

**LIVING THROUGH THE PAIN: EXPLORING VIOLENCE, SOCIAL TRAUMA
AND GENDER IN AMMA DARKO'S *FACELESS***

Titilayo Selimat ERINFOLAMI¹

&

Olumide OGUNROTIMI²

Department of English and Literary Studies,
Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State.

(¹Main author ²Corresponding author)

Abstract

This paper examines the tropes of violence, gender, and social trauma in Amma Darko's Faceless. Using trauma theory, it explores the traumatised experiences of women and girls in a fictionalised Ghana, shining a spotlight on pervasive gender-based violence, poverty, and rigid societal expectations within both the home and the broader community. Darko vividly portrays violence as a tool for asserting power and control, with significant impact on the central female characters, Fofo and Baby T, whose lives are shaped by their encounters with violence and oppression. The novel powerfully underscores the profound social trauma endured by marginalised women and girls, which is intricately linked to systemic poverty and gendered oppression. Through her portrayal of male characters, Darko exposes how violence is wielded as a mechanism to dominate and control those with less power, often targeting women and perpetuating harmful cycles of abuse. The narrative places these struggles in a contemporary Ghanaian setting, offering insight into how social hierarchies and gender disparities continue to sustain a culture of violence. By centring the voices and experiences of marginalised characters, Darko illuminates the intersection of gender, poverty, and societal expectations, highlighting their detrimental impact on personal agency and societal progress.

Keywords: gender-based violence, social trauma, Amma Darko, marginalisation, power dynamics

Introduction

The increments in the number of female African writers (and the emergence of some male writers who are sympathetic to women's fight for equality) have arguably transmogrified gender discourse in African literature. These female writers who are focused on combating masculine imperialism write to highlight women's social conditions; they vociferously project the execrable experiences women suffer in patriarchal societies in the continent. In

their literary works, they combat African male authors' negative presentation of African femininity by presenting resourceful, effervescent and resilient female characters, usually against weaker and docile male characters. Thus, female African writers such as Mariam Ba, Ama Atta Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Sefi Ata and Mona Eltahawy among others, become agents of change through their corrective engagement in gender discourse in literature.

Gender violence in the context of this paper means violence against women and girls. Gender violence knows no social or economic boundaries as it affects women and girls of all social and economic backgrounds. It includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, prostitution and sex trafficking of females, female genital mutilation, widowhood rites, widow inheritance and female religious bondage. From precolonial times up to the present, most African societies have been patriarchal and a woman's place is subordinate. African literature emphasises the power of tradition within African culture, which helps explain the prevalence of gender-based violence. Some cultures allow wife beating and even those that do not allow it, let others get away with it. According to Connors (1992), "Violence against wives is an outcome of the belief, fostered in all cultures, that men are superior and that the women with whom they live are their possessions to be treated as they consider appropriate" (p. 3). The uneven distribution of power within traditional African marriages, the acceptance of male promiscuity, and the impact of polygyny all give room for the maltreatment of women. Abane (2020) summarises the situation in Ghana when she says that "Ghana is a multi-cultural society in which across cultures, traditional values and beliefs discriminate against women, making them unequal to their male counterparts, and giving women a very low status in society" (p. 17).

Violence on the female gender has now become a recurring issue in Africa and the effects of these unspeakable and overwhelming experiences on the victims cannot be overemphasised (Erinfolami et al., 2023). Sometimes, even the government, often populated by men, cannot be entrusted with combating the scourge of gender violence. This shows the level of "harm that women face on a daily basis in a world that views them sometimes as property, often as pawns, and usually as secondary citizens in need of control by men" (O'Toole, 2007, p. xi). As this is becoming a general phenomenon, its eradication should be advocated by all. But many African male authors have chosen to do otherwise. In the works of most African male authors, the women do not have a voice and most times are relegated to the background. In a bid to stand up for themselves, many African female writers have taken the pen to record and write about the various forms of violence perpetrated against them, thereby, bringing the people closer to their experiences and creating awareness amongst Africans. As Africa is a male-dominated society, women have become silenced victims of violent acts such as rape, sexual abuse and wife-beating among others. Although these acts

are not encouraged in many African societies, the men still get away with them. To bring a stop to this, many female African writers like Buchi Emecheta, Mariama Ba, Ama Ata Aidoo, etc. use their books not only to reflect their experiences but also the experiences of many other African women.

This research intends to examine the lives of female characters who are victims of violent acts in Amma Darko's *Faceless*, and how these experiences have traumatised them thereby shaping their lives throughout the novel.

