



# WOMEN'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON MEN IN AMMA DARKO'S *THE HOUSEMAID* AND DANIEL MENGARA'S *MEMA*

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## ABSTRACT

Some feminist scholars qualified women's implication in domestic violence against men as self-defence or retaliation. This paper examines the context and interaction that may lead women to abuse men in *The Housemaid* and *Mema* (2003) through womanist and radical feminist approaches. As findings, women's domestic violence on men has appeared as a product of radical feminism because radical feminist ideology is contrary to that of womanists. Through the study of the female characters such as Sekyiwa and her husband's ex-wife in Darko's novel and a female character, Mema, in Mengara's novel, the motives paving the way for women's violence on men/husbands can be traced in the followings: female masculinity, women's deliberate will to maintain control over men due to their economic advantage, age difference, revenge and violation of African values related to marriage. Women's violence on men may lead to the increase of men's violence on women. Violent African women may lose the support or defence of their societies and social institutions designed to maintain gender equality/equity. So, it is advisable for African women not to make justice themselves but recourse to nonviolent approaches and to competent law enforcement institutions whether modern or traditional in order to defend themselves.

**Keywords:** Domestic violence; women, men; African society, African Literature, feminism

## INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence, also called family violence and intimate partner violence, is an abuse of power in a relationship displayed by exertion of physical, verbal, sexual, psychological and emotional control by one family member or intimate partner to control the other. As Anthonia Uzuegbunam (2013) confirms,

Domestic violence includes any aggressive behaviour or maltreatment among intimate partners which occur in privacy of a home, family or clan. These include all hostile acts committed by any family members against another, spouse, parents, child, siblings, grandparents, in-laws etc., irrespective of sex, status, race, age, religion or emotional

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state. It can be in form of aggressive behaviours by which the victims are physically or emotionally disturbed or harmed. Thus, any threat or indecent assault, personal or economic intimidation, undue curtailment of freedom, any expression that reduces a person's dignity, any physical assaults, blows, beating, strangulations that are complete or incomplete, jabs with sharp or blunt objects, slaps, kicks, sexual abuse of any kind, inordinate sexual demand and or refusal, etc., constitute manifestations of violence within the home, household or family, clan etc., (pp. 185-186).

Women are known to be victims of domestic violence and men as perpetrators, in African traditional societies. As Anthony Abayomi Adebayo stipulates, 'in domestic violence, man is culturally assumed as the aggressor and the victim a female' (2014, p.17). That belief/assumption is favoured by stereotypical roles attributed to men and women in patriarchal societies, especially in traditional African societies. According to Léonard Koussouhon and Fortuné Agbachi, "Stereotypically, men are seen as violent-being the ones who exert acts of violence on women-while women are considered as non-violent-being the victims of men's violent actions"(2016, p.86). This observation has actually aroused the interest of many advocates of gender equality.

One fundamental resolution of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women is that "violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women [...]"(2000, p.2). While objecting to the foregoing views of violence, Shakil Mohd says that

[...]one needs to understand that dynamics of domestic violence and abuse among men and women are different, and reasons, purposes, and motives are often very different. There are various studies on dynamics of violence against women, but there are limited studies on the issue of domestic violence and abuse against men (2016, p.123).

Women's implication in domestic violence against men is seen by feminist scholars as an unequal power between men and women in society. As a result, Jan Seeley and Catherine Plunkett hold that

[...] domestic violence is seen as a result of a patriarchal society and the unequal distribution of power that has historically oppressed women. It is primarily about the misuse of power by men, who believe they have the right to control women through emotional and physical violence (2002, p.6).

It is also argued to be self-defence or retaliation to men's provocations. In this sense, Donald Dutton and Tonia Nicholls contend that "The feminist paradigm supports the notion that domestic violence is primarily a culturally supported male enterprise and that female violence is always defensive and reactive. When women are instigators, in this view, it is a *preemptive strike*," aimed at instigating an inevitable male attack" (2005, p.683).

Similarly, Suzanne Swan and David Snow note that women's implication in violence can be motivated by two factors, namely: defensive motivations and active

motivations: 'Defensive motivations (self-defence, protecting children, and fear) involve defending oneself and one's children from physical harm. Active motivations (control and retribution) refer to motivations that go beyond self-defence and encompass anger, revenge, and a desire to control the partner' (2006, p.1031). Interestingly enough, Russell Dobash and Emerson Dobash argue that in order to consider women's violence as an act of 'self-defence', it is necessary to consider the context in which the 'act' occurred, including the interaction between the individuals involved. These elements are essential in the application of the term 'self-defence' (2004, p.341). In this perspective, we have raised the following question: Should all women's domestic violence against their intimate partners (husbands/men) be considered as self-defence or retaliation?

