

Character Naming and Authorial Attitudes in Contemporary African Literature.

Ayodele Adebayo Allagbé
English Department, Faculty of Letters, Arts and Humanities (FLASH),
University of Abomey-Calavi (UAC), Republic of Benin.
Laboratory for Research in Linguistics and Literature (LabReLL).

Abstract

One of the overt characteristic features of written literature, especially contemporary African literature, is character naming or labeling. Character naming, as the name implies, is a process whereby a writer names or labels his/her characters. The name given to a character (male or female) in a literary text often serves a specific function. Of course, the function of a given name is mediated by the choices its bearer makes (or someone else makes on behalf of its bearer) in the language system. In this sense, the analysis of language can be argued to unveil the roles a character plays as well as the attributes and traits s/he evinces in context; the roles as well as the attributes and traits, as believed, often exude the semantic import or meaning (or content) of the name the character bears. It can also be contended to reveal such aspects as gendered identities and social relations in social practice (McConnell-Ginet in Holmes and Meyerhoff, 2003). Anchored on theoretical insights from literary onomastics, gender studies and linguistics, this paper aims to explore how Amma Darko names or labels her male characters in four of her fictional works, viz. *Beyond the Horizon* (1995), *The Housemaid* (1998), *Faceless* (2003) and *Not Without Flowers* (2007). The analysis also highlights the authorial attitudes, perceptions and biases vis-à-vis the characters. The findings reveal that Darko obviously demeans the male image via the narrative technique of character naming in that the male characters are literally or/and rhetorically depicted through names and naming labels as well as roles, attributes and traits that denote or/and connote negative semantic imports or onomastic implications.

Keywords: Character naming, contemporary African literature, literary onomastics, male-dominated setting, male image.

1. Introduction

One of the overt characteristic features of written literature, especially contemporary African literature, is character naming or labeling. Character naming, as the name implies, is a process whereby a writer names or labels his/her characters. The name given to a character (male or female) in a literary text often serves a specific function. Of course, the function of a given name is mediated by the choices its bearer makes (or someone else makes on behalf of its bearer) in the language system. In this sense, the analysis of language can be argued to unveil the roles a character plays; these roles often exude the semantic import or meaning (or content) of the name the character bears. It can also be contended to reveal such aspects as gendered identities and social relations in social practice (McConnell-Ginet in Holmes and Meyerhoff, 2003). By the way, proper names are generally indexical of a specific culture or identity, ethnicity, geographical area or position, history, religion, sex/gender, etc. But once these names are deployed in literature, their function is no longer indexical or deictic but rather specific. This is to say, these names carry specific meanings which integrate and imprison the characters in the fictional world.

Wamitila (1999) submits that “character names can be used artistically to achieve a number of goals like encoding a central trait in a particular character's signification, embracing crucial thematic motifs, ideological toning as well as even showing the particular writer's point of view” (p.35). He further adds that “Character names can be used as expressions of experience, ethos, teleology, values, ideology, culture and attitudes of varying shades” (Ibid). In this article, I intend to explore how a female writer, Amma Darko, names or labels her male characters in four of her fictional works, viz. *Beyond the Horizon* (1995), *The Housemaid* (1998), *Faceless* (2003) and *Not Without Flowers* (2007). Drawing on theoretical insights from literary onomastics, gender studies and linguistics, I examine Amma Darko's naming or labeling of her male characters in relation to the roles and activities they are assigned to in the narrative context of the fictional texts. The analysis also highlights the authorial attitudes, perceptions and biases vis-à-vis the characters. Amma Darko is a contemporary female writer whose fictional works are generally set in Ghana, a male-dominated setting. As such, it can be expected of such literary works that men will be given names with positive semantic import and projected in roles and activities that promote the male image. In the next section (section 2), I first present the theoretical prerequisites of this study, clarifying the concept “onomastics” in relation to such aspects as literature, gender and linguistics and reviewing some previous studies relevant to the ongoing research topic before presenting the methodology that the study employs. In section 3, I also carry out the analysis proper, displaying the findings as well as discussing them before concluding (section 4).

2. Theoretical Prerequisites

2.1. *Conceptual Clarification and A Brief Literature Review.*

The current study employs a theoretical approach that is eclectic in nature. This is to say, it draws on theoretical insights from three distinct but complementary disciplines: literary onomastics, gender studies and linguistics. In a recent past, onomastics has been of major interest to many branches of scholarship, including linguistics, ethnography, folklore, dialectology, philology, history, geography, philosophy, gender studies and literary studies (Bright, 2003). Onomastics derives from the Greek word *onoma*, which means ‘name’. By definition, onomastics is the study of proper names. Adekoya (Adekoya in Adegbite, Adekoya and Adegoju, 2012:368-369) claims that “A name is an image and a metaphor. It not only gives the identity of a person or an object but it is also a representation of the person or the object”. According to Bright (Ibid: 670), “the word *name* is often used to mean a term which can refer to anything” or an entity in the physical world. The entity could be a person, an animal, a place, a thing or an abstract thing.

