



Harmattan

Gavin Weston

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Harmattan

Gavin Weston

Harmattan Gavin Weston

Harmattan (from an Arabic word meaning destructive wind) tells the story of Haoua, a young girl growing up in a remote village in the Republic of Niger. Spirited independent and intelligent, Haoua has benefitted from a stable home life and a loving and attentive mother. She enjoys working and playing with her siblings and friends. Haoua worships her elder brother, Abdelkrim, a serving soldier who sends money home to support the family. But, on his last home visit, Abdelkrim quarrels with their father accusing him of gambling away the money he sends and being the cause of their mother s worsening health. It also emerges that their father plans to take a second wife. Despite this Haoua finds contentment in her schoolwork, her dreams of becoming a teacher and in writing assiduously to the family in Ireland who act as her aid sponsors. But for Haoua, there are new storm clouds on the horizon. As civil strife mounts in Niger, Haoua begins to fear for Abdelkrim s safety. Haoua's mother's illness is much more serious and further advanced than anyone had recognised and her father s plans are turning out to be far more threatening than she could have ever imagined. Approaching her twelfth birthday, Haoua is alone and vulnerable for the very first time in her life.

Harmattan Details

Date : Published June 1st 2013 by Myrmidon Books (first published January 1st 2011)

ISBN : 9781905802579

Author : Gavin Weston

Format : Paperback 512 pages

Genre : Cultural, Africa, Fiction, Western Africa, Niger, Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Coming Of Age

 [Download Harmattan ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Harmattan ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Harmattan Gavin Weston

From Reader Review Harmattan for online ebook

Ian says

This novel gave me my 100th country on my Round the World trip. I wanted an unusual country for the milestone and this was just the ticket. Set in Niger, it's about the struggles of a 12 yo girl living in a happy family at the outset, but in a male dominated society and with the storm clouds of personal upheaval and civil strife gathering. She is aid sponsored by a family with 12 yo twin girls in Northern Ireland and the girls exchange letters about themselves. This is a great device for comparing Western and African lives, especially what we take for granted.

Overall I enjoyed it. It rather tailed off towards the end when I thought the author was searching for a dramatic end to his tale and didn't quite find it.....so only 3 stars rather than 4, but still I would really recommend it - taught me a lot about a very large African country that I suspect most of us know bugger all about.

Tu?çe Gök?rmak says

Bu yorum daha önce www.tugceninkitapligi.com da yay?nlanm??t?r.

Harmattan, kitab?n ba??nda da aç?kland??? gibi; Arapça kökenli bir kelime ve Sahra Çölü'nden Bat? Afrika'ya do?ru esen tozlu ve kuru rüzgarlara verilen isim. Nijer Cumhuriyeti'nde ya?ayan 11 ya??ndaki kahraman Haoua'n?n hayat?nda esen zorlu ve sert rüzgarlar? ifade eden de bir analogi asl?nda kitab?n ad?.

Kitap oldukça derin bir konu etraf?nda dönüyor; bizlere çokta uzak olmayan, çocuk ya?ta ve zorla evlendirilen k?z çocuklar?.

Hikayeyi a?z?ndan dinledi?imiz Haoua, ak?ll? ve oldukça cesur bir k?z çocu?u. Nijer Cumhuriyeti'nin medeniyetten uzak köylerinden birinde ya?am?na annesi, babas? ve 2 karde?i ile birlikte devam eden Haoua, ailenin dört çocu?undan birisi. Büyük a?abeyi Abdelkrim ise, askerde ve kazand??? paray? ailesine yard?m için yolluyor.

Kuzey ?rlanda'l? bir ailenin kendisini okutmak için sponsor olmas? sayesinde, son derece meraklı ve ö?renme heveslisi olan Haoua, okula gitme ve okuma yazma ö?renme ?ans? elde ediyor. Ama Haoua ?ans? devam edecek mi?

