. Louis)

This paper is structured around (1) how some African immigrants get fraudulently to Europe, (2) the root cause of illegal immigration to Europe, (3) the disastrous consequences of illegal immigration to Europe as seen in the target novel, and eventually (4) how the irregular immigrants get disillusioned in the destination country. Socio-criticism will provide the theoretical light that informs this study. How do irregular immigrants get therefore to Europe?

2. Illegal Immigrants' Stratagem to Get to Europe

Illegal immigrants are viewed as people who usually cross fraudulently the border of a country thus, breaking migration regulations; they are not quite often in possession of documents that entitle them with the right to live in the host country. They generally get to the country after heavily paying commission to smugglers sometimes at the risk of their lives. For fear of being unmasked and sent back to their countries of birth, irregular immigrants live perpetually underground. As if to tally with me, the character Osey in *Beyond the Horizon* declares, "the German people, or at least those who represent them, don't want too many of us here in their country, so they do all they can to make things very difficult for us, so that we will feel humiliated and think of returning to our homeland as a palatable alternative"³. Literature coinciding at times with reality, Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* lies within this framework especially as it depicts how some African immigrants get fraudulently to European countries. Accounting for how irregular migrants circumvent regulations to enter European countries, Amma Darko's narrator points out: "Men paid him [Osey] to smuggle their wives and girlfriends, who had no valid visas, into Europe [...]" (p. 57). In fact, smugglers take advantage of the fact that Europeans find it hard to make distinction between Africans; for Germans, Africans are like two peas in a pod. This is how a smuggler, in the novel under investigation, sheds light on trickery immigrants use to fool Europeans for the reader to take notice: "In the German people's eyes ... we niggers all look the same. Black faces, kinky hair, thick lips. We don't fight with them about it. We use it to our benefit" (p. 59). This is how the smuggler helps the narrator to slip through the immigration 'net' in Germany: "Then we ... headed to a station where my agent took my passport ... and disappeared into the toilet. He emerged minutes later, walked straight up to me and gave me a passport. I noticed immediately that it wasn't my passport. This one was older than mine and had many travel stamps in it" (p. 59). Facing the narrator's perplexity after the substitution of her passport once in the German territory, the artful smuggler dispels Mara's fear in this way: "Because this woman whose passport you have has a valid staying permit for West Germany for at least five years, thanks to some poor wretched and destroyed German drug addict she married" (p. 59). From this excerpt, it follows that the character Mara enters Germany without a staying permit; that is why her husband, Akobi, enlists the smuggler's service. To unmask such fraudsters, the immigration department should resort to biometric passports.

³ Amma Darko, *Beyond the Horizon* (Edinburgh: Heinemann, 1995) pp. 76-77. Further page reference to the same edition will be made directly in the text.

Furthermore, irregular immigrants to Europe manage to get married to destitute native Europeans in order to have their immigration status regularised. Indeed, the characters Osey, Vivian – Osey’s ‘African wife’ – and Akobi have used this subterfuge to have permission to settle in Germany as ‘legal residents’ for five years in return for a payment in coin of the realm (p. 77). In this vein, the narrator in the novel under consideration reports to the reader the heavy price Vivian pays to live legally in Germany: “I asked about the [German] man she [Vivian] had married and how much he charged her. She said he was a homosexual and had charged her a down payment of five thousand Deutschmarks, with an additional four hundred marks to be paid monthly over the next two years”⁴ (p. 109). From this quotation, it is worth noting that African irregular immigrants, in search of a permanent residence permit, are the victims of swindling from unscrupulous German hoodlums.

What are then the reasons why characters like Akobi and Mara leave their origin country for their so-called Promised Land, Europe?