Tóth (2014) uses the term “literary onomastics” for the diverse study between literature and proper names. But I use the term here to mean the study of the semantic import of proper names in literature or in a literary text. Andersson (1994:15) (cited in Bertills, 2003:1) submits that “The most researched categories of proper names are personal names and place names”. For Bertills (2003:9), the term *proper name* (also proper noun) is an umbrella term which “covers the (proper) names of persons, animals, places, buildings, plants, bodies of water and the names of objects (artefacts)”, In this perspective, Tóth (Ibid: 2) contends that:

Proper names are important elements of human languages and may be connected to every field of human activity (history, culture, religion, arts, etc.). Naturally, names play significant roles in literary texts. Since in these texts reality and fiction mingle, the differences and similarities between the real world of the reader and the world of the text are important in the process of the reception.

In the same vein, Wamitila (1999) opines that:

In reading creative works we tend to identify characters basically by the names given to them. It is on this basic premise that some character analysis methods tend to define characters by taking recourse to their names and sometimes identifying them in metaphorical terms or as speaking names. Names play a very central and important role in any reading exercise and so would certainly the names given to characters be of importance to us. These are linguistic or semiotic signs that play a very crucial role in the overall linguistic structure of a literary text or its signification. Decoding of the names therefore becomes an important critical engagement in as far as it helps the reader in his [or her] deciphering of the text in which the names are (p. 35).

It is clear in the quote above that character naming is crucial to narrative formation as well as to its reception. The author actually plays a very important role in the naming or name-giving process. According to the Finnish onomastic scholar Kurt Zilliacus (1997:20) (cited in Bertills, 2003:9), “naming is artistic creation”. However, the act of naming is not only ‘artistic creation’, but it is also a semantic process which is forcefully ideology-driven. I maintain therefore that there is a dialectal relationship between a writer’s naming or name-giving process and his/her ideological orientation; both mutually inform each other (see Simpson, 1993; Sunderland, 2006 and Fairclough, 1989 respectively on the dialectal relationship between language, ideology and point of view, language and gender and language and power). By ideology, I mean the set of beliefs, attitudes, biases and perspectives the writer cogently holds onto and by which s/he interacts with his/her readers. By naming or labeling a persona, the writer consciously or unconsciously creates an ideological effect, which manifestly transpires or pervades his/her fictional world. One of the effective ways the writer uses to create and convey an ideological meaning in his/her fiction is to select a noun or name (or create one from the existing ones: e.g.: “Owura” (a local Asanti name meaning “Mister”) and “Kwaku” (a Wednesday male born child’s name) combine to form “Owurakwaku”, but this name is artistically or stylistically abbreviated into or reduced to “Owuraku” in Darko’s *The Housemaid* (1998)) from the alternatives or options provided in/by the language system. Language in this sense serves to encode the writer’s ideological stance or worldview (Alaghbary, Alazzany and Al-Nakeeb, 2015; Koussouhoun, Akogbéto and Allagbé, 2015), and as a result of this the authorial ideology can be argued to literally or/and rhetorically determine the semantic import or onomastic implication of his/her character names. This argument is actually evidenced by the fairly increasing body of research works on names and their semantic or/and onomastic implications.

Olamide (2013), in his article entitled “Semantic Implications of Authors’ Names in Creativity: A Study of Wole Soyinka’s Name as Reflected in His Selected Works”, shows how the author’s names impact his

creative use of language. In other words, the “study [explores] the meaning of Soyinka’s name and what it is used to mean in that the ideas, philosophies and phenomena that generate from his name, have onomastic implications” (Ibid: 715). Using Locke’s ideational theory of meaning and Mey’s Pragmatic acts theory, the study has been able to establish that Soyinka’s names embody some ideas which cannot be separated from the nature of meaning significations in his writings. Odebode (2005) also carries out a pragmasociolinguistic study of names and nicknames in Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horseman*. The scholar criticizes the view put forth by Latimer (1989) and Bamisaye (1997). The view is that names and nicknames signify nothing and are without any semantic relevance. Drawing on a pragmasociolinguistic approach, the scholar exudes that “names in African Yoruba worldview are meaningful and a name in the immediate environment (of a text) subsumes many others in the wider environment” (Odebode, 2005:211).