Hikaye, yazar?n 8 ya??ndan itibaren ?rlanda'l? bu aile ve k?zlar? ile Haoua aras?ndaki mektuplarla böldü?ü, üçüncü tekil ki?i anlat?mla, Nijer Cumhuriyeti'ndeki ya?am? tüm aç?kl???yla gözler önüne seriyor. Ailesinde verilen ya?am sava??, küçük bir çocu?un a?z?ndan sunulan son derece basit ve saf bir anlat?mla daha da etkili bir ?ekilde hissediliyor. Ya??na ve ya?am?na göre oldukça olgun bir dil ve ifade sunan Haoua'n?n bu anlat?m tarz?, bu zor konuya ferahlat?c? bir aç? getirmi? diyebilirim. Geli?mi? bir ülke ile Nijer Cumhuriyeti'ndeki bu köy aras?nda, inan?lmas? güç farklara bu mektupla?ma ile dikkat çekiliyor ve yazar, gayet etkili bir biçimde fark?ndal??? artt?r?yor.

Haoua'n?n hayat? her zaman umdu?u gibi gitmiyor, a?abeyine hayran ancak kendilerine gönderdi?i paray? babalar?n?n kumar oynayarak harcad???n? ö?renen Abdelkrim, birgün ans?z?n ziyaretlerine geldi?inde, tepki gösteriyor, ayr?ca köyde babalar?n?n ikinci bir e? almak istedi?i yönünde dola?an söylentilerden de

rahatsız olur. Bu sırada da babaları Abdelkrim'e içki içmesinden dolayı sinirlenmiştir ve aynı zamanda Haoua'nın evde hasta olan annesine yardım etmek ve görevlerini yapmak yerine okulda bir şeyler öğreniyor olmasından da memnun değildir.

Bu olaylar sonucunda; Haoua, giderek ailesiyle annesine bakmak için okuldan uzaklaşmak zorunda kalır. İç savaşın kızları ile, bir yandan ailesi için endişelenirken, bir yandan annesine AIDS teşhisi konması, babasının yeni eşinin kötü tavırlarına maruz kalması ama daha büyük bir fırtına yaklaşıyor. Haoua eğitimine devam edebilecek mi ve kendisini bekleyen zorlukların nasıl üstesinden gelecek bunu okuyarak öğrenmeniz gerekecek...

Yazar, hikayenin mümkün olduğu kadar açık ve doğru şekilde anlatılması için özel bir çaba sarfetmiş. Kitabın giriş bölümünde yer alan, etkili ve üzücü başlangıç sonrasında, uzunca bir süre Haoua'nın hikayesini ve Nijer Cumhuriyeti'ndeki yaşamı oldukça detaylı bir anlatımla sunmuş. Yer yer biraz fazla detaylı olmuştur gibi görülmüş, bu sayede; Afrika'daki en sıcak ve dünyadaki en yoksul ülkelerden biri olan, Nijer'e hiç gitmemiş olmanızla beraber, tozlu ve kuru havaya adeta soluyor, çekilen güçlükleri içinde hissediyorsunuz.

Yazarın daha kitabın başında okuyucuyu içine alan bir anlatım var. Bazı noktalarda yazar, fazla gazeteci gibi yaklaşmış ve veriler bu şekilde sunmuş bile olsa, Nijer'li küçük bir kız çocuğu ailesinden ve bakıcılarından, okuyucu hiç rahatsız etmeden, hatta yazarın yaşı ve milliyetini düşündürmeyecek bir başarıyla, sunmuş hikayesini. UNICEF tarafından en yüksek çocuk evlilikleri ve zorla evlendirme oranına sahip ülke olan Nijer Cumhuriyeti'nin gerçeklerini, birde Haoua'nın gözünden öğrenmenizi tavsiye ederim.

Ben şahsen farklı kültürlerle hikayeleri okumayı ve neler yaşadığını görmeyi seviyorum, ne kadar acıklı hikayelerle karşılaşsam bile... Bu tip kitaplar seviyorsanız bu kitabı mutlaka tavsiye ederim, ama bu tip kitaplar sevmiyor da olsanız, normal okuma listenizin dışında da yer alıyor olsa, bir farkındalık yaratmak için yazılmış, sizi hızla içine çeken, bu son derece canlı hikayeye şans vermenizi öneririm.

