
**THE ISSUE OF STREET CHILDREN IN POST-COLONIAL AFRICA; A STUDY OF
FACELESS BY AMMA DARKO**

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Abstract

This text is about the thorny problem of street children in post-independence Ghana (Accra). It particularly deals with the way the space reflects their conditions of life and the state of degradation of the whole environment. Our reflection, thus, seeks to investigate the deep causes of that phenomenon beyond the horrible conditions of life to suggest some solutions which to our mind can only come from Africans' creative mind and from the commitment of parents and mainly the ruling elite.

Résumé

Ce texte parle de l'épineuse question des enfants de la rue au Ghana, Accra, après son indépendance. Il s'intéresse particulièrement à la manière dont l'espace reflète leurs conditions de vie et l'état de dégradation de l'environnement dans son ensemble. Notre réflexion cherche à comprendre les causes profondes en rapport avec ce phénomène au-delà des conditions de vie horribles pour ensuite proposer quelques solutions qui de notre point de vue ne peuvent que provenir de l'esprit de créativité des Africains, de l'engagement des parents et surtout de la classe dirigeante.

Introduction

“The phenomenon of street children has become one of the most widely discussed social tragedies of our time.” (*Faceless*, XIX). This assertion by Kofi Anyidoho shows the extent to which the case is persisting, spreading and contaminating rapidly the urban cities of independent Africa. A child, by nature is a fragile person needing care, protection and guidance. This is one of the reasons for which writing about children is of great interest. Literature about children abound in literary productions, but Amma Darko's *Faceless*¹ is in our opinion the work which best tries to shed light on the important issue of street children which is becoming more and more intractable in a world where decent morals seem to have vanished.

Faceless is the life story of a disunited family at loss, a family in which children are left to their own expenses in the streets, a story which, in the end turned into a tragedy with the murder of Baby T, the senior girl issued in Kwei and Maa Tsuru's union.

¹Darko, Amma, *Faceless*, Legon, Accra, Ghana, Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2003. All further quotation from the book will directly appear within the text under this form: (*F* + page number).

According to Mary Jane Kehily, referring to the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1912-1978) “the romantic discourse claimed that children embody a state of innocence, purity and natural goodness that is only contaminated on contact with the corrupt outside world” (5). From this quotation, it appears that children are endowed with divine virtues as God alone is pure. A child, as defined by the law² is an individual of either sex, under eighteen (18) in the criminal justice and under twenty one (21) under the civil law (our translation). We therefore wonder why these “angelic” persons should find themselves in the streets? How do they live in these open spaces? What dangers are they running there...? There are as many as questions which remain without any answer. This present contribution, among many others, accordingly, means to analyze the living conditions of street children in general and Ghanaian street children in particular. More, it seeks to study some deep causes of this new social plague in post-independence black African capital cities including Accra, to suggest in the end some solutions. Postcolonial criticism and psychoanalytic criticism will sustain our argumentation. As for the plan properly said, we will, on the one hand, make a descriptive approach of the universe of street children to study their living conditions, then analyze the main causes of the phenomenon and finally propose together with Darko some solutions. Literature, being essentially an act of language, we will, through the study, see how the narrative structure helps to understand deeply the case and contribute to pass on the message.

I- The Space; A Reflection of Children living Conditions

The physical space in which the street children live conditions and reflects and models their way of life. In a first approach, we will consider the space as it appears within the narrative and then deal with the population who inhabits it. It is important however to note that beyond the realities described within a work of art, the author wants to produce meanings. So through these descriptions, we will perceive signs and symbols which will lead to understand the hidden causes in relation with the use of this place as a living home.