In her essay “What’s in a name? Womanism, Black Feminism and Beyond”, Collins (2001) explores some theoretical implications of using the terms “womanism” and “black feminism” to name a black women’s standpoint. After retracing the epistemology, philosophy, history as well as the political affiliation of womanism and black feminism, the scholar goes ahead to point out how African American women’s efforts to distinguish between the two ideological terms are limitative in that though the bearers of such social names or naming labels share the same space in common they in fact seem to belong to diverse groups of black women, and as result of this they treat women’s issues from different ideological perspectives. McConnell-Ginet (McConnell-Ginet in Holmes and Meyerhoff, 2003), in her paper entitled “What’s in a Name?” Social Labeling and Gender Practices”, is of the view that “Social [naming or] labeling practices offer a window on the construction of gendered identities and social relations in social practice” (p. 69). This denotes thus that a linguistic analysis of social names or nominal labels can give an insight into how gendered identities and social relations are constructed in a social practice, the social practice itself is mediated by language (Koussouhon, Akogbéto and Allagbé, 2014); i.e., the linguistic choices the interactants make while interacting. It also denotes that the proper name or nominal label an individual (male or female) bears or is assigned to in a social practice defines or represents his/her gendered identity (Adekoya in Adegbite, Adekoya and Adegoju, 2012), the individual’s gendered identity is dynamically negotiated via his/her interactions with others (Allagbé and Allagbé, 2015), the acts or roles the individual performs or the attributes or traits that s/he evinces in the interactions actually point out the meaning signification(s) of his/her name or naming label.

In this perspective, the name or nominal label assigned to an individual in a social practice can be contended to have either a positive or a negative semantic import or onomastic implication depending on the context of use, the linguistic study of which, as assumed by many proponents, can truly unveil the namer’s/writer’s attitudes, biases and ideological orientation or worldview vis-à-vis the name-bearer. This observation is actually in tandem with Adetunji (2010). In his paper entitled “Nicknaming soccer players: The case of Nigerian supporters of English Premier League clubsides”, Adetunji (2010) examines how football fans from the South-Western part of Nigeria name or nickname the players of their favourite leagues. The study actually reveals that the fans observed and interviewed used slangy coinages based on the players’ capabilities, performance, and roles on the field of play. This means that it is the extralinguistic or contextual realities surrounding the soccer game that determined the choice of slangy names or nicknames assigned to the players. The slangy names or nicknames the interviewees employed, as the study exudes, were derived from the mostly used Yoruba expressions which reflect the discourse practices motivated by the Yoruba people’s socio-cultural worldview.

2.2. Methodology.

This article seeks to explore how Amma Darko, names or labels her male characters in four of her fictional works: *Beyond the Horizon* (1995) (henceforth *BH*), *The Housemaid* (1998) (henceforth *TH*), *Faceless* (2003) (henceforth *F*) and *Not Without Flowers* (2007) (henceforth *NWF*). It draws its theoretical underpinnings from literary onomastics, gender studies and linguistics. It combines these theoretical underpinnings with the qualitative research method, which “involves data collection procedures that result primarily in open-ended, non-numerical data which is then analyzed primarily by non-statistical methods” (Dornyei, 2007:25). The data collected here are some of (not all of) the male character names and place names in the selected prose works. Since Amma Darko sets all her fictional texts in a male-dominated milieu, it is expected that in these literary works men will be given names with positive semantic import and projected in roles and activities that promote the male image.

3. Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

Names and naming practices are very important in any human language and culture. Bertills (2003:17) submits that “In most language[s and] cultures a (personal) name is considered to be the essential linguistic label of individuals”. It follows from this a view that the linguistic analysis of names or nominal labels can bring out the artistic values and ideological aspects of language-in-use prevailing in a literary work. In this sense, Wamitila

(1999:36) argues that “In analyzing names as expressions of experience, attitude and senses, one is in a way engaged in a linguistic analysis with social, political and ideological considerations predominating at various points. It is therefore possible to subject names of some of the characters [in a fiction] to a linguistic analysis”.

There are many male characters in the four selected fictional texts; while some of the characters are named, others are nameless. But this study subjects only twenty-four (24) of these male characters to a linguistic analysis. In other words, six male characters are selected from each of the four novels. In fact, it is the names or nominal labels of these male characters that are linguistically described. After the linguistic description of these names or naming labels is carried out, an attempt is subsequently made to show how Amma Darko, the writer whose selected prose works are under scrutiny here, foregrounds her authorial attitudes, perceptions and biases through the names or naming labels she assigns to her male characters. To unveil Darko’s attitudes, perceptions and biases vis-à-vis her male characters, the researcher has tried to linguistically and/or pragmatically infer the semantic import or onomastic implication of the male character names or naming labels from the narrative context of the fictional texts. In fact, the semantic import or onomastic implication of the male character names or nominal labels is denotatively or connotatively drawn mainly from role assignment. From the roles or acts these male characters perform in the narrative context of the fictional texts as well as the attributes or traits that they evince therein, especially in their interactions with other characters (female characters mainly), the meaning significations of their names or nominal labels are diligently worked out. The twenty-four (24) names and nominal labels selected for the current study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Some Male Character Names in the Selected Novels.