Susan says

I was drawn to this book by the cover. The image of a man with a headwrap crouching in the foreground, looking at a scene of camels and what appears to be a young woman standing under a leafless tree against a backdrop of searing orange and yellow light in the desert. Harmattan is a heartbreaking story. It is the story of Haoua Boureima a young girl growing up in the village of Wadata in Niger. In many ways it is a coming of age story. The descriptions of life in Haoua's remote village are vivid and endearing. It is easy to fall in love with this character. She is spirited, intelligent, with a fierce love for her family. Even though she is surrounded by poverty, her life before her twelfth birthday is almost idyllic. Her life is perfect, well almost. She lives in a household with an authoritarian father, who clashes frequently with her brother. Haoua's mother tries to keep the peace but can only do so for so long. Things start changing when the mother is taken ill. We follow the family's struggles as they try to get her treatment. The crushing poverty in Niger which is also representative of so many other places in Africa and around the world is evident. Getting access to the basics of life is an ever present struggle. Gavin Weston's descriptions of Niger really make the place come alive. The beauty of the desert is charming, but life there is punishing. Niger is a country at war with itself. There is civil strife and other forms of social unrest. There is preferential treatment of the *anasaras*, who presumably have more money than the common Nigerien. Some are aid workers, others are adventurous tourists. With each passing day, things get progressively worse. Haoua's life is changed forever as everything she holds dear is taken away from her. Her correspondence with her sponsor family the Boyds, who are

paying for her education through an aid organisation shows the sharp contrast between life in a developed country and a poor third world country. The story comes to a shattering climax when Haoua is forced to make a grave decision in order to escape from a very abusive situation. This caught me off guard and it's hard to believe that this is the story of a girl of about 13 years of age. Haoua's tormentor gets retribution that is well deserved, but is there hope for her? The novel's ending left me feeling sad and a tad desperate. It ends with a letter to Haoua's sponsors much like it opened with one of these letters. There is a sense that the aid organizations can only do so much to save women and children stuck in desperate situations. The culture of abuse, the objectification, and subjugation of women has to change if the country is to move forward. Haoua's story is that of many girls in Africa, Asia, Latin America and possibly certain parts of the Caribbean and North America (think Warren Jeffs). Girls (and boys) who are robbed of their childhood by domestic violence, early marriages, HIV/AIDS and all the other scourges that come from ignorance and the persistence of retrogressive cultures. Gavin Weston's book is a great accomplishment. It is a story that needs to be told and tell it he does, with great compassion. I did find sections of the book a bit tedious (the word dry also comes to mind), sometimes he could be overly descriptive and I skimmed and skipped through some sections. That said, it is obvious he *knows* Niger. The text is interspersed with expressions in French and the local language, a refreshing twist. The inclusion of a glossary was very helpful, some books leave this out and it can be very frustrating. Overall a great read and one that comes highly recommended. This is a story you won't soon forget. 4 and a half stars!

Calzean says

An Irish male writer narrates in the first person the life of Haoua a 11-12 year old girl in a Niger village. The backdrop is the 1990s a time Niger's government undergoes many changes with corruption, coups and assassinations.

The early part of the book deals with the hard life of a villager (especially the women), the total domination of her father, Haoua's determination to do well at school and the good work being done by the local aid worker. The father is fundamentally lazy and spends what little money they have on gambling and the local whores.

Poor Haoua's life gets even harder when her mother is sent to the capital for treatment for AIDS. Her father becomes more morose, angrier and frustrated with the loss of the traditional culture and the interference of the educated people who bring change. At the age of 12 Haoua is married off and becomes the third wife of another shiftless, arrogant, dominating and brutal man.

There are some brutally sad scenes in the book. And then there are many pages of banality which could have been shortened. There is also an interesting use of letters from Haoua's sponsor family in Ireland where the lives of young girls could not be more different.