3. Poverty as the Root Cause of Illegal Immigration to Europe

In the present paper, I have found out poverty as the root cause of illegal immigration. Talking about the causes of illegal immigration, Silvia E. O. Meza, a sociologist of the International Organisation for Migration, identifies poverty as the “main cause of Illegal Immigration”.⁵ In fact, in developing countries in general and particularly in African countries some people leave their home country for western countries looking for a better quality of life. According to Barthélémy Kotchi, the literary work and society are inextricably related⁶. Still making the link between a literary work and society from which it hails, Edmond Cros rightly observes that “Sociocriticism aims to bring out the relations existing between the structures of literary (or cultural) work and the structures of this society in which the work is deeply rooted”⁷. I concur with them based on Amma Darko’s novel insofar as *Beyond the Horizon* is a microcosm or reflection of most African / Ghanaian traditional societies at least because the novel depicts the fact that some young Africans venture into the western countries thinking they might decently make their life due to the utter destitution in which they vegetate. Indeed, Amma Darko, a Ghanaian female novelist, has been preoccupied with this question in her novel titled *Beyond the Horizon* in which characters like Akobi and Mara leave their country for Germany in search of a utopian well-being. In fact, the characters Akobi and Mara, who are so to speak spouses, are poverty-stricken in their home country:

⁴ All things considered, the character Vivian will have to pay out about 14 600 Deutschmarks making FCFA 5 402 000 or €28 470 before getting a residence permit in Germany, sacrificing her dignity.

⁵ Silvia E. O. Meza, “Causes of Illegal Immigration”, in http://www.Migration/Causes_of_Illegal_Immigration.htm dating July 21st 2014.

⁶ Barthélémy Kotchi, *Méthodologie et Idéologie*, Abidjan CEDA, 1989, p. 66.

⁷ Edmond Cros, “Towards a Sociocritical Theory of the Text,” in http://www.Theories/Towards_a_Sociocritical_Theory_of_the_Text_-_La_sociocritique_d'Edmond_Cros.htm dating July 21st 2014.

Parts of the corrugated-iron-sheet shelters had rusted away and left little holes here and there which, though too small for the heads of humans to pass through, were large enough for inquisitive mice and other creatures to slip through. Lift a pan here and out would jump a toad. Pull a chair there to sweep behind it and what should dash feverishly past but a bright orange-headed lizard. Spiders, wasps and cockroaches were all about. So here and there I sealed with broken pieces of bricks and clay and anything that could seal, even wet bread and corn dough. But those were just the holes that I saw. (p. 9)

One can infer from this excerpt that the ambitious character, Akobi and his wife live wretchedly in the city sharing their filthy single room with bugs, tailless amphibians, and other household pests. Worse still, one learns that what looks like Akobi's dwelling place is "situated by a public toilet and rubbish dump" (p. 34). These wretched living conditions in her home country make the narrator Mara feel very enthusiastic about migrating to Europe. Indeed, without any qualification or job and having no hope looming on the horizon, the narrator has no other option but "throw people's rubbish away for them in return for food..." (p. 16) Being of the same mind with Meza, Hein de Haas, of the International Migration Institute points out that, "African migration to Europe is commonly seen as a tidal wave of desperate people fleeing poverty ... at home trying to enter the elusive European El Dorado".⁸ At this very level, it is worth pointing out that Amma Darko seeks to "describe and analyze the ways in which [male] literature reinforces the narrative of male domination in regard to female bodies by exploring the economic, social, political, and psychological forces embedded within literature."⁹ Indeed, as a feminist Ghanaian female writer, Amma Darko makes the male character Akobi in *Beyond the Horizon* tell his wife, "I have decided that you must start work to earn proper money, now that we are going to increase.... You have been here long enough now, and you can work. I can't cater for us all when *your*¹⁰ child comes... and I have important plans [to migrate to Germany]." (p. 17) If one looks carefully into this statement, one can infer that Amma Darko highlights the fundamental role that a woman plays or has to play beside the man in the couple in Africa even if the male character speaking seems authoritative and is evading responsibility. It comes out that Akobi's disdainful attitude towards his expectant wife reveals his inability or rather his powerlessness to take on his responsibility as husband and prospective father largely due to his acute dearth of financial means, obviously because that undesirable pregnancy might hamper his obsessive dream to go "to Europe to live there ... and to work". (p. 34) Akobi's determination to make for Europe is uncovered through a secret concocting of his project to move to Germany and gathering resources that come his way. In this wake, Akobi's sexual partner, who stands out as the heterodiegetic narrator in the novel, tells this to the reader:

The very next day he [Akobi] announced he was leaving for the city because work was awaiting him. To my surprise, he insisted on taking with him the high-quality gold jewellery that his father had presented to me in gratitude for his first grandson, as well as

⁸ Hein de Haas, "The Myth of Invasion: The Inconvenient Realities of African Migration to Europe," in the *Third World Quarterly* 2008 29 (7): 1305-1322.