Novel Titles	<i>BH</i>	<i>TH</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>NWF</i>
Character Names	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mara’s father 2. Akobi Ajaman (Cobby) 3. The Secretary to the Housing and Construction Minister 4. Pee (Pompey) 5. Akobi’s father (Mr. Ajaman) 6. Osey 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tika’s father 2. Owuraku 3. A taxi driver 4. The scarred truck pusher 5. The stained teeth 6. Kofi Akorti 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maa Tsuru’s father 2. Kwei (Maa Tsuru’s first man) 3. Adade (Kabria’s husband) 4. Poison 5. Sylv Po 6. Onko (Uncle) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pa 2. Idan 3. Pesewa 4. Muff haircut 6. buck teeth

As the table above exudes, the names in Amma Darko’s selected novels are both full proper names (Akobi Ajaman in *BH*, Owuraku in *TH*, Kwei in *F*, Idan in *NWF*, etc.) and nominal labels (The Secretary to the Housing and Construction Minister in *BH*, The scarred truck pusher in *TH*, torpedo haircut in *NWF*, etc.). A close look at the linguistic forms of these naming labels discloses four categories: descriptive or characterizing or compound labels (The Secretary to the Housing and Construction Minister in *BH*, The scarred truck pusher in *TH*, torpedo haircut in *NWF*, etc.), specific title or profession labels (The Secretary to the Housing and Construction Minister in *BH*, A taxi driver in *TH*, etc.), abbreviations or clippings (Cobby for Akobi in *BH*, Pee for Pompey in *TH*, Pa for Papa in *NWF*, etc.) and deformations (Onko for Uncle in *F*). In addition, the linguistic analysis of the full proper names reveals that while most of the character names are bi/di-syllabic words (Cobby (clipped form of Akobi) and Osey in *BH*, Kofi in *TH*, Kwei and Onko (deformed form of Uncle) in *F*, Idan in *NWF*, etc.), others are monosyllabic (Pee (clipped form of Pompey) in *BH*, Pa (clipped form of Papa) and Muff in *NWF*, etc.) and polysyllabic (Akobi Ajaman in *BH*, Owuraku in *TH*, Adade in *F* and Pesewa in *NWF*, etc.). It should be noted that mono-syllabic words like Pee (clipped form of Pompey) in *BH*, Pa (clipped form of Papa) and Muff in *NWF* sound onomatopoeic. Onomatopoeic words often contain sounds similar to the noises they describe (Hornby, 2010). Based on the linguistic forms of these words, one might think that these names are empty nominal labels or do not have any semantic content at all. But this is not true in that every literary name or naming label always makes sense in its narrative context or serves a social or artistic effect or narrative purpose. Also, it should be noted that the transformation of “Akobi” to “Cobby” in *BH* points to a new status or a change of ideological stance. Here language serves as a tool of/for self-renaming. This male character moves to Germany, there he finds out that an African name like his is too difficult for Germans to articulate. So he decides to clip his African name “Akobi” to the more German-friendly “Cobby”. This character’s attitude denotes denaturalization or acculturation, which is a direct consequence of what Obiechina (1974:11) terms “Couriferism- an uncritical imitation of Western customs”. Ogunwale and Bamigbade (2012) term this character’s attitude or act as name dropping and change. They further argue that name dropping and change, two sociolinguistic phenomena characterizing most contemporary African elites, portend a strong linguistic alienation and culture subversion. Indeed, a prototype of Akobi is intertextually found in Chimamanda Ngozi

Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009:169-173). This character's African name is *Ofofodile Emeka Udenwa*. Like Akobi, when Ofofodile travels to America, he transforms his name to *Dave Bell* (or simply drops his African name for a European one) and even forces his newly married wife, *Chinaza Agatha Okafor*, to do the same. In short, Darko, like Adichie, is raising the reader's awareness through the character trait of self-renaming/name dropping or change on how a change of sociocultural setting or place imparts (or can impart) an individual's behaviour patterns, attitudes and ideological stance (Koussouhoun and Allagbé, 2013). Again, the transformation of "Pompey" to "Pee" in *BH*, "Papa" to "Pa" in *NWF* and "Uncle" to "Onko" in *F* reveals such interpersonal dimensions as casualness, proximity, familiarity and informality. Drawing on Cate Poynton's (1985) (cited in Eggins, 1994:64) tenor continua adopted by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the transformed names can be said to exude an affective or interpersonal meaning of equal power, high affective involvement and frequent contact. The transformation of the names also exudes that the name-bearers have chosen another point of view or ideological stance which is different from the one of their neutral names (Wamitila, 1999). From the foregoing, it is obvious that Darko foregrounds her attitudes, perceptions and biases through the various male character names or naming labels.