Overall it was an insightful and empathetic depiction of what life was for women in Niger.

Billi Tiner says

Harmattan is an emotional and eye-opening look at a culture so different from our own. Author, Gavin Weston, does a great job providing a vivid description of the living conditions found in many areas of Africa. The story is told through the eyes of Haoua, a young girl, living in the village of Wadata in the Republic of Niger. Weston brings you into Haoua's world where she faces poverty, sickness, and oppression. Through letters written to Haoua from her aid sponsors in Ireland, Weston provides the reader with an illustration of what it means to grow up in such dramatically different cultures. Harmattan is a moving experience that will

give you a greater appreciation for the privileges of education and equality that women have in our culture.

Patricia Fawcett says

Harmattan - the wind of change blows south, clouding the pathway through life of Haoua. Intelligent and optimistic, Haoua's story of her life in a village in Niger is related in her own words, posited with, and punctuated by, letters and gifts from her sponsors, a Northern Irish family.

The knock-on effect of sponsorships organised by international aid agencies not only provides basic comforts and education for the sponsored child; the family benefits also. However, Haoua's hopes for the future are compromised by events within her family and the escalation of unrest in Niger. Contrasts between cultures in the the UK and Niger are increasingly outlines in this vivid, at times heart-rending, narrative, where the protagonist continually struggles against Niger male hegemony, nowhere more apparent than within her own family.

Whilst the Harmattan blows relentlessly onwards, it fails to completely obliterate Haoua's hopes and dreams, and, most importantly of all, her spirit.

This beautiful and authoritatively-written novel subconsciously raises questions about child sponsorship, especially of female children. In these cases, sponsorship stops when the girl marries, irrespective of the fact that this may occur as soon as she reaches puberty, where she may effectively be sold into slavery by her own family, sometimes well down in the matrimonial pecking-order of a polygamous culture where educational measures to prevent diseases such as Aids appear to have failed.

International agencies, whilst carrying out wonderful and vital programmes of health and education, overseeing sponsorships worldwide, are really up against it when they are left helpless by unchanging and relentless cultures, where they have to abandon girls who are forced into marriage, lives of promise unfulfilled.

Cultures which bring obscurity and continue on their unrelenting way, much as the Harmattan itself.

Jeanette says

The first half of this book was a pleasant and easy read. Niger girlhood holding much description and cultural, tribal, life task information. Haoua tells us about her daily habits, her pen pals, her contacts within school and primarily of her family and Sushie, a support helper towards her further lessons.

But the second half quickly became difficult to read after her Mother's illness drives her into a distant village's hospital. Her brothers, her sister- no friend can eventually and quite quickly prevent her life taking a huge change just days after her 12th birthday.

It's an extremely sorrowful book. No reveal here, but there is no joy remaining by the end. And the abrupt ending gave an increased sense of hopelessness, quite beyond a point of that lack. It's 3.5 star but I can not round it upwards when the finale is this void.

I try to read at least one book out of ten that are not North American or European dominant location. Out of the numerous African, I think this one was probably one of the most dire I've ever read. Although it didn't contain any horrific genocide or tribal warfare tragedy- this tale was, perhaps, even worse. If that is possible. Yes, probably- because females are half the population. Fathers or males who sell or trade their daughters for brides at young, young ages! That aspect alone would cover tens of thousands of ultimately negated

outcomes. Not just to literate capacity, but to any chance for potentials towards health or mental states of competence, not to speak of any level of contentment or happiness.

The pen pal letters gave sharp contrast to not only material expectation and use, but also girlhood self-identity inputs to the contrasting lives in Ireland and in Niger.

This is a book written clearly and with lovely description. Heat, sand, aroma- always there. But it is also an extremely sad book.

Joanne says

This was a novel that practically jumped off the shelves at me in the library, shouting 'read me, read me!'. I love fiction with a strong sense of place, and books that tackle serious issues in the world today. And the little line on the front stating it was from the publishers of The Garden of Evening Mists simply clinched the deal for me.