⁹ Allen, Brizee & J. Case Tompkins, "Feminist Criticism (1960s-present)" in http://www.Theories/Feminist_Literary_criticism_-_Wikipedia,_the_free_encyclopedia.htm dating August 8th 2014

¹⁰ The emphasis is mine

the cloth and other jewellery given me as dowry, which I brought with me from the city. When I asked to know why he told me simply, 'For safekeeping'. (p. 30)

Akobi stops at nothing to reach his 'El Dorado' where wealth and riches are believed to be in abundance. Indeed, the distraught character, whose future seems to be gloomy in Africa, has been compelled to sell his wife's valuables in addition to "his demand that he [his father] should sell part of his farmlands and give him the money for some project he was about to undertake which would, guaranteed, bring in plenty of money". (p. 30) In fact, Akobi has resolved to sell his wife's treasure fraudulently following his father's refusal to give in to his whims as a spoilt child. On Mara's insistence to know why he has deprived her of her chattels, Akobi replies, rather peremptorily, "I deposited the money [out of the sale of your property] for my passport and a ticket. I am travelling to Europe." (p. 33) Undoubtedly, Akobi is unshakeable in his willpower to rejoin Europe as he tells his gullible wife, "in Britain the people are so rich that they throw fridges away ... And in Germany they throw cars away" (p. 35). Concurring with Edmond Cros in drawing a parallel between a literary work and the society in which it is deeply rooted¹¹, we can point out that Amma Darko's novel under scrutiny somehow depicts situations leading some young Africans to take the decision to leave for the Promised Land, Europe. There is often a clear-cut difference between a European's lifestyle and that of an African; and willing to match the European's lifestyle, some poverty-stricken and desperate Africans make for Europe. Accounting for the reason why young people set their heart on Europe, Adil Akkid, of the Moroccan Association for Human Rights, pinpoints, "As long as there is such a big difference in wealth and there are problems in Africa, there will always be immigration [to Europe and western countries]".¹² It follows that the total absence of a prospect of a better life or in other words, viewing the future with trepidation in the origin country triggers desperate Africans to leave for Europe. But moving abroad requires the holding of some documents.

Indeed, eventually, Akobi gets his passport after heavily oiling an officer's palm at the immigration department thinking he will get a better tomorrow in Europe. This is what the narrator in Amma Darko's novel says about Akobi's misfortune before getting his identification document allowing him to travel abroad: "Akobi had got his passport after heavily bribing someone at the passport office". (p. 39) Ignoring the procedures in force to get a passport, candidates for immigration are swindled by unscrupulous civil servants at the immigration department. Even the narrator, who is at the same time Akobi's wife, is also confronted with a situation in which she has to 'pay' the unprincipled civil servants at the passport office 'in kind' or 'in ready cash'. The narrator complains in this way:

it became necessary for me to approach mother and beg her to sell yet more of her beads because one clerk there [at the passport office] wanted to sleep with me before he pushed through my passport form, even before it got to the stage where I knew I would have to

¹¹ Edmond, Cros, "Towards a Sociocritical Theory of the Text," in <http://www.Theories/Towards a Sociocritical Theory of the Text – La sociocritique d'Edmond Cros.htm> dating July 21st 2014.