To make the inference I have just made above clearer, I need more examples. Consider how "The stained teeth" in *TH*, "torpedo haircut" and "buck teeth" in *NWF* and "Poison" in *F* encode the authorial attitudes, perceptions and biases in what follows suit. On their surface structure, these names or naming labels directly or denotatively project a bad male image. For instance, "The stained teeth" in *TH*, "torpedo haircut" and "buck teeth" in *NWF* are metonymic labels with a negative semantic import and onomastic implication. Though these metonymic labels obviously describe or characterize the physical feats or traits of their bearers, they as a matter of fact embody the namer's tacit intention. From the perspective of feminism or/and gender studies (cf. Lakoff, 1975; Butler, 1988, 1990/1999, 2004; Hooks, 2000; Holmes and Meyerhoff, 2003; Sunderland, 2006), one can claim here that the namer's intention, as evinced by her deflatory language, is meant to represent the name-bearers and, beyond that, their sex or/and gender negatively. This representation shows that the namer, Darko, adopts or has adopted a gender politics that does no justice or good to men at all. In addition to this observation, by linguistic convention, proper names or nominal labels are normally written or start with a capital letter, but this is not the case in "torpedo haircut" and "buck teeth" in *NWF*. Besides, Darko has the possibility in the language system to choose and use full proper names for these male characters, but she consciously desists from doing so and simply resorts to a redundant use of anonymity all through. The conscious breach of the convention and redundant use of anonymity by Darko, apart from exuding respectively an artistic or stylistic effect and validating the reductionist view of language put forth by the American philosopher of language Benjamin Whorf, invariably foregrounds her strong desire and deliberate will to downgrade, deflate or bash the male image (to borrow Adjei's terms).

In the same token, the *onoma* or name or nickname "Poison" given to the streetlord in *F* is self-suggestive (Adjei, 2009) in that it sounds evil. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 2010:1130), this name is defined as "a substance that causes death or harm if it is swallowed or absorbed into the body". It follows from this definition that the person who bears this name or nickname in *F* is naturally predisposed to or teleologically conjured up to be portentous, dangerous, cruel, heartless and inhuman. A cursory reading of Darko's four fictional texts under scrutiny here makes one perplexed in that almost all the men that populate her fictional world are or behave like "Poison", the very few responsible or good men in Darko's fictional world, as Adjei (Ibid: 57) notes, "die [even] before the stories open" (I will discuss this aspect in detail in the subsequent paragraphs). From the foregoing, I think Adjei (Ibid: 48) is right when he writes that "Darko fits into [the] frame of female writing which concentrates on men as enemies." One can understand Darko's attitudes towards men from the narrative ideology she has adopted and executed in her fiction. I submit here that Darko has executed the feminist project *à la lettre* in her fiction (see Lakoff, 1975; Hooks, 2000; Emecheta in Akporobaro et al, 2010 on feminism). The feminist project seeks to deconstruct such traditional structures as patriarchy, its sexist or androcentric ideologies and male-dominance and power in contemporary African literature (and by extension society) (see Simpson, 1993, on sexism or/and androcentrism).

Darko further foregrounds her feminist ideological or gender political orientation via the roles and activities she assigns to her male characters (named and nameless alike) in the fictional texts under study. Via role assignment, Darko polarizes the two categories (named and nameless) of male characters in her selected novels as good and bad men. But she foregrounds the bad epitome of men much more than any other thing in her prose works. By so doing, she demeans summarily the male image in the cultural setting of the novels. According to Wamitila (1999:37), "One of the most basic qualities about a name is the relationship with a "particular" culture, this is what can be termed as the social contextuality of naming." The names used in the selected novels are actually contextualized in that they point to a specific and identifiable cultural setting: Ghana. Except *BH* which is set both in Ghana and Germany, the rest of the prose works; I mean *TH*, *F* and *NWF*, are all set in Ghana. It should be borne in mind here that Ghana, like Germany, is a patriarchal society. In a patriarchal society, men detain all the power (social, economical and political). They also serve as the norm for the counter-

sex or/and gender; I mean women.