Literature Review

Amma Darko's *Faceless* has been construed by several critics from different perspectives using various interpretive strategies. This research is shaped by the fact that previous research on Amma Darko's *Faceless* covers various aspects leaving the subject of trauma unexplored.

For example, in his article, "Streetism as a Social Tragedy in Amma Darko's *Faceless*", Ogbeide (2015) explains the street child phenomenon and how the existence of the street child affects not only the children but also society in general. He discusses the phenomenon of street children and the need for all in society to contribute to the eradication of streetism in all its ramifications before it becomes an uncontrollable epidemic. He concludes that the solution to the problem of streetism lies in bringing love back to the family unit, parents controlling their urge for robust procreation, and the government doing the needful to support planned parenthood.

In "The Effects of Child Abuse on the Victims and the Community: A Critical Analysis of Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Lawrence Darmani's *Grief Child*", Osei and Addei (1997) discuss the presentation of child abuse in society, and the effects of abuse on the individual and the society. They state that the phenomenon of child abuse is prevalent in Africa in general and Ghana in particular. Child abuse has effects on the abused, the abuser and the community as a whole. According to them, "No matter the amount of joy or satisfaction which child abusers may derive as they abuse the children, it follows with a few exceptions that such abusers also suffer from guilt and depression, in the long run. Sometimes it may take a period of counselling before such abuser can be freed" (p. 101). They reveal the various types of child abuse, the causal factors and the effects of child abuse on both the abused child and the community. They conclude by suggesting that preventive measures should be put in place to mitigate or curb this social menace.

Similar to the above work is the study by Capo-Chichi and Djossou Agboadannon (2015), "The Phenomenon of Street Children in Amma Darko's *Faceless*". The authors assert that the issue of street-involved children is one of the consequences of urbanisation. They analyse the narrative strategies employed by Darko to highlight the scourge and the solutions she suggested in the novel.

Many critics of this work have written from the angle of gender, female oppression (Ofosu, 2013), child abuse, and gender violence (Idowu, 2017). Despite these numerous attempts to analyse these works, not much work has been written on the psychological effects of the hardship, oppression and abuse meted out to the females. The research intends to fill the vacuum created by the subject of trauma, by critically examining the psychical and physical experience of the traumatised female characters in *Faceless*.

Method

Trauma Theory and the Vectors of Violence, Gender, and Social Status

Trauma theory, an interdisciplinary field of study, draws from diverse disciplines such as medicine, psychology, physiology, history, and literature to explore the nature and effects of psychological trauma. Emerging as a concept to address specific medical and social conditions, trauma studies focus on how individuals experience, internalise, and attempt to articulate traumatic events. The depth of a traumatic event's impact on any one individual varies significantly, shaped by a complex matrix of factors: the dynamics, duration, and intensity of the trauma, as well as the unique subjective responses of the survivor. Sigmund Freud's observations underscore this point, noting that the suffering imposed by others inflicts the deepest and most enduring psychological wounds (Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*). Freud's perspective provides a foundational insight into the relational and socially contingent nature of trauma, emphasising that human-inflicted trauma leaves a distinct, indelible mark on individuals' lives and perceptions of the world around them.

The etymology of "trauma" can be traced to the Greek word "traumat," meaning "wound." This term has historically been understood in both physical and psychological contexts, underscoring the dual nature of trauma as both bodily and psychic injury. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud explores trauma as a form of psychic wounding - a breach in the mind's protective barrier against overwhelming experiences. Trauma, thus, can be conceptualised as a toxic condition, characterised by intense anxiety, pervasive helplessness, and a profound loss of control. Freud's psychoanalytic framing of trauma as a disruption in the psyche's defence mechanisms remains influential, though trauma studies have evolved to encompass broader cultural and historical dimensions. Scholars like Judith Herman recognise the challenge in documenting the history of trauma itself, as trauma can manifest in ways that resist coherent narration, rooted in memory's often fragmented and mutable nature. As Herman aptly notes, "the history of trauma itself is traumatised" (*Trauma and Recovery*, p. 7), emphasising how trauma destabilises linear understandings of memory, knowledge, and history.