¹² Paul Schemm, "African Migrants Risk Lives to Reach Europe," in the online *THEWORLDPOST* ([http://www. Migration/African Migrants Risk Lives To Reach Europe.htm](http://www.Migration/African Migrants Risk Lives To Reach Europe.htm)) dating August 1, 2014

pay the bribes If I felt too big in my shoes to sleep with him because my husband was living in Europe and I myself was soon to go and join him, then I must do what people in big shoes, like I was shoving myself into, do: PAY! And pay I did. In the end, when I calculated, the bribes I had paid could have fed my whole family in the village for maybe a year or so. But I got my passport, which was what I wanted. (pp. 52-53)

Despite all this hassle with bureaucracy, Akobi continues his struggle because by then he still "*had no entry visa for any European country*" (p. 39). The entry visa in a European country has been denied to him probably because he has a low standard of formal education. Actually, the character Akobi, as a candidate for Europe, only holds "*a Form Four General Certificate*" (p. 5) and the furthest he can go with this level of education even in his native country is a "*messenger clerk at the ministries, at best*" (p. 5). In fact, the character Akobi has an overdeveloped sense of being inferior to the middle-class people especially to those in power, who have accumulated gadgets like cars, refrigerators, television sets, and have acquired real estate. Such Africans, who have reached the top of the social ladder, tend to marry white women. Oddly enough, Akobi, in his daydream, wants to match such people; and Europe is the only setting where he can attain such a goal; that is what the heterodiegetic narrator says about African characters of Akobi's calibre,

Ah, here [in Africa] if you had no such gadgets you were a nothing. You could have a television that was spoilt. It didn't matter. You probably did not even watch it or, if you did, you didn't understand anything on it [...] What mattered was that you had a television. And if as well as the television you had a fridge and a car, then, eh, between you and the Minister or doctor only his English wife separated you [...] And such a prestige it was that Akobi was aiming at? pp. 35-36)

Akobi's drive to make it for Europe comes only from his propensity to meet a social requirement to make a name for himself in his community. Characters of Akobi's type are keen on going to Europe not only for the social welfare that might follow on from it but mainly because the community values candidates for immigration to Europe and beentos very highly. Better still, the relations of such characters stand to benefit from this new social status as they too are highly respected. Indeed, when the news breaks out that Mara, the narrator is on the verge of flying to Europe, this is how her people are treated in the village:

That I was travelling to Europe raised me in the esteem of my family in the village so much that mother didn't even care any longer about the beads she had to sell [when we were raising money for my trip to Europe]. Suddenly, people were greeting her with low respectful bows and mothers were warning their children to handle my two sons with respect and care during play. (p. 54)

In this excerpt, Mara, leaving for Europe, raises not only her own status but also that of her people in the community. The social status of Mara's relations has changed in their community simply because their 'prodigy' daughter is on the verge of going to Europe. Needless to point out that in the mind of those people the mere mention of the fact that a native African intends to travel to Europe is enough to make him or her experience blissful happiness over there, and as an indirect result piling up wealth.

What are then the sufferings irregular migrants go through once in Europe?

4. The Disastrous Consequences of Illegal Immigration

Among other sad realities some irregular African women immigrants face in Europe is prostitution.

4.1. Prostitution

Amma Darko recounts the events in her novel out of order – analepsy – in which the female character Mara becomes wizened and remorseful out of prostitution in Europe and pities herself as she looks at what is left now of her body in an oval mirror. In fact, the heterodiegetic female character Mara learns to her expense that Europe is not made for unskilled and gullible people. This is what Mara says about Europe, “*Europe to me was a place so special and so very, very far away, somewhere unimaginable, maybe even somewhere near Heaven, where not just anybody could go. A place where only the very rich, those Ministers, the big doctors and lawyers who learned plenty of books and married white women could go*” (p. 34). Although Mara is quite aware that Europe is not meant for everybody, she endeavours to get there. Unfortunately, she realises that Europe is not what she thinks. The reader feels rather empathetic with Mara when she hears her point out in a monologue “*I am staring painfully at an image. My image? No! – what is left of what once used to be my image.*” (p. 1) It appears that Mara’s loose attitude, in an alien and hostile setting, has changed her physically so much so that she becomes withered, and undoubtedly, out of all recognition oddly enough, even for herself. It is no wonder therefore that the character Mara mopes about her reluctant emaciation due to the job she finds herself in, in the ‘heavenly’ European country, Germany. In that state of mind, the dreamy and disappointed African female character – Mara – feels utterly lonely and secluded in the sense that she raises, rather in dismay:

And yet here by myself, alone inside my room, I feel so very, very far away on my own. So friendless, isolated and cold.
I am just in brief silky red underpants, so I’m virtually naked, but that is not why I feel so cold because this coldness I feel does not grip my body so much as it does my soul. It’s deep inside me that feels this chilliness, from the dejected soul my body harbours, a soul grown old from too much use of its shelter. Yes! I’ve used myself and I have allowed myself to be too used to care any longer. (p. 1)

Mara’s sexual hyperactivity and exploitation have produced in her the feeling of loneliness and seclusion in that imaginary Promised Land, which torments her to the marrow. It is worth mentioning that Mara and her lady colleagues solely appear as sex objects in the dehumanising profession that they are compelled to do. The very black picture the authoress, Amma Darko, draws of the sexual hyperactivity of the female characters makes of them innocent aggrieved parties to the wickedness of male characters, and the sensitive reader might do nothing but share the grief and sorrow of the ‘exploited’:

Tears are building up in my eyes. They always do when I stare at what is left of me. They are blurring my vision and are slowly rolling down my face in an agonising rhythm like the beating of the devil’s own drums ... ta ... ta ... ta ... dropping down one after the other, painfully slow, painfully gradual, onto these two flabby, floppy drooping things I

call my breasts, my tired graceless bosom. I fear what I see when I look at myself. I shiver at the sight of my sore cracked lips which still show through the multiple layers of the glossy crimson paint I apply to hide them. (p. 2)

Out of the physical description made of Mara, the most seductive parts of her body – lips and bosom – will surely become repellent to male characters due to their overuse. When African characters, in Amma Darko's fictional prose work, exchange their sacred body for cash, they are simply subject to the assault of depraved and ruthless male characters. Indeed, to assuage their sex drive or worse still their 'bestiality', some male characters in Darko's novel pounce on prostitutes, as a wildcat will do on its prey. The female characters of easy virtue pay a heavy price for their loose attitudes as their mighty clients inflict scars on their body. Indeed, Mara worries herself sick over the idea that her mother, who has pinned all her hopes on her while heading for Europe, might be informed that her daughter turns out to be a whore and her sexually 'famished' clients claw all her body while abusing her. This is how Mara recounts the torture she recurrently goes through during her lovemaking and dreads her mother's practically certain disapproval of the misfortune befalling the promising daughter abroad,

What my poor mother back home in black Africa would say to these hideous traces of bites and scratches all over my neck, should she ever have the misfortune of seeing them, I fear to imagine. They extend even far beyond the back of my ears, several bruises and scars left generously there by the sadistic hands of my best payers, my best spenders. And even back down my spine too run a couple more – horrendous ones which I fortunately do not suffer the distaste of seeing vividly like those on my neck, and so I care less about them. (p. 2)

It is not picnic at all for Mara to assuage her numerous sexual partners' desires. As a matter of fact, Mara gives herself to the lover or client with the most enticing offer sacrificing, of course, principles and personal integrity. Mara's quest for a better living in Europe turns sour and nightmarish. Indeed, during one of her countless lovemaking with a client, her little left finger is fractured by a revengeful well-off client. Mara's moving accident 'at work' rings as follows:

Small was my little finger and it still cries, but no more for mother's playful hunger. It's bent. Its bone's been displaced and it looks weird. I see it all the time and I loathe it, but not the money that came with it. The injury was done to me by one of my best spenders, a giant of a man who always, when he comes to me, cries like a baby in my arms, telling me about his dictator wife whom he loves but who treats him so bad she makes him lick her feet at night. Then filled with the loathing and rage of revenge for this wife he'd love to kill, but lacking the guts even to pull her hair, he imagines me to be her, orders me to shout I am her, and does horrible things to me like I never saw a man ever do to a woman before in the bushes I hail from. But I bear it because it is part of my [prostitution] job. I listen attentively to his talk and comfort where I can. And even when he puts me in pain and spits upon me and calls me a nigger fool I still offer him my crimson smile and pretend he's just called me a princess, for I've got a job to do, and I've got to put my all in it. (pp. 2-3)