Harmattan is the story of a brave young girl, Haoua, growing up in the Republic of Niger. An intelligent and optimistic young girl, she tells her story growing up in a remote village, but with a stable and loving family, and benefiting from sponsors from Ireland who send her letters and gifts and sponsor her schooling.

Shortly before her 12th birthday, storm clouds appear on the horizon, signalling a harmattan, as winds of change blow in to threaten everything she has ever known. Her mother is taken ill, arguments break out in her family and she is forced out of school.

Gavin Weston tackles a lot of serious issues in the book and I found myself reading with a growing sense of unease. But I couldn't stop reading. It's a wonderful novel and the author has clearly done his research.

My only (very slight) criticism is that very occasionally the writing didn't quite flow, and I was suddenly aware I was reading a book rather than being totally swept away by the story, if that makes sense. It wasn't quite up there with Tan Twan Eng or Khaled Hosseini. I'd probably give it a solid 4.5, although I've rounded up because to do anything else would be doing the author a disservice.

Claire Boulter says

Like 'We Need New Names' and 'Woman At Point Zero' you keep reading hoping against hope that something will change for the better (and some signs are there) for the protagonist, only for it to be..well I guess that's the point, there is no clear cut fairytale ending and that reflects the reality of girls like Haoua. I was a bit underwhelmed in parts of the book..but that makes it no less gripping and devastating for the reader, knowing that this novel reflects thousands of families' experiences (poverty, child brides, questioning the 'help' of NGOs etc). The plot twists and turns and you think you know what the outcome could be but are surprised every time. It'll be a while before this book leaves my memory.

Laura says

This book is hard. Its descriptive and at times lyrical tone takes us through some fantastic images of dusty Niger through the story of a very wise 12 year old girl. Before our very eyes her story unfolds in a climate of poverty, political strife, rape, lack of woman rights, lack of democracy, lack of choice and forced marriage and sexual intercourse seen as what can only be described as beastly rape. I found that the juxtaposition of the Irish sponsor letters with her own from Niger somehow ridicule our current sponsorship programmes, European naïveté against a backdrop of pain, beatings, sickness and death. I'm sure the author meant well, but to me it does indeed strike a critical blow to our way of thinking/seeing. We send gifts and money and they are sold in the market to pay for a visit to the sick. We talk about green hills and pony rides and holidays in Spain and on the other side health issues, lack of education and no money even to feed properly on a daily basis. Luckily the American nurse who helps the main character's family somehow redeems us Westerners. Every volunteer worker or peace corps heading to Africa should read this book. Against our blue sky views of Africa lies much pain and suffering still. I guess this book humbled me. An eye opener but not for the faint of heart.

Phyllis says

Despite the subject matter being dark and it being obvious from the first page that it will not be a happy story, I found this a compulsive read. The author describes the setting so we can feel the heat and dust, and he is very convincing in telling the story from the viewpoint of a young girl. The letters from the sponsors are particularly good for showing the contrast in lifestyle between Niger and Ireland, and the aid workers are also well portrayed. There is a lot of violence and heartbreak in the story, but also a lot of love and caring people. It is not all darkness and depression.

This was a particularly thought provoking book to read if you do sponsor a child, and even more so to read it now whilst girls have been abducted from school in Nigeria. I hope more people read it and that it draws attention to the very real issues of young women's lives in some developing countries.

Sally says

*I no longer believe my father", February 29, 2016

This review is from: Harmattan (Kindle Edition)

This Niger-based novel opens with Haoua, an abused 12-year-old third wife looking back on her earlier life. And as the narrative begins, five years earlier, it would seem that Haoua's prospects are good as a sponsored child through a charity programme. Letters between her and her Irish 'family' form part of the novel - yet these cheerful little epistles show their writers have little grasp of the recipient's life. And Haoua's hopes for an education and a career are not to be so easily attained...