Historically, "trauma" first appeared in the seventeenth century in medical discourse, denoting physical injury caused by external force. However, by the nineteenth century, the

study of trauma expanded from the physical domain to the mental realm. Roger Luckhurst, in *The Trauma Question* (2008) argues that trauma is a distinctly modern concept, emerging from the socio-economic and technological transformations of the nineteenth century. Luckhurst contends that “trauma is a concept that only emerges within modernity” (p. 19), an outgrowth of increasingly urbanised, industrialised societies capable of quantifying the psychological “shocks” of modern existence. The industrial and post-industrial eras saw rapid advances in technology and urbanisation, bringing with them forms of trauma that were both more widespread and more intense than those experienced by previous generations. The collective violence of war, technological accidents, and urban disasters amplified the visibility of trauma, compelling societies to grapple with the psychological ramifications of events that outstripped traditional frameworks for understanding and coping with distress.

Trauma studies as we know it today were further shaped by specific historical events that exposed the limits of existing psychological theories and introduced new dimensions of psychological suffering. World Wars, nuclear devastation, and gender-based violence brought new, complex forms of trauma to the fore. Freud’s early work on hysteria among bourgeois women highlighted the psychological strain of modern, patriarchal societies, drawing attention to the “hysterical” manifestations of psychological conflict as an outcome of oppressive social structures. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (2011), Freud theorises that trauma represents a psychic rupture, an intrusion that the mind cannot fully process or assimilate. The trauma becomes what Luckhurst (2008) describes as “something that enters the psyche that is so unprecedented or overwhelming that it cannot be processed or assimilated by the usual mental process. We have, as it were nowhere to put it, and so it falls out of our conscious memory, yet is still present in our mind like an intruder or ghost” (p. 499).

The nineteenth century’s shift from a focus on physical trauma to psychological trauma was driven by figures such as Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet, and Freud and Breuer, who applied medical frameworks to understand the psychological manifestations of trauma. Charcot’s (2014) work on hysteria among women in Paris’s Salpêtrière Hospital was groundbreaking in conceptualising trauma as a psychological phenomenon. Charcot’s methodology, which included hypnosis, led to a medical understanding of trauma as a disorder of the mind rather than merely the body. Janet, a disciple of Charcot, built upon this foundation by linking trauma to dissociation, theorising that traumatic experiences disrupt the integration of memory and consciousness. Janet’s (1903) work was particularly concerned with the emotional and psychic fragmentation that follows traumatic events, a notion later expanded by Freud and Breuer. In their collaborative work on hysteria, Freud and Breuer (1957) argue that “hysterical” symptoms are, in fact, displaced expressions of repressed, often traumatic experiences. Freud and Breuer, and Janet both conclude that therapeutic

interventions should involve the re-experiencing and verbalization of traumatic memories, which laid the groundwork for modern therapeutic practices like psychoanalysis and cognitive therapy.

Freud's 1896 paper, "The Aetiology of Hysteria" (1962), marked a significant development in trauma studies, positing a link between childhood sexual abuse and adult psychopathology. Freud's notion that trauma results from the compulsive repetition of repressed memories of terror - memories that overwhelm the mind's capacity for control - emphasises the profound psychological impact of early trauma. In Freud's view, trauma becomes a form of psychic intrusion that continues to disrupt normal functioning, manifesting in symptoms that symbolise the victim's inability to fully assimilate or control the past. The repetitive nature of traumatic memory, as Freud observed, is often involuntary and can lead to a debilitating sense of powerlessness and alienation. Cathy Caruth, in *Trauma: Explorations of Memory* (1995) builds upon Freud's insights, emphasising that traumatic memory is not simply a recollection of past events, but an "experience or reception" (p. 4) that re-enacts itself in ways that transcend conscious recall. Caruth argues that trauma cannot be fully assimilated at the time it occurs; it "possesses" the individual, reemerging through involuntary, often disruptive repetitions that resist narrative cohesion.

Judith Herman further develops trauma theory by distinguishing between simple and complex trauma. Recognising the limitations of PTSD as a diagnostic category, Herman (1994) introduces the concept of complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) to capture the cumulative effects of prolonged, interpersonal trauma - such as domestic abuse or captivity. In *Trauma and Recovery*, Herman (1994) writes:

Survivors of prolonged abuse develop characteristic personality changes, including deformations of relatedness and identity. In addition, they are particularly vulnerable to repeated harm, both self-inflicted and at the hands of others. The current (1992) formulation of post-traumatic stress disorder fails to capture either the protean symptomatic manifestations of prolonged, repeated trauma or the profound deformations of personality that occur in captivity. The syndrome that follows upon prolonged repeated trauma needs its own name. I propose to call it "complex post-traumatic stress disorder. (p. 119)

Herman's concept of C-PTSD is particularly relevant to trauma theory as it underscores the unique psychological toll of sustained trauma, which often entails alterations in self-perception, disrupted interpersonal relationships, and susceptibility to re-victimization. Herman's work thus emphasises the nuanced ways in which trauma infiltrates and reshapes

individual identity, leaving survivors vulnerable to cyclical patterns of self-harm or abusive relationships. This theoretical framework, which Herman describes as a “synthesis” of insights from hysteria, combat trauma, and domestic violence, addresses the shortcomings of earlier trauma models and broadens the scope of trauma studies to encompass forms of trauma that elude simple categorization.