So, to answer the question, we have tried to examine the context and interaction that may lead women to abuse men in Amma Darko's *The Housemaid* (1998) and Daniel Mengara's *Mema* (2003) through womanist and radical feminist approaches.

### **1. Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework of this study falls on womanism and radical feminism. The womanist and radical feminist approaches are two different women's movements that serve as advocates against gender inequality between women and men in patriarchal societies. In order to reach their goals, they have come up with different strategies women can follow so as to fight for their rights against social, political, economic and cultural injustice that have long maintained women in a marginalised position in patriarchal societies.

As differences between womanism and radical feminism, one can briefly retain that womanism strives for a meaningful union and survival of women, men and children. For instance, the notion of inclusiveness can be deduced in "Alice Walker's term of the 'womanist' meaning a woman who is committed to the survival of the wholeness of entire people..." (2006, p.28). Drawing on this, Léonard A. Koussouhon and Ashani Michel Dossoumou claim that "Womanism is an inclusive theory centered on the natural order of things in the nature, society and family" (2015, p.130).

Literary critics are divided as regards whether womanism should be considered or interchangeably be called African feminism or not. But feminism (radical feminism) is different from womanism. The difference between feminism and womanism is that feminism is a social movement that revolves around women's issues alone and the eradication of sexism, while womanism, as Layli Phillips argues, "does not emphasize or privilege gender or sexism; rather, it elevates all sites and forms of oppression, whether they are based on social-address categories like gender, race or class, to a level of equal concern or action" (2006, pp.xx-xxi).

Unlike womanism, radical feminism is a branch of feminism which believes in using violence either in advocating for women's rights or solving problems of injustice. Ijeoma Ann Ibeku holds that "[...] Radical feminism [...] uses violence in order to gain their freedom" (2015, p. 430). Similarly, Mawuli Adjei points that "Radical feminism attempts to draw lines between biologically determined behaviour and culturally-determined behaviour" (2009, p. 47).

Despite the difference between womanism and radical feminism, they are used in portrayal of female characters in the contemporary African male and female novels under study. So the two approaches would help to examine the reaction of women portrayed in the novels. The next paragraph shed lights on the methodology of the work.

## **2. Methodology**

Even though radical feminism and womanism are different in terms of stratagem, they are women's struggles against social, political, economic and cultural injustice towards women in patriarchal societies. We shall explore radical feminism and womanism approaches to interpret the reactions of the women depicted, in the African male and female novels, concerning domestic violence so as to see if all women's domestic violence against their intimate partners (husbands/men) should be considered as self-defence or retaliation.

The women, in the novels, are purposively chosen based on their interactions and reactions to male counterparts. Another criterion stressed the fact that the women, under study, are represented within the framework of the socio-cultural African setting and context of contemporary African fictional oeuvres. The next paragraph focuses on the analysis of the fictional works.

## **3. Women's domestic violence on Men in Darko's *The Housemaid* and Mengara's *Mema*.**

In Darko's *The Housemaid*, there is a female character named Sekyiwa who abuses her husband. The context in which this woman exercises violence on her husband is progressively unfolded to the reader. The narrator first informs the reader that the man invests all his money on his wife in order to make her a successful tycoon. After this, he suggests to her that they start enjoying life but she refuses: '[...] Sekyiwa gave him a scornful jeer. 'Enjoy what life? What life is there to enjoy with a dead penis' (Darko, 1998, p. 18).

The reader is further informed that the disagreement between Sekyiwa and her husband leads to a protracted confrontation between them: 'That was how the squabbles started. [In fact,] No day passed without a fight or an argument' (Ibid. p. 18).

Financial problems are commonly known as the origin of dispute in a couple. But in the novel, Darko informs the reader via Sekyiwa that a sexual dysfunction of a partner can also lead to a squabble in a marital home. It should be recalled that the squabble between Sekyiwa and her husband is what leads her into dating other young men to whom she pays 'good money' in order to have 'good sex' (Ibid. p. 18) from them. And that's why she insults and mocks her husband by calling him 'dead penis' (Ibid. p. 18). The way Sekyiwa name calls her husband is an emotional/psychological abuse which can lead to anger and loss of temper from the husband.