I enjoyed this novel but felt that the text sometimes felt as if the author was determined to incorporate every aspect of Niger for the reader's edification - fauna, funerals, AIDS, a look at the capital, the desert, the military, the political situation, weddings, funerals... There was also a road-trip that I think would have benefitted from being cut. And the lengthy letter that Haoua writes to an American volunteer worker at the end just didn't feel like the outpourings of a traumatized teen but rather a report that the author himself might have submitted to Amnesty International.

And yet the author manages to create touching moments too: when her long-absent soldier brother comes to spend a few days with his family - "For a moment I observed them both as if they were strangers, or actors in a movie; these two people whom I loved more than life itself, reflecting each other's smiles in that way that only a mother and her child can. It was a moment I wish I could have captured somehow - frozen in time forever: not as a photograph, but as a tiny physical fragment".

Vera Marie says

The title, *Harmattan* refers to a dusty wind that blows in from the Sahara. Gavin Weston defines the term in a frontispiece by saying "Probably from the Arabic haram, a forbidden or accursed thing." The novel, a miraculous creation, deals with a life that seems "accursed." I couldn't get the taste of grit out of my mouth and nose when reading this book.

There are many things miraculous about Gavin Weston's creation. It is set in an African nation that only makes its way onto travel itineraries of the most adventurous foreigners, and yet Weston, a visual artist, helps the reader clearly see Niger and its life. The hottest country in Africa, straddling the Sahara and spreading along the great Niger river, it is one of the poorest countries in the world.

Harmattan familiarizes you with Niger, but it does not make you comfortable with Niger. In fact, the main character, a young girl called Haoua, takes the discomfort of her life for granted. It's the way life is. While this attitude is partly due to the family's devotion to Islamic religion, it also reflects an acceptance of reality.

Not only is Weston showing us Niger as though he were Nigerien, he is writing from the view point of a young girl from a village. In the four years of Haoua's life, we see her lose her childhood and become wise far beyond her years. Weston presents the privileged reader with a world of want without making you want to cover your eyes and stuff your fingers in your ears. Because of the ever-present curiosity and acceptance of Haoua, we learn a lot about Niger and maybe even a little about how to live a good life.

This is portion of a review at A Traveler's Library.

Read more: [Book Review: Harmattan](#)

Tripfiction says

Haoua, a young girl of 12 years suffers a huge amount of loss, yet is also very brave and resilient and can still maintain a sense of humour at times. It is almost as though she is borne back and forth by the wind, from her home in a small village, Wadata, to the capital Niamey. From the parched earth, the camion trails across the desert, the heat, the colours and the smells of West Africa - you can almost shake the sand and brittle earth out of this book as you turn the pages. The dry, arid heat lifts from the writing and water is available to us, the reader, but often not to the people who populate this book. It is sometimes shocking in its rawness, beautiful in its descriptions and remains in the consciousness long after the novel is back on the bookshelf.

Do you need any more persuading to buy this book? Then hear what the publishers have to say: "We haven't released anything as hauntingly beautiful since Tan Twan Eng's "The Gift of Rain".

Julie says

I must admit that I was intrigued by the title but because of the subject matter of child marriage in West Africa, I wasn't exactly looking forward to reading this book. It's true that it deals with a dark topic but the book is by no means written in a dark way. As we meet Haoua on the brink of her twelfth birthday, Gavin Weston manages to get inside this young girl's head. Although a fictional story, it's clear that this is based on the author's own experiences and perhaps it's that element which makes this book so haunting. There are tender moments, humourous moments but a sense of pathos throughout as Haoua is powerless to prevent what happens to her. I was somewhat surprised to learn that even if you sponsor a child through an agency, this does not protect the child from being forced into marriage and if the child is withdrawn from education then he or she is no longer eligible for the sponsorship scheme. It may not be an easy book to read but it is an extremely powerful book. The story of Haoua's journey through the desert was so well written and had me feeling guilty for taking water for granted in the West. It's a novel that will stay with you for a long time to come - one of the most powerful books I have read in ages and deserves more recognition.