The Yale School of Trauma Theorists, particularly Cathy Caruth, contributed significantly to the incorporation of trauma theory within the humanities. Caruth’s seminal work, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), foregrounds the enigmatic relationship between trauma, memory, and narration. For Caruth, trauma occupies an ambiguous space between “knowing and not knowing” (p. 3), a phenomenon that resists complete understanding or articulation. This idea that trauma resides in the “unknowable” aspects of human experience has profound implications for literature, which Caruth argues provides a unique medium for expressing trauma’s complex temporalities and affective resonances. Literature, by engaging with trauma, allows for a confrontation with the ineffable and often incomprehensible aspects of human suffering. Caruth (1996) asserts that literature and trauma theory “precisely meet” (p. 3) in their shared concern with the interplay of knowledge and its limitations. In the context of trauma studies, literature becomes a vital medium through which the otherwise unspeakable aspects of trauma may be symbolically represented and indirectly communicated.

In examining trauma through the interdisciplinary lenses of psychology, history, and literature, trauma theory has evolved into a field that addresses both individual and collective suffering. Trauma studies allow scholars to trace how traumatic experiences shape personal and social identity, revealing the broader socio-cultural structures that perpetuate violence and marginalisation. Luckhurst’s (2008) discussion of trauma as a byproduct of modernity suggests that trauma is, in many ways, an intrinsic part of contemporary existence. Modernity, with its focus on technological progress and urban expansion, inadvertently generates forms of alienation and vulnerability that leave individuals susceptible to trauma. As Luckhurst (2008) argues, the “ambivalence of modernity” (p. 20) is manifest in the tensions between individual empowerment and systemic disempowerment, liberation and control, and self-expression and societal repression. Trauma theory thus becomes an essential framework for understanding how modern social structures create conditions for psychological harm, while simultaneously obscuring or discrediting the voices of those who suffer.

The application of trauma theory to Amma Darko’s *Faceless* provides a lens through which to understand the intersecting roles of violence, gender, and socio-economic status as catalysts for trauma on both personal and systemic levels. By focusing on gender-based violence and socio-economic marginalisation, Darko’s narrative underscores how trauma

becomes embedded within social relations, thus reinforcing cycles of suffering and alienation. Trauma theory aptly examines how *Faceless* portrays the cumulative effects of systemic forces - such as poverty, gendered violence, and social ostracism - which function as vectors that shape personal identity, relationships, and community dynamics.

Theories by Judith Herman (1994) and Cathy Caruth (1995, 1996) extend this understanding by emphasising the structural nature of trauma and its ability to fragment identities over time. Herman's concept of complex post-traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) is particularly relevant, as it encapsulates how prolonged exposure to violence and deprivation affects Darko's characters, symbolising the pervasive trauma borne by the marginalised. Caruth's notion of trauma's inherent unknowability aligns with the challenges Darko's characters face in articulating their suffering, as trauma exists in unspoken forms that disrupt social bonds and obscure personal identity.

In conclusion, trauma theory reveals *Faceless* as a purposeful portrayal of trauma's far-reaching consequences, from individual psyches to societal frameworks. It prompts readers to recognize the entrenched systems of violence and marginalisation that sustain trauma, emphasising the limitations of individual agency within oppressive structures. Through trauma theory, readers can more deeply appreciate *Faceless* as a powerful exploration of both collective and personal suffering, one that critiques the socio-political dynamics perpetuating cycles of trauma in disenfranchised communities.

Data

Traumatic Exegeses in Amma Darko's *Faceless*

Darko presents situations in which the relationship between men and women is one in which the latter experiences both physical and psychological violence. Women are victims of rape, battery, betrayal, abandonment by irresponsible husbands, economic exploitation and obnoxious cultural practices. This perpetrator-victim relationship leaves women consigned to fear, trauma, suffering and death.