In fact, the word 'dead penis' used by Sekyiwa is scientifically called erectile dysfunction. The husband's erectile dysfunction is technically normal due to his age. Doug Lording confirms 'Erectile dysfunction is very common and becomes even common in older men' (2010, p.1). As the narrator relates, there is a great age-gap between Sekyiwa and her man: 'Madam Sekyiwa, Tika's mother [...] At the age of twenty-two she began a clandestine affair with a married man twenty-four years her senior' (Darko, 1998, p.18). Mathematically, if one has to work out the aforementioned age of her husband and that of their daughter, he will probably be more than sixty years when the fight/argument takes place between him and his wife.

Darko appears to be a feminist in the way she has tried to empower Sekyiwa economically. As Komla Messan Nubukpo notes, '[...] feminism appears fundamentally as a reform ideology [with] the objective of which is to help every woman stand on her own feet, cast off her old man imposed self and eventually become all that she can be' (1995, p.59). But she does not inform the reader about who first exercises violence on whom between Sekyiwa and her husband. As a matter of fact, in most parts of the novel, she informs the reader through Tika (the daughter of Sekyiwa of the man) that Sekyiwa dominates her husband physically whenever there is a fight between them: '[...] her mother's hands flying at her father's face in time with her insults. It was her father who had wept' (Darko, 1998, p. 19). By so doing, Darko confirms Leslie Maureen Tutty's argument that 'Men who are abused are more likely to be slapped, kicked, bitten or hit, or have something thrown at them' (2008, p.3). The question of how to qualify Sekyiwa's motivation to do violence against her husband still remains.

Indeed, Sekyiwa's domination of her husband calls for 'a better understanding of how masculinities are shaped in different environments [because this] would be an important contribution to the field of violence and not just to violence against women' (2007, p.12). The only factor that one may consider as the cause of her use of violence is that her husband may want to prove his manliness or masculinity to her when she mocks his dysfunctional penis. If the man tries to lay his hands on her and she tries to defend herself, one may talk of/about self-defence or retaliation.

Furthermore, she may have developed hostile and domineering attitude towards her husband so as to prevent him from doing what he does to his ex-wife to her. So, Sekyiwa's motivation may be to revenge the man's first wife whom he has left after many years of marriage. This is to say, she may want to prove her feminist solidarity with the man's ex by simply avenging her cause on him.

In a related development, Sekyiwa's feminist standpoint meets Ataféi Pewissi's claim when he avers that '[...] feminism is blurred, malicious, segregationist, radical, self-glory seeking, revengeful and intolerant' (2017, p.51). In short, the following feminist position of Sekyiwa can indubitably open the door to violence on her husband. So, those factors contribute to her control and abuse of her husband. Her control of her husband has dual origins. First, she is able to gain control over her husband due to her economic advantage. As John Archer observes, '[...] within those countries that have been most 'progressive' about women's equality, female violence has increased as male violence has decreased' (2005, p.707) And one of the ways to decrease male violence is female economic empowerment. Secondly, she is able to control her husband due to the age difference between them.

The way of waging feminist war against a male counterpart is contrary to African cultural values. Annelie Dahlin-Jones contends that radical feminists believe that male supremacists are the real beneficiaries of women's oppression and there are huge material benefits to the males at the cost of the females in a society. They see evidence of misogyny, the hatred of women and girls everywhere (2014, p.6). Obviously, Darko has proved her adherence to feminism, especially radical feminism, by making Sekyiwa's husband suffer violence in her hands as well as in his ex-wife's when he attempts at reconciling with her: '[...] he has tried for reconciliation with his first wife. But his ex had been greatly offended by this move and hurled every insult under sun at him' (Darko, 1998, p. 20). This act of the man's ex adds to the depression he has gone through in Sekyiwa's hands. The depression, under which the man finds himself in the hands of Sekyiwa and his ex, confirms Abayomi Adebayo Anthony's affirmation that domestic violence mostly leaves the victim depressed and anxious irrespective of gender (2014, p.17). In some cases, humiliating a man emotionally in front of others can be more devastating than a physical abuse. Mental and emotional abuse can be an area where women are often more brutal than men. However, what hurts a man mentally and emotionally can in some cases be very different from what hurts a woman. For some men, being called a coward, impotent, or a failure can have a very different psychological impact than it would have on a woman (Shakil, 2016, p. 120).