From the roles and activities the major male characters (Mara’s father and Akobi Ajaman in *BH*, Maa Tsuru’s father and Maa Tsuru’s first man (not to say husband), Kwei in *F*, Tika’s father and Tika’s boyfriend, Owuraku in *TH* and Pa, Ma’s husband, Idan and Pesewa in *NWF*) in the selected novels play, one can note that Darko thematically encapsulates her male character names or naming labels. Mara’s father and Akobi Ajaman, given the thematic roles they play in the plight of the female protagonists (Mara in *BH* and Maa Tsuru, her children (mainly her female children: Baby Tsuru (Baby T) and Fofu in *F*) and Maa Tsuru’s father and Maa Tsuru’s first man (not to say husband), Kwei, are names or naming labels denotatively or connotatively contextualized to mean carriers of such attributes or traits as brutish, exploitative, eccentric, materialistic, lustful, greedy, deceitful, reckless and heartless. Likewise, the roles and activities thematically allotted to Tika’s father and Tika’s boyfriend, Owuraku in *TH* and Pa, Ma’s husband, Idan and Pesewa in *NWF* rhetorically contextualize their names to symbolize a dual meaning signification: exploiters/exploited, predators/preys, independent/dependent individuals, responsible/irresponsible fathers, husbands or men, etc. (See Koussouhon, Akogbéto and Allagbé, 2015). From a feminist (linguistic) perspective, Darko’s characterization of the male characters in her fictional world denotes once again her intention; i.e., her ardent desire “to deconstruct and demolish the patriarchal status quo [...]” (Adjei, 2009:48) in contemporary African literature.

Now, I turn to the places or settings of the selected novels. “Another important aspect of names is related to the concept of place or setting. Setting refers to the spatio-temporal circumstances in which the events of a narrative occur. One can approach names of literary characters as pointers to the social, economic and political setting in which they find themselves. In this particular case the name becomes a marker of particular quality associated with a fictional character” (Wamitila, 1999:37). The four novels under study here do contain many place names or settings. However, I select and discuss only six of such place names in the novels. Actually, the selected place names are not linguistically described, but they are categorized. After categorizing these place names, their meaning signification is inferred accordingly from the narrative context of the fictional texts under scrutiny. From this, the researcher has been able to elicit Amma Darko’s attitudes, perceptions, judgments, etc. The six (06) place names drawn from the four novels are tabulated below.

Table 2: Some Place Names in the Selected Novels.

Novel Titles	<i>BH</i>	<i>TH</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>NWF</i>
Place Names	1. Naka 2. Germany (Europe)	1. Kataso 2. Accra	1. Sodom and Gomorrah 2. Accra	1. Sakumono 2. Oxford street

As shown in the table above, the place names mentioned in Amma Darko’s selected novels can be categorized as factual, fictionalized and fictionalized factual place names (Naka and Germany (Europe) in *BH*, Kataso and Accra in *TH*, Accra in *F*, Sakumono and Oxford street in *NWF*, etc.) and fictionalized factual historical place name (Sodom and Gomorrah in *F*). Place names like “Naka” in *BH*, “Kataso” in *TH* and “Sodom and Gomorra” in *F* on their deep structure sharply contrast with a place name like Germany (Europe) in *BH*. There is a general mistaken view that Africa is poor and Europe rich. This view is discredited, for instance, by the narrative context of *BH*. The novel reveals that there are as rich and poor people in Europe as in Africa. Consider the place name “Sodom and Gomorrah” in *F*. This place name (a fictionalized market name in Accra city) actually alludes to the Biblical historical “Sodom and Gomorrah”. The “Sodom and Gomorrah” in the Holy Bible (see Genesis 19:1-29) is a land full of iniquities, a place of moral decadence and perdition. By transposing this Biblical meaning into her literary world, Darko naturally seeks to create a strong symbolic image therein. The image she creates here is that of a place where the people (male and female alike) therein are submitted to abject and rampant poverty expressed by such aspects as lack of basic social amenities, squalid environment, human suffering, joblessness, etc. Like Sodom and Gomorrah, Kataso in *TH*, an eastern village in Ghana, rhetorically symbolizes a poverty-stricken area where people lack entertainment centres, flowing water, electricity, etc. What’s more, Kataso is contextually characterized as:

a village with an appetite for material showmanship and obsessed with things of the city. [...] this passion alone is enough to dismantle all the time-tested mores, norms and values as the people find themselves sucked into the desires and defining symbols and images of the city– radio, television, fridge, rasta braids, American hip-hop culture, sleek cars etc. In addition, Kataso is also a grooming ground where boys and girls are sexually hyper-active (Adjei, 2009:51).