In an interview with Ayinne & Akolbire, Darko says:

We have started writing from our point of view because, for a while, you were writing for us ... so ... if we are writing, probably there is some pain that has to come out. And I think rather than take it as a means to better understand the women folk of Africa ... You were always portraying us as all-enduring, all-giving mothers and that is the attitude we find in males ... but I don't want to be all-giving all the time, I don't want to be all-enduring, I want to ventilate pent up feelings about the experiences of women. (n.p.)

Thus, the text becomes the site to ventilate pent-up feelings about the experiences of women. Edkins (2006) explains that trauma takes place when “the powers that we are convinced will protect us and give us security become our tormentors, when the community of which we considered ourselves members turns against us when our family is no longer a source of refuge but a site of danger” (p. 109). The failure of most parents who hardly can live together in harmony to nurture their children is one of the major factors responsible for street children growing wild and taking to the streets to fend for themselves. And a lot of danger is posed by the ever-increasing number of street children in major cities and urban centres.

Faceless is Darko’s third novel which was first published in 2003. It tells the unpleasant story of young children who are driven onto the streets by their parents to battle it out and fend for themselves because these parents cannot simply discharge their duties as expected of them. Darko presents the sociological issues of child neglect, gender, child abuse, defilement of girls, child trafficking and violence against women and children.

In the novel, women are depicted as faceless, symbolising their lack of identity and voice within a patriarchal society. Both women and children suffer severe sexual and physical violence at the hands of characters such as Onko, Kwei, Kpakpo, Macho, and Poison. However, it raises the question of who is truly faceless in this system: is it the women, whose voices and identities are suppressed by patriarchy, or the men, whose irresponsible behaviours are concealed by patriarchal protection? Meanwhile, children are abandoned to the merciless environment of Sodom and Gomorrah, where the absence of parental guidance exposes them to the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases and even death. The trauma they endure is both personal and collective, as they confront the unbearable experiences of sexual abuse and suffer from the loss of family or elder support, intensifying their psychological scars.

Darko’s female protagonists usually undergo a physical and emotional journey that is stabbing and traumatic. This is due to her own experience when she travelled for years and encountered several difficulties as an African woman in Europe. Louise (2007) writes that:

Darko was shocked when she arrived in Germany and found that the only jobs available for African women were in menial service and prostitution. She took a job as a domestic and made very little money. Unable to send money home, as was expected by many in her family, she felt a humiliating sense of failure, frustration and anger... This experience of leaving home in order to come into writing is common to many writers, in Africa and elsewhere, and in fact seems almost an archetypal theme in the development of voice. Time... abroad provides

not only time and psychic distance but also the emotional impetus to begin to write. She acknowledges freely! “If I hadn’t left Ghana and come to Germany, I would never have written.” (n.p.)

Darko’s writing justifies her traumatic position explained by Caruth, when she explains the convergence of literature and psychoanalysis. Caruth asserts that:

If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet. (1996, p. 3)

The quotation suggests that Freud's use of literature to describe traumatic experiences is rooted in a shared focus between literature and psychoanalysis on the intricate interplay of knowledge and ignorance. Both fields converge at the critical juncture where awareness and unawareness intersect, indicating that literature, with its rich, expressive language, and psychoanalysis, with its theoretical depth, complement each other in understanding and articulating the complexities of trauma. This intersection allows for a deep exploration of trauma, benefiting from the descriptive power of literature and the analytical framework of psychoanalysis.

Trauma and the Traumatized

In *Faceless*, Fofo comes from a very poor background with hardly little or nothing to feed on. In a bid to survive the panging ache of hunger, she ventures onto the street to find a means of livelihood. The more time she spends on the street, the more she gets lured by its attraction till she starts living on the streets. On the streets, she attains a very dangerous level of freedom living: at the squatter’s enclave of Sodom and Gomorrah watching adult films her:

Fourteen years required her to stay away from, and drinking directly from bottles of akpeteshie, or at best, some slightly milder locally produced gin. Ultimately, she would have found herself waking up Monday morning beside one of her age group friends, both of them naked, hazy and disconcerted and oblivious to what time during the night they had stripped off their clothes and what exactly they had done with their nakedness. (p. 1)

Such is the life Fofo and other girls like her lead on the streets. They resort to stealing and pick-pocketing to feed. Fofo lacks the warmth of a parent. Street children like her are denied the opportunity of a mother-child relationship which is essential for their physical, emotional and mental growth. On the streets, they are no longer the child they are supposed to be; they become adults taking sole responsibility for their lives. Theirs is a traumatised story, having no elderly guidance, care and love. They wish for things other children who have the proper care would take for granted, “Sometimes I wish to be hugged even if I am smelling of the streets” (p. 2).