But there is something Darko has not informed the reader concerning Sekyiwa's husband. The reader has not been informed of/about the man's (Sekyiwa's husband) attempt at reporting his wife's brutality to his relatives, authorities or friends. His attitude has confirmed the negative response most sociologists often

obtain when carrying out an investigation on the following question: 'Do men report to the relevant authorities when battered by women?' (Gathogo, 2015, p. 3). There are many reasons which may prevent the man from going to confide in his relatives, authorities or friends. These are male ego, cultural reasons such as religious leadership, shame, mockery, etc. As Julius Gathogo further confirms,

[...] cultural reasons; religious leadership that advises the couple to 'seek the face of God' rather than 'washing dirty linen' in public; parents fear of embarrassment; male ego; close friends who prefer to downplay the magnitude of the problem; fear of being laughed at; fear of the taboo or/and anathema associated with the cultural dictates of the African societies; fear of divorce in cases where the man relies on the 'rich' woman for his daily upkeep; and the embarrassment that goes with shame and exposure of being seen as a 'weak man' - in a culturally sophisticated society (2015, p.3).

As one can remark in the quotation, societal patterns, especially patriarchal one designed for men, sometimes make them suffer in silence despite their empowerment in some patriarchal situations. In so doing, this confirms Florence Stratton's affirmation that the patriarchal situation also creates difficulties for men [...] (1994, p. 17). Therefore, Darko has insinuated through the man's attitude that gender connotations attributed to man and woman have not only hindered women from expressing themselves on certain issues but they have also silenced men in some areas. The fact that the narrator has been silent on the man's lack of courage to report his wife's brutality to his family, authorities or friends raises crucial questions relating to gender attributions of a man and woman in patriarchal African societies and to the quality of marital relationship between Sekyiwa and her husband (the man). Is their relationship in accordance with African cultural values? What is the man's relationship with his family members and friends? Or has he fulfilled the requirements for a traditional marriage?

The answer to those questions is negative. Darko does not inform the reader that the man and Sekyiwa have fulfilled the traditional rite that legalises/officialises marital union in African societies, especially in Ghanaian society. Although she tries to notify the reader that the man has a family (some relatives) after his death, she has not informed the reader of their coming to his rescue when he is still alive. The worst is the representation of Sekyiwa alone and her daughter (the only child Sekyiwa has for the man) but there is no information about her parents/relatives. The reader is only informed of her cohabitation with the man after he has got her pregnant. In fact, the cohabitation of Sekyiwa and her husband is like a marriage between two individuals without parental implication. This is contrary to African cultural values. That's why Kwame Gyekye holds that 'marriage is not merely an affair between two individuals who have fallen in love and plan to spend the rest of their lives together. It is a matter in which the lineage groups of both the man and woman are deeply interested' (1996, p.78).

Moreover, Sekyiwa and her husband have not lived in accordance with African cultural values but Western cultural values. That is to say, Sekyiwa and her husband live a family life which is Western because it encourages individuality, nuclear family and turns their back to anything related to community life or extended family life. That way of portraying them is in opposition to African cultural values, especially the Ghanaian cultural values. It is contrary to womanist concept. Ataféi Pewissi claims that 'womanism is not radicalism. It intends to create a context for both male and female values to meet and exchange for the growth of the community [...]' (2017, p. 59).

In the African cultural values, especially in the Ghanaian cultural values, the presence of parents and relatives is indispensable and helpful in reducing violence in marital homes. So their absence in the relationship between Sekyiwa and her husband paved the way for her radicalism over her husband. In fact, the role of parents in the marital homes of their children can be compared with some functions of the Police Force. Junior Anyaele confirms that

One of the functions of the Police Force is to protect life and property of citizens of a country; The Police Force maintains law and order in a country; Prevention of crime in a country is another function of the Police; also prosecution of minor offences is another function and power vested on the Police Force (1994, p. 184).

Parents sometimes serve as law enforcement agents between a young married man and woman in African society. This reality of African cultural value is absent in the marital relationship of Sekyiwa and her husband depicted by Darko. The intervention of parents in marital homes of their children in times of disputes is paramount in reducing domestic violence in African society. Parents care for peace and harmony in the marital homes that is why they sometimes pay a couple in disputes an unscheduled visit from time to time. Or they may delegate a person to pay an unaware visit to a warring couple so as to identify the cause of their disputes. They may stay with them for a long time so as to find a solution to it. It is important to point out that the presence of the parents can be only possible if the couple welcomes them.