From the point of view of Critical Linguistics (CL) (Fowler and Kress, 1979) informed by the descriptive apparatus of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) (Eggs, 1994; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Fontaine,

2013), place names (otherwise known as circumstances of location) do serve to encode or reinforce the authorial ideology. In this sense, it can be put forth that through the various place names in/from the fictional texts under study, Darko critically evaluates the defects and ills (social, economical and political) of post-colonial and capitalist contemporary (African and European) societies and subsequently expresses her attitudes, perceptions, judgments, etc., towards/of them in her prose works. Her critical evaluation clearly exudes how the complexities, pressures and tensions (both at infrastructural and superstructural levels) observable in such societies are dramatic for people's lives. It also exudes that the quality of a people's lives as well as their behaviour and thought patterns determines and is in turn determined to a large extent by what is obtainable in their societies.

4. Conclusion.

The qualitative analysis of the four novels exudes that Amma Darko's male characters bear both full proper names (Akobi Ajaman in *BH*, Owuraku in *TH*, Kwei in *F*, Idan in *NWF*, etc.) and nominal labels (The Secretary to the Housing and Construction Minister in *BH*, The scarred truck pusher in *TH*, torpedo haircut in *NWF*, etc.). A perfunctory glance at the linguistic forms of the naming labels reveals four categories: descriptive or characterizing or compound labels, specific title or profession labels, abbreviations or clippings and deformations. Also, the linguistic study of the full proper names discloses three types of word patterns: monosyllabic, bi/di-syllabic and polysyllabic, with bi-syllabic being the most dominant. Again, most of the mono-syllabic names sound onomatopoeic. The linguistic patterning of the male character names and naming labels actually unveils the social or artistic effects of Darko's literary or creative language, which linguistically and/or pragmatically elicits her tacit authorial attitudes, perceptions and biases.

Apart from the linguistic patterning of male character names and labels in Darko's prose works, the study has examined the roles and activities she assigns to the male characters in the fictional world. This is meant to foreground the semantic import or onomastic implication of the character names or nominal labels in the narrative context as well as Darko's point of view, ideological stance or worldview. The analysis does exude that while the male character names or labels in *BH* and *F* are denotatively or connotatively contextualized as carriers of such attributes or traits as brutish, exploitative, eccentric, materialistic, lustful, greedy, deceitful, reckless and heartless, those in *TH* and *NWF* contextually symbolize a dual meaning signification: exploiters/exploited, predators/preys, independent/dependent individuals, responsible/irresponsible fathers, husbands or men, etc. By the way, the place names or settings of/from the four novels provide insightful contextual clues that determine linguistically and/or pragmatically the aforementioned semantic imports or meaning significations of the male character names or nominal labels. From the foregoing findings, this paper infers that though Darko sets her fictional texts under study in a male-dominated setting, she does not in fact celebrate the male image in that she typifies her male character names or nominal labels negatively and projects them in negative roles and activities. In this sense, the paper submits that Darko has duly executed the feminist project in her fiction. Naming, as repeatedly shown in the current study, is one effective means Darko draws on to downgrade, deflate or bash (to borrow Adjei's terms) the male image, thereby deconstructing patriarchy.

5. References

- Adegbite, W., Adekoya, S. and Adegoju, A. (2012). *Use of English: A Manual on Communicative Skills for Tertiary Institutions*. Lagos: Olas Ventures
- Adetunji, A. (2010). "Nicknaming soccer players: The case of Nigerian supporters of English Premier League clubsides", in *California Linguistic Notes*, Volume XXXV No. Pp. 1-19.
- Adichie, C.N. (2009). *The Thing Around Your Neck*, First Edition. Lagos: Farafina.
- Adjei, M. (2009). "Male-bashing and narrative subjectivity in Amma Darko's first three novels", in *SKATE Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. no. 1. Pp. 47-61.
- Akporobaro, F. B. O., Sotunsa, M. E. and Iguanre, S. (2010). *Landmark and New Essays in Literary and Linguistic Theories and Analysis*. First Edition. Ikeja, Lagos: Princeton Publishing Co.
- Alaghbary, G. S., Alazzany, M. and Al-Nakeeb, O. (2015). "Linguistic Approaches to Ideology: Review of Work between 1979 and 2010", in *IJALEL*. 4(5): 1-10.
- Allagbé, A. A. and Allagbé, A. M. (2015). "A Cross-Examination of Female Masculinities And Male Femininities In *Mema* By Daniel Mengara", in *Studies in English Language Teaching*. Vol. 3, No. 4. Pp. 384-394.
- Bertills, Y. (2003). "Beyond Identification: Proper Names in Children's Literature". Unpublished PhD Thesis. Abo Akademi University, Finland.
- Bussmann, H. (1996). *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. USA and Canada: Routledge.