Unaware of the evils of unprotected sex, with no visible parenthood, “the boys and girls slept together, stripped together and did things with each other, many times under the influence of alcohol, wholly unconscious of what they were doing or with whom” (p. 5). An action that might turn out to haunt them for the rest of their lives once they are aware of the dangers. Ms Kameme, in an interview with Sylv, explains some of the effects of these events on the children, most especially the girls. She says:

it is they who get pregnant and who bear the brunt of that joint carelessness. It is the females who end up saddled with the child after the male has decided he no longer wishes to stick around and play father after all. So it is the girls who should be sensitized to this reality and urged to take the responsibility for their lives into their own hands. (p. 111)

It can be deduced from Ms Kameme’s response that the effects of sexual abuse of street children are not immediate. And according to Caruth, “trauma is linked to an image or events as it resurfaces; it alters the normal structure of the human mind” (*Trauma*, 1995, p. 4-5). The children left on the streets grow unusually financially leading to their tragic end. For a young girl like “Fofo who grew up never really experiencing what it meant to simply be a child” (p. 66), she ended up not trusting anyone, especially elders. The few elderly people she has had in her life turned out to be betrayals, thieves, rapists and bullies. Fofo’s father left home when she was not yet born. This is the utmost dejection from one’s father. She grows up without a father figure in her life. A mother is supposed to be a child’s greatest support but the reverse is the case for Fofo. Maa Tsuru, her mother, relishes feeding off her children’s sweat. At a young age, Baby T and Fofo are sent to beg on the streets so that they can feed. Her mother, unable to caution her sexual urges, marries a new husband, Kpakpo.

“Trauma is transmittable: it leaks between mental and physical symptoms, between patients, victims and their listeners or viewers who are commonly moved to forms of

overwhelming sympathy, even to the extent of claiming secondary victims” (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 3). Fofu would never forget the sight of Kpakpo sexually abusing Baby T. It was like her heart “would burst and hurl itself out through her chest” (p. 133).

Kpakpo took Baby T’s hand and sat on the bed. He placed Baby T before him and signaled her to remove her dress. Baby T obeyed as though in a trance. He savored Baby T’s maturing body hungrily with his eyes. Then he brushed the back of one hand over Baby T’s breast and drew down her pants...Kpakpo held the back of her tiny lower waist with one hand and placed the other hand between Baby T’s thighs. (p. 133-134)

Even when Baby T claimed that Kpakpo did not have sex with her, “he touched me with his fingers,” Fofu could not get the image out of her mind. She resorts to telling Onko who she believes to be a kind and good man. Little did she know that Onko was a greater animal and beast. Onko not only taunt Baby T with this piece of information, but he also raped her.

he had unexpectedly locked the door and pushed an unsuspecting and too-trusting Baby T onto his bed, pinned her down, forced a handkerchief inside her mouth and torn off her pants. Three times he did it, and left her bleeding on his bed. Better tell no one he warned. I know what your new father Kpakpo did to you. (p. 139)

Fofu reaches her melting point with the death of Baby T. She wants her voice to be heard and goes on to unravel the mystery behind Baby T’s death if not for justice, for closure. Having lost trust in everybody, she demands the “government” whom she believes is the only solution to her ordeals. On meeting Kabria, she is afraid to fully trust her based on her past experiences and holds on to her thoughts. Seeing Kabria come back for her the next day, her heart softens because Kabria fulfils her promise to her, a rare experience of hers (Fofu). But that is as far as she can go, she refuses the doctor to detain her overnight at the hospital for close examination.

Fofu grew hysterical about spending the night away from the company of anyone from MUTE. It seemed too much for her to develop some faith and trust in two groups of people within the space of a day. After having lived without faith or trust for so long on the streets, learning to

trust and have faith again was like a crawling child learning to walk. (p. 71)

Getting to Dina's house, Fofu did not want to remind herself of her miserable life on the streets. For a child who is used to sleeping around on the streets, she is always haunted by her condition. She dreams of a life far from the realities she lives.