One can therefore conclude that Mara does not make any determined stand against this sexual assault or rather she lets herself go facing her sexual client's brutality simply because she realises that this is the heavy price she has to pay to continue living in Europe. She is obliged to face sexual assault of cold-hearted and self-centred men. Worse still, an unscrupulous rich European landlord takes

advantage, illegally, of the desperate character Mara by finding sexual customers for her in return for cash. This is how the narrator in the *Beyond the Horizon* by the Ghanaian novelist recounts the humiliation and exploitation that she and her peers in misfortune go through as modern slavery and human exploitation perpetrated by a mighty and money-grubbing man, "This man I call Oves. Formally, to others, he is Overseer. He is my lord, my master and my pimp. And like the other women on my left and right, I am his pawn, his slave and his property. What he orders, I do" (p. 3). From the foregoing excerpt, Overseer – living off immoral earnings – not only exploits those whores but he also traffics. Taking to prostitution, Mara's reputation is now in tatters. In this respect, how do candidates for illegal immigration absorb and assimilate European ways of life?

4.2. Acculturation

The electronic dictionary *Dicos Encarta*¹³ defines acculturation as a cultural change, a change in the cultural behaviour and thinking of a person or group of people through contact with another culture. In other words, acculturation can be likened to a cultural depersonalisation in the sense that African characters that are the symbolic representation of this phenomenon usually lose their sense of personal identity and external reality, generally for western values and culture. In this wake, Gbaguidi Célestin writes that some Africans, in contact with European culture, "reject and detest indigenous African values and ways of life in favour of foreign values. The desire to be 'Europeanised', while still African, leads to funny imitations of European lifestyles. European drinks are the vogue. European dresses are the order of the day and the mark of distinction".¹⁴ As socio-critics put forward, literature generally depicts facts of the society from which it hails¹⁵, in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* characters like Akobi and Mara adopt attitudes that are nothing but cultural depersonalisation. Indeed, Mara, for instance, changes her styles in clothing as soon as Akobi, her husband, leaves for Europe. In fact, Mara's social transformation stems from her desire to parade herself as the worthy wife of a man who now lives in Europe; she does not want to be viewed as a bush girl. Many a time has Akobi blacklisted her. Indeed, because of Mara's wretched dressing, Akobi is ashamed of being seen in her company especially when his colleagues are nearby. This is how Mara recounts her ordeal and ostracism with her 'beloved' husband:

I don't think that all this while that we had been living together Akobi had really bothered to take a close look at me in my shabby clothes concealing this extended belly of mine. But that morning he did. And from the look on his face at the bus stop as I waited for my truck and he for his Ministries bus, he didn't like what he saw. And to make matters worse, his bus arrived filled with 'gentlemen and ladies' co-workers like himself who saw that he knew me. I don't know what went on in the bus or at the work place but something must have happened because, following this first day, his attitude changed at

¹³ *Dicos Encarta* Microsoft® Encarta © 2009

¹⁴ Célestin Gbaguidi, *Morality and Social Instability in West African Literature: A Reading of Selected Novels by Chinua Achebe and Ayi Kwei Armah* (Abomey-Calavi: Université d'Abomey-Calavi, 2012), p. 115.