Contrary to Darko, one can notice the intervention of parents in pouring oil on troubled waters between spouses in Asare Adei's *A Beautiful Daughter* through female character, Esi and a male character, Sam and in Daniel Mengara's *Mema* via Biloghe and Ntutume, her husband. But there is slight change in settlement of disputes in Lola Shoneyi's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, whereby Iya Segi and three wives of Baba Segi settle the problem they have with their husband, Baba Segi, without the intervention of their parents.

In a nutshell, it is possible to settle domestic violence that leads to Sekyiwa battering her husband if their parents are implicated in their relationship. Sekyiwa's radical feminism may have been discouraged if the African cultural values, especially the



Ghanaian cultural values are respected. Even she may have severely been punished if her relationship with the man follows the African cultural reality like it is done to women who batter their husbands among the Kikulu and the Banyore (Luhya) of Western Kenya. Gathogo argues:

[...] whenever it was established that a woman battered her spouse, elders from both sides would be summoned. Here, the issue at hand would be tabled. If it was established beyond any reasonable doubt that she indeed battered her spouse, the house was ritually demolished; and another one could be rebuilt if a man wanted to remarry. Being a communal issue that affected the society, it meant that the man could be assisted to rebuild the house if he wished to remarry. In some cases, a woman who battered her husband could be warned publicly; and if she was willing to change, she could be accepted back into the community. Failure to change however meant that, as in the case of the Kikuyu, she could be disowned by the society, her house be demolished and she would even be disallowed from drawing water from a common spring. She was isolated from the rest of society (2015, p. 3).

Contrary to Darko's *The Housemaid*, the account for violence is given by Elang, the last son of Nsame Minlame (also called Mema) and Sima Okang (husband of Mema) in Daniel Mengara's *Mema*. In the novel, Mengara shows a double facets of women's violence through the representation of the female protagonist named Nsame Minlame also called Mema, meaning 'my mother'. He reveals that women's violence may deliberately come from women as means to maintain control over their intimate partner on the one hand. Women's violence is used by women as self-defence or revenge on the other hand.

In the novel, it is said that Sima Okang, the husband is of a '*soft, placid and subdued nature*' (italics ours) (Mengara, 2003, p. 44) but as for Mema, it is argued by Ayodele Adebayo Allagbe and Monday Akinola Allagbe that 'when Mema is angry, her strong voice echoes and frightens both male and female' (2015, p.388). Masculine and feminine qualities, in Mema contribute to the domination of her husband, Sima Okang whenever there is quarrel between them.

She wanted a fight with her husband. She found it disgraceful to her and to the manhood itself that he should always stay silent whenever they had an argument. She wanted him to react to her anger, to do or say something that would add dry wood to the bush fire burning inside her (Mengara, 2003, p. 44).

The aforesaid act of Mema confirms Suzanne Swan's and David Snow's claims that women use emotional and/or verbal abuse such as yelling, screaming and name calling equivalently as their partners used against them. They also committed significantly more moderate physical violence such as throwing something, pushing and/or shoving than their partners used against them (2006, p.1028). The narrator further informs the reader on how she (Mema) threatens and provokes her husband:

What kind of a man are you?' she would shout in those situations. 'What kind of man are you to stand there like a dead tree, not speak to me? People! Look at him, but he stands there like a bull who can no longer perform on a female. Is that the kind of man that my parents gave me? A man who cannot even give me a child [...] Shame, Sima Okang. I say shame on you! (Mengara, 2003, p. 45).

Mema, the female protagonist is depicted with a trait of female-masculinity. Her representation defiles the traditional stereotypes women readers are used to when they read earlier African male depiction of women. Ayodele A. Allagbe and Akinola M. Allagbe further confirm that '[...] Mema the female protagonist in the fiction is described as strong, spiritual, powerful, manly, independent and aggressive' (2015, p.388). In reality, that is shown in her use of machete whenever there are quarrels between her husband and her:

[...] she suddenly ran to her kitchen hut, and came out with a machete, seemingly ready to slash her husband into pieces[...]The crowd of people that had come closer dispersed in panic[...] her husband ran for his life too, with my mother at his heels (Mengara, 2003, p. 46).

This attitude from Mema is understood as psychological violence even though she does not stab him (her husband) as she intends to. It makes her maintain control over him. Suzanne Swan and David Snow argue that '[...] when women's violence against a male partner does occur, it is usually, although not always, in the context of men's violence to the woman' (2004, p.345). In this sense, Mengara has tried to inform the reader that women's violence against male partners, in any forms can enhance men's violence against women. This is shown in the reaction of Sima Okang to Mema's provocations.