And in her dream, she was living in a home with a roof. She was there when it suddenly began to rain and she was going to rush somewhere in search of a safe and dry place to huddle close to other kids for warmth when it dawned on her that she had a roof over the head. And in the home with a roof, she smiled so wide when she felt the urge to attend to nature's call that the angel watching over her smiling too. In the dream, she simply entered the toilet with a roof and did her thing. No war as it was many times when she had to do in real life. (p. 3)

Fofu's joy radiates on her face when Dina shows a room with a well-made bed. Normally, a roofed house like Dina's would have a toilet under the same roof, but due to the pain and harsh treatment she has suffered on the streets to use a toilet, she is prompted to ask "whether I had a toilet under the same roof" (p. 76). Hence, the children on the streets do not only suffer physical and sexual abuse, but they also suffer emotionally. Such is Fofu's case, who suffers trauma experiences in the Agbogboloshie market, in her home and the society at large. According to Whitehead, "trauma acts as a haunting or possessive influence which not only insistently and intrusively returns but it is moreover experienced for the first time only in its belated repetition." Fofu does not feel hurt when Baby T first leaves home; the impact of her leaving does not fully register until Baby T dies which signifies the second leaving. "In her mind's eye was a recollection of the last time she laid eyes on her sister. Baby T's reddish and swollen eyes from too much crying, with her belongings tied up in an old headscarf and held loosely in her right hand as she followed Maami Broni out of the compound house" (p. 23).

The events in Fofu's life affected her psyche only when she goes over it again. The gap in the events and the realisation of the effects of the events is traumatic. The effect and shock of the families she lost are fully registered; "He entered mother's life and pushed us all out of it, she began, first my two older brothers, then baby T, then me. My older brothers couldn't stand it. The old bed creaks. The moanings. God!" (p. 158) The impact of Baby T's death had hit her, she reached her melting point. Her last threshold of courage, of suppressed pains and hurts, got broken. She openly mourns her sister. She let out her anguish openly for

once, “You couldn’t even mourn her openly. You couldn’t bury her decently. You couldn’t even talk about her death” (p. 159). “The tears flowed into torrents. They were suppressed for too long! Tears that could not be shed out there on the streets where toughness was the prescription for survival and tears were a sign of weakness; tears held back lest they reveal her fourteen years” (p. 160).

Fofo receiving warmth and care from everyone at MUTE regains her shyness back. She becomes the child she wants to be and is treated like one. But trauma as it is an unbearable experience which might forever stay in the mind of the victim or even always haunt him/her. For some traumatised children, total rehabilitation is a long journey, in which they may be haunted by the psychological wound for the rest of their lives. Although Fofo goes into rehabilitation, the question of her health still hangs, “our duty, here is not to judge or condemn you for your past sexual behaviour. But we face reality and deal with it because you did indulge in some careless and unwise sex” (p. 179).

Whitehead (2004) in *Trauma Fiction* argues that “trauma fiction creates a narrative which is full of gaps to be filled by the reader using his or her knowledge” (p. 9). It is left to us to decide if Fofo’s STD checkup will be positive or negative. If positive, then Fofo is yet to escape from the horrors of trauma as it will be a memory that will always haunt her and cannot be erased. The unbearable experiences in Fofo’s life which traumatised her remain inexorable; they “were thoughts that she sometimes wished desperately to go away. But something always awakened them like restless ghosts at night...” (p. 20).

The Traumatic Sacrifice

Baby T is Fofo’s elder sister born to an absentee and irresponsible father. Right from conception, hers is a traumatic story. She is the one at conception when Kwei severely assaults her mother for being pregnant. Kwei eventually abandons Maa Tsuru. The former unceremonious abandonment of the latter precipitated the child’s identity to be attached to her mother, “She went first by the name Tsuru’s baby; which evolved to Baby Tsuru; and then, Baby T” (p. 125). Hence, Baby T is an abandoned child who ventures onto the street to beg due to the fear of hunger and her mother’s inability to feed her.

Not as lucky as Fofo, fate’s machinery placed in her a trail of events which finally leads to her gruesome death. As a child, Baby T is assaulted sexually by her stepfather, Kpakpo. This molestation is an execrable experience that she would remember for a long time. All the men and women ever known by Baby T, who were supposed to be moral examples for her, affected her negatively. They were all responsible for her tragic end. Onko, in whom both Fofo and Baby T repose trust and confidence, betrays their trust as he rapes Baby T and threatens her. Maa Tsuru does fail in her maternal functions towards her children

as she heavily depends on them for sustenance at a very tender age, therefore obliquely exposing them to horrible external experiences that haunt the children, especially Baby T; “The trauma she had suffered had left its prints on her very person and her soul. She was in great physical and even greater mental pain. If the good lord gave her long life, it was obvious she was going to require lots of strength and love to rebuild her dignity, her self-love and trust” (p. 136).