¹⁵ Barthélémy Kotchi, *Méthodologie et Idéologie* (Abidjan : CEDA, 1989), p. 66.

the station. He was still unwilling to let me leave with Mama Kiosk, so he would leave me, but at the station he left a respectable space between us. (p. 25)

One may feel very indignant at the way Akobi treats his wife by ostracising her. Akobi does not want his co-workers to get acquainted with his wife at the bus stop because the latter is in tatters. Akobi can be taxed with irresponsible husband as before his co-workers he behaves as if his wife were unknown to him or as if she were a nuisance or a leper. The situation goes worse at the arrival of the buses:

Then, too, about the time his bus usually arrived he would stretch his neck to see from afar if it was coming. And when he saw it coming he would very quickly and hastily move even farther away from me as if suddenly I was a stink-bomb scheduled to go off soon. When the bus stopped, unlike the first day when he muttered a curt 'Bye', he would board it without a look or glance at me. I wasn't as naive as before. I knew he was desperately trying to give the impression that he didn't know me. Above all, he didn't he didn't want the people in the bus to know that I was his wife. (p. 25)

Akobi's despicable attitude towards his wife presses her to 'Europeanise' her dressing when given the opportunity because she wants to attract Akobi to her; she does not want Akobi to view her as a bush girl any longer. In fact, she wants to distract Akobi's attention from the Ministries woman he is running after since Comfort, so to speak, is the name of that Ministries woman, is 'presentable' and 'civilised'. In this vein, this is how the narrator, Mara, awkwardly informs the readership about her rejection of African ways of life or clothing: "*I no longer wore African cloth, neither new nor old. No! I wore dresses, European dresses*". (p. 48) By adopting the European lifestyle, Mara wants to keep in touch with what is going on in her neighbourhood lest she might lose her 'civilised' husband. On no account can Mara justify her acculturation because anyhow she remains an African and must be proud of her African roots whatever the case. In fact, Mara overlooks the fact that an African will always feel uncomfortable when he or she europeanises his or her clothing in an African setting. Mara learns this at her expense when she is about to board an aircraft to Europe:

I wore jeans, the first ever pair of jeans, or indeed trousers for that matter, that I had worn in my whole life. I felt ecstatic about wearing these. They had been given to me, together with the rest of my attire, namely: a sweatshirt, a pullover, Adidas sport shoes and socks. Even though I was sweating profusely in them, since, after all, I was still in Africa... (p. 56)

Mara is not the only one to reject the African ways of life in the focus novel; Akobi adopts an attitude that borders on acculturation. Definitely, when Akobi comes into close contact with Europe he changes systematically his identity being ashamed of his African name. This is how the agent, who smuggles Mara into Europe, derides Akobi after the latter has changed his African name, "*Cobby is your husband Akobi. He changed his name to Cobby because he thinks that sounds more civilised*" (p. 66). Akobi's attitude consisting in changing the essential character that distinguishes him from the others - his identity - is rather blameworthy. How do candidates for immigration to Europe usually become disillusioned?

5. From Rapture to Disillusionment in Europe

Gleefully, desperate and poverty-stricken young Africans leave their origin countries in search of an imaginary welfare in western countries. In fact, in the novel under investigation, Akobi is obsessed with the idea that happiness and prosperity are only reachable in Europe through wealth accumulation and the acquisition of some ostentatious worldly property. Easing his conscience or seeking forgiveness after selling his wife's valuables, Akobi indoctrinates Mara over his project of going to Europe in this way, "*Mara, do you know that there is so plenty factory and construction work waiting to be done there in Europe but with so little people to do them? That is why I sold your things, Mara. I want to go there and work, to work hard.... I will make so much money that I can buy us everything! Everything, Mara! Television, radio, fridge, carpet, even car!*" (p. 34) Needless to point out Akobi dreams of better days only in Europe through the acquisition of materials. Better still, Akobi considers building a nice flat two years after moving to Europe. His dream rings as follows, "*If I don't miss you [Mara] and Kofo [our son] too much by then ... and I am able to stay on for another year or more, then before I return we can have our own home. A beautiful block house just like those government Ministers and doctors with their English wives* (p. 34). As we can see, candidates for unlawful immigration to western countries often dream of an improved standard of living for themselves and for their close relations. In this wake, Silvia Elena Ortega Meza rightfully highlights that, "*Illegal Immigration is the result of ... economic, social ... problems that people suffer in their origin country. People try to find a better tomorrow, and look for the well-being of their family. Many of these people consider this situation like the only way to achieve their stability in order to have better living conditions*".¹⁶ It appears that fed up with the utter destitution in which they vegetate in their home country, gullible and unskilled people venture into the western world looking forward to bettering their living conditions and those of their relations. The character Osey, an African who smuggles people into Germany, refutes categorically the assertion that Europe is an El Dorado; he confesses to Mara this way, "*You have to come here to know that it is not true*" (p. 77). As soon as Mara gets to Germany, Osey gets her thinking in this way, "*Mara, first we must tell you that life here in Germany for us black people, from Africa especially, is very very hard*" (p. 76). Since the 'line of demarcation' between fiction and reality is not so stiff, a Malian immigrant recounts her misfortune in Paris in this way:

I was raised by my grandmother in Mali, and when I was still a little girl a woman my family knew came and asked her if she could take me to Paris to care for her children. She told my grandmother that she would put me in school and that I would learn French. But when I came to Paris I was not sent to school, I had to work every day. In their house I did all the work; I cleaned the house, cooked the meals, care for the children, and washed and fed the baby. Every day I started work before 7 A.M. and finished about 11 P.M.; I never had a day off. My mistress did nothing; she slept late and then watched television or went out.¹⁷

¹⁶ Silvia E. O. Meza, "Causes of Illegal Immigration," from <http://www.Migration/Causes of Illegal Immigration.htm> dating July 21st 2014.

¹⁷ Kevin Bales, "The New Slavery" in *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 1.

This heartbreaking testimony is symptomatic of the disillusionment Africans suffer while they get to Europe. In Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon*, Akobi migrates illegally to Germany to assert himself socially once back in the fictitious village named Naka created by Amma Darko in her novel. Unfortunately, for him, Akobi has been confronted with realities that make all his dreams hard to pin down. As a result, his wife, whom he has left behind, becomes puzzled:

But with nearly two years since his [Akobi's] departure, all that we had heard from Akobi was one postcard and a brief letter that said that he was still settling and would write again as soon as he had settled. This settling, it seemed, was taking far longer than any of us anticipated. Two years it was he said he would need to work and make the money of his dreams. And the end of the two years was fast approaching and still there was no trace at all of any of the televisions and cars, the grinding machine and the rice harvester, not forgetting – most importantly of course – my six electric sewing machines. (p. 49)

From this long but edifying quotation, one can say that Akobi entirely deludes himself while in his origin country over the idea that Europe is really the place where anybody can be successful. In other words, the hope that he has cherished to pile up wealth two years after migrating to Europe is nothing but empty words. Another character, who goes into raptures over the idea that Europe is a place where great wealth can be acquired, is nobody else but Mara.

Mara's raptures over Europe ring as follows: "*All was going to be golden for me there [Europe] and, though I was going there poor, I would return with wealth and bring honour to Naka [my home village]*" (p. 55). It is clear that the character Mara migrates to Europe to make a fortune. Shortly she is utterly disappointed as she learns that her husband has taken a German wife to get permission to live in Germany as a legal resident. Worse still, Akobi suggests that Mara should live by his side with his German wife as a sister. Acting as Akobi's spokesperson, Osey's wife tells this to Mara, "*So you will go and live with them, but as his sister and not as his wife*" (p. 79). Therefore, Mara migrates to Europe only to face the reality that the man she has pinned all her hopes on is now sharing his life with another wife and she has to serve them as a housemaid, pretending to be her husband's sister.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that the characters that migrate illegally to Europe for better opportunities become disenchanted once they set foot on the European land. From the ordeal characters like Akobi and Mara have gone through in the European setting, the Ghanaian authoress Amma Darko, in *Beyond the Horizon*, deserves a lot of credit for making the younger generation understand that one must take one's destiny on a known setting through hard work. Even if the authorities shirk their responsibilities, the young must be made aware of the fact that there is no El Dorado elsewhere. In addition, African irregular immigrants must understand that unemployment or the lack of better future prospects is not a distinctive feature of the black continent but is a universal issue. The young people must toil to be socially as well as financially self-sufficient in their home country. They had better stay in their

home country rather than venture into an unknown setting as the destination is not always glorious.

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