- Butler, J. (1988). "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory", in *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 519-531.
- Butler, J. (1990/1999). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Great Britain: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing Gender*, First Edition. Great Britain: Routledge.
- Collins, P. H. (2001). "What's In A Name? Womanism, Black Feminism and Beyond", in *The Black Scholar*, Volume 26, No. 1. Pp. 9-17.
- Darko, A. (1995). *Beyond the Horizon*, First Edition. London: Heinemann.
- Darko, A. (1998). *The Housemaid*, First Edition. London: Heinemann.
- Darko, A. (2003). *Faceless*, First Edition. Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers.
- Darko, A. (2007). *Not Without Flowers*, First Edition. Accra, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers.
- Dorney, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*, First Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Eggins, S. (1994). *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*, First Edition. London: Pinter Publishers.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*, First Edition. New York: Longman Group UK Limited.
- Fontaine, L. (2013). *Analysing English Grammar: A Systemic Functional Introduction*. First Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Fowler, R. and Kress, G. (1979). "Critical linguistics", in R. Fowler, B. Hodge, G. Kress & T. Trew, *Language and control* (pp. 185-221). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Fludernik, M. (2009). *An Introduction to Narratology*, First Edition. London and New York: Routledge.
- Halliday, M. A. K. & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Arnold.
- Holmes, J. and Meyerhoff, M. (2003). *The Handbook of Language and Gender*, First Edition. USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Hooks, B. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody: passionate politics*. Canada: South End Press.
- Hornby, A. S. (2010). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- King James (Undated). *The Holy Bible*, Waynesboro: OM Literature.
- Koussouhon, A. L. and Allagbé, A. A. (2013). "The Lexicogrammar of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Fiction: A Systemic Functional Contribution", in *Langage & Devenir*, No. 22, Revue Semestrielle. Pp. 19-44.
- Koussouhon, A. L., Akogbéto, P. and Allagbé, A. A. (2014). "Gender Relations and Mood Choices: A Systemic Functional Analysis of Amma Darko's *The Housemaid*". Paper presented at the 16th Colloquium held at University of Lome, from 20-25 October, 2014.
- Koussouhon, A. L., Akogbéto, P. and Allagbé, A. A. (2015). "Portrayal Of Male Characters By A Contemporary Female Writer: A Feminist Linguistic Perspective", in *International Journal of Advanced Research*. Volume 3, Issue 12, 314-322.
- Koussouhon, A. L., Akogbéto, P., Koutchadé, I. and Allagbé, A. A. (2015). "Decoding The Context Of Ideology In Two Extracts From A Contemporary Ghanaian Prose Work", in *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*. Vol. 2, No. 4. Pp. 129-139.
- Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Marfo, C., Yeboah, P. A. and Bonku, L (2015). "Exploiting the Exploiter: Some Violations of Society's Expectations in *Beyond the Horizon* and *The Housemaid*", in *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, Vol. 21(1): 35-46.
- Odebode, I. O. 2005. "A Pragmasociolinguistic Study of Names and Nicknames in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*", in *Perspectives on Language and Literature*. Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press Ltd. 199-214.
- Obiechina, E. (1974). *Culture, Tradition And Society In The West African Novel*, First Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ofori, J. D. (2013). "The Feminist Voice in Contemporary Ghanaian Fiction: A Textual Analysis of Amma Darko's *Faceless* and *Not Without Flowers*", in *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 178-188.
- Ogunwale, J. A. and Bamigbade, O. E. (2012). "Linguistic Alienation and Culture Subversion as Sociolinguistic Factors for Name Dropping and Change among the So-Called Yoruba Elites", in *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, Volume 19, Issue 11, Ver. I (Nov. 2014), PP 42-53.
- Olamide, A. E. (2013). "Semantic Implications of Author's Names in Creativity: A Study of Wole Soyinka's as Reflected in His Selected Works", in *Language in India*. Pp. 714-735.
- Phillips, L. (2006). *The Womanist Reader*, First Edition. New York: Routledge.
- Simpson, P. (1993). *Language, Ideology and Point of view*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Simpson, P. (2004). *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*, First Edition. London: Routledge.
- Sunderland, J. (2006). *Language and Gender: An Advanced Resource Book*. First Edition. London and New York: Routledge.

- Sunderland, J. (2009). "Language and gender in African contexts". *Proceedings of the BAAL Annual Conference 2009* held in Newcastle University, 127-130.
- Tóth, L. (2014). "Theory and methodology in literary onomastics: Proper names in István Szilágyi's novels (in particular in *Hollóidő /Time of ravens/*)". Unpublished PhD Thesis. Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Piliscsaba.
- Wamitila, K. W. (1999). "What is A Name: Towards Literary Onomastics In Kiswahili Literature", in *AAP 60*. Pp. 35-44.