Baby T's traumatic experiences appear to transcend conventional psychological intervention methodologies, presenting a complex challenge to traditional therapeutic approaches, thus she resorts to taking hard drugs to ease herself off the haunting precocious sexual experience. This is a transient solution as she does not forget her traumatic incidents. All was going well until Onko decided to get a strand of Baby T's pubic hair for a rejuvenating charm as prescribed by the Jujuman. The sight of Onko reminds Baby T of the traumatic event (the rape) and she manifests symptoms of hysteria, which irritates Poison. He threatens to put her to work at “Circle,” a risky and dangerous place. Baby T's defiance of this threat compels Poison to physically assault her, as “he slowly unbuckled his leather belt and drew it rhythmically out through the trousers hooks... Baby T felt only the first lash, which landed across her shoulders. The right side of her face felt dead already anyway. She simply imagined the rest of her body also dead” (p. 196). Baby T's traumatic experiences serve to raise awareness and draw attention to the challenges and hardships faced by girls living on the streets.

In the novel, Maa Tsuru is also a traumatised character; she suffers worse things at the hands of fate. She inherits her trauma via a curse that has been placed on her by her mother. The history of Maa Tsuru's experience is traumatic in the sense that it implicates Kwei and other characters in the novel, who believe in the overwhelming influence of the curse on her—a curse of fecundity. This precipitates her abandonment. She combats her trauma with a strong sense of her sex, “But cursed or not, I was still a woman. I felt like a woman. I needed to be wanted by a man” (p. 157). Her combative spirit is rendered docile through her fear of abandonment, and the fear of being alone without a man again; she has not gotten over the leaving of her father and Kwei. This is why she remains silent about her knowledge of Baby T's sexual assault by Kpakpo and eventual rape by Onko.

Maami Broni witnesses the gruesome death of Baby T and no longer remains herself, “Nowadays, Maami Broni doesn't even sleep here, Oh! She is afraid of her room...” (p. 176). Being the seasoned woman that she is and having seen a lot in the profession, the death of Baby T should not have affected her much. She expresses her traumatic feelings that the “image has never left me. Not since it happened have I known peace or sleep. When I am bathing, I am afraid to close my eyes. I see her everywhere. I hear sounds. I feel her unseen presence” (p. 198). This is the expressive cure advocated by Jean-Martin Charcot. Maami

Broni does not perceive this as sufficient enough to solve her trauma, she, therefore resorts to the practice of dissociating propitiation- the slaughtering of a fowl to the place where Baby T's body was dumped. This also does not ease her trauma. The inexorability of her trauma is rooted in the suddenness and unexpectedness of the event.

Conclusion

Girls who are victims of sexual harassment right from their youths are usually vulnerable to psychological trauma. Women are exposed to different types of traumas such as rape and sexual abuse which may be more personally violating and more traumatic (Ruth, 2000). Society needs the set of people who constitute the MUTE to combat the menace of street children and victimised women. Also, the government should provide ways of empowering the children so that they do not end up on the streets. Every child out there is the responsibility of the society; therefore, society should not turn deaf ears to the cries of the street children.

Domestic violence is one of the major forms of violence that beleaguers society nowadays. Most women are encouraged to keep their "marriage problems" secret but violence is not one of those problems to be silent about. Victims of violence should open up and get help as violence cannot be curbed alone. Women are now victims of sexual abuse, emotional abuse and worst of all, physical abuse, and the perpetrators get away with it due to the system of the patriarchal society. Most female characters in the novel undergo different kinds of physical and psychological afflictions that tend to haunt their memories.

This research intended to make traumatic links in a female-authored text, *Faceless*. The study has examined the various and distinct ways in which violence is a form of physical, emotional and psychological trauma in women and children. Having an unhealthy family is one of the major reasons why most children venture onto the streets. An unhealthy family is one in which there is insecurity, poverty, and brutal parents, and all these create so much lovelessness in the family. Most teenage girls leave home to escape the brutality at home or the immoral advances from elder uncles, stepfathers or male relatives. Looking for solace in the streets, they fall into the hands of bullies, girl traffickers and men who not only rape them but also force them into prostitution. As a result of this, they are exposed to an unhealthy lifestyle, sexually transmitted diseases as well as unwanted pregnancies.

Darko suggests in *Faceless* that one of the solutions to gender oppression is that while parents should take total responsibility for their children, and "Feminist work on gendered violence ... (continues to dismantle) the dichotomous relationship between the so-called private and public worlds" (Kalisa, 2009, p. 3), individuals, government organisations, NGOs, religious centres, schools, and other reputable organisations should combine resources to help reduce this scourge or try to eliminate it.

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