My father was a pacifist. But in those situations, in situations where his so-called impotence was publicly shouted out to the entire village, even a pacifist and lame man like him would attempt to defend his honour. That day, as if suddenly transfigured, he seized my mother by the neck and applied his anger beating her up. Of course, she would fight back [...] wrestling her husband to the ground and trying to lacerate his skin with both her nails and teeth. But her man had had enough (Mengara, 2003, p. 45).

In fact, one can notice how Mema's provocation of her husband ends up in waking a sleeping lion. It is evident that women's violence of any kind on men may lead to the increase of men's violence on women as one can remark with Mema's husband with Mema. But the reality of women's violence on men is hardly accepted in patriarchal societies. For Sotirios Sarantakos, [...] resistance against accepting husband abuse as a real problem is evident in many sectors of our society (1999, p.243). The reason for the reticence has its origin in societal gender structure that continues in seeing women as weak and men as strong.

Some patriarchal African societies seem not to accept the reverse of the aforementioned gender structure. Nevertheless, Mengara reveals to the reader that women's violence against men may make women lose the defence of their different societies whenever the battered men/ husbands start to reciprocate to them with violence. This is shown in the people's determination not to intervene in or rescue Mema from her husband's retaliation to Mema's violence:

At last! people would silently mutter with appreciation and relief. At last he was showing her who carried nkon [Penis] between his legs in that hut. Let no one intervene, they would say. Let him teach her a lesson. She looked for it (Mengara, 2003, p. 46).

Women's violence may be considered as revenge on men/husbands when it is a man who firstly aggresses the woman. But it is argued by Pewissi that 'feminism operates on the policy of exclusion and revenge' (2017, p.67). That argument on women taking revenge may be considered as self-defence or retaliation against men's violence but the contrary may be considered as exclusion. In Mengara's novel under study, Mema slaps one of her son in-laws called Zula for disrespecting her. As one can remark in the excerpt

She slapped Zula in the face, causing him to step backward and tumble against his seat. He landed squarely on his buttocks, causing panic among the people who were sitting behind him (Mengara, 2003, p. 118).

The slap of Mema which makes Zula tumble confirm Anthony Abayomi Adebayo's argument that says 'naturally, men are stronger than women, but that does not necessarily make [it] easier for them to have their way all the time' (2014, p. 17).

Although it is Zula who first abuses Mema verbally and emotionally through his insults, rude attitude, harsh criticism and name-calling, her use of violence on him may be not considered as self-defence because her response to his provocation is not proportionate. Furthermore, the reader is informed about how Zula calls Mema 'that woman is witch, I [Zula] tell you. She is an *nnem* [a devil]' (Mengara, 2003, p. 91). Accordingly, the fact that he threatens not to let Mema's son, Elang, go back to her makes her lose her temper on him. As the reader is informed "Elang will never leave my house to go back with you [Mema] [...] As long as I [Zula] am alive, this child will stay with me" (Ibid, p. 118).

Indeed, it is true that self- defence can only be used in response to an immediate threat but it should warrant a proportional response. That is to say, if an aggressor is threatening to use deadly force against a person, s/he is permitted to use deadly force in defending him/herself so as to counteract the threat. But s/he may not use force on him/herself if the threat is minor. So, the reaction of Mema cannot totally be considered as self-defence but as an act of aggression because of her response is not proportional to men's domestic violence, her husband and Zula, her son in-law.

## CONCLUSION

Women's domestic violence on men is a product of radical feminism because radical feminist ideology is contrary to that of womanists. The womanists do not believe in radicalism in advocating for women's rights. There is a tendency of violence coming from men to women which may make women defend/retaliate with violence but all women's violence cannot be considered as self-defence or retaliation. Through the study of the female characters such as Sekyiwa and her husband's ex-wife in Darko's novel, *The Housemaid* and a female character, Mema, in Mengara's novel, the motives paving the way for women's violence on men/husbands can be traced in the followings: female masculinity, women's deliberate will to maintain control over

men due to their economic advantage, age difference, revenge and violation of African cultural values related to marriage. The presence of parents and relatives is indispensable and helpful in reducing violence in marital home.

Therefore, their absence in the relationship between Sekyiwa and her husband pave the way for her violent act on her husband. In short, women's violence of any kind on men may lead to the increase of men's violence on women. Violent African women may lose the support or defence of their societies and social institutions designed to maintain gender equality whenever battered men/ husbands want to reciprocate women's violence on them. So, it is advisable for African women not to make justice themselves but recourse to nonviolent approaches and to competent law enforcement institutions whether modern or traditional in order to defend themselves.

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