I-1- Sodom and Gomorrah, the Town within the Town

The place where most of the street children live or try to make a living is called Sodom and Gomorrah. The name for sure fits the case. This area has a particular link with the rest of Accra city. It is represented as a precarious universe, filled with filth at physical and figurative meanings. There is no appropriate toilet, but a sort of single toilet to which people run and queue up waiting for their turn to come (*F*, 6). The reader is informed that during the long waiting “people sometimes do it on themselves” (*F*, 6). The lucky ones who enter the toilet are urged by the guard to hurry up, forcing them sometimes to stop midway. So the favourite place for those who cannot queue up for long seems to be the dump. The text reads: “a handful of children and a few adults were already there doing their own thing under the scrutinizing eyes of some early rising pigs and vultures” (*F*, 6). Here at least, we may say, they feel a certain freedom. In this space, no decent morals are observed. Children abuse adults and vice-versa. The consumption of alcohol (Akpateshie³) and drug is a current issue. The words of the woman Fofu abused are a perfect illustration of our assertion: “I

² Reference is made to the Ivorian law

³ Local gin much consumed in Accra.

don't blame you! ... after all, we are just a stone's throw from Sodom and Gomorrah; were we to be somewhere else where being an adult counted, you would have seen what I would have done to you" (F, 28).

Sodom and Gomorrah, just like Nima in Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth, My Brother* (1971-1986 Heinemann) is a scatological universe much dominated by excrements and urines. The narrator describes "a dug gutter by the side of a kiosk infested with algae which betray the litres of urine that fed it each day" (F, 59). Such is Sodom and Gomorrah; iron blacks, disused vehicles, rubbish dump, the favourable place for flies and mosquitoes of all sizes and shapes (F, 58). It is reported that "when the rest of Accra is sleeping, that is when Sodom and Gomorrah and its real inhabitants wake up" (F, 154).

The dug gutters and the stagnant pools of greenish algae-infested water pollute the environment in every aspect. The reader then is not surprised to know that the houses (if any) are made of wooden shacks. In that particular area, people are unconcerned with the social norms as they, themselves, have created their own norms grouped in filth, sin, stealing ... as rightly expressed by the narrator in these lines:

"With the increasing influx of migrants from the north and elsewhere in the country in search of greener pastures, coupled with the consequences of the acts of some irresponsible parents which result in children leaving home to live on the streets, the vices of Sodom and Gomorrah gained momentum. Filth and sin, suffering and ignorance, helplessness and woes ..." (F, 66).

I-2- The Inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah

Aside the migrants in search of some job, most of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah are called street children who either sleep in the open air or else in wooden shacks (if any). If they were not performing petty jobs in the day time, they were spending the whole night watching adult films despite their young age and "drinking directly from bottles of Akpeteshie, or at best some slightly milder locally produced gin" (F, 1). The result as we may expect is "boys and girls sleeping side by side," sometimes "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" (F, 1).

Here, sex, alcohol consumption and drug go together. But despite all the dangers that they might run into this place, children seem to prefer it to a home deprived of any parental warmth and food. Fofu, the street girl, explains: "I led my own life on the streets ... I was on nobody's control ... I went to sleep when I wanted. I watched any film I wanted. Whatever money I made on the streets, I kept for myself. I spent it as and when I wanted" (F, 102).

The street children operate in specific gangs which know one another very well and they are all under the control of the street lords namely Matcho and Poison.

C. L. Innes asserts that "post-colonial studies are concerned with the way colonized people react to the set of values imposed upon them by the colonist" (F, 2). Here, this reaction takes the

form of a new way of considering life. As a matter of fact, market economy has replaced consumption economy and the only way to survive poverty is to hold a paid activity. In this perspective, many people including children rush into the cities and this rush engenders other problems when the dream is not fulfilled, namely, matrimonial break offs.

The inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah can be assimilated to the “wretched of the earth,” a category of people struggling to survive their fate. Their motto which stands as a rule according to Fofa, the street girl, is: “live in peace, trade in peace, steal in peace, deal in peace, sin in peace by doing nothing to upset them” (F, 156). Consequently, what might appear abnormal to a human being is erected here as a code of conduct. A stranger to the place is likely to be detected as specific attitudes are to be observed; not to turn, not to look around. There are also some forbidden streets to pass through unless one has the appropriate password (F, 154-155). **In short, we can partially conclude that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (among whom the street children) are frustrated and this fact makes them be watchful.** Sonia Lee in this perspective is right when she ascertains that “the reasons for a character’s alienation ... are directly linked to the social and moral context in which he/she evolves” (quoted in Jacqueline Bardolph,103). So the choice of this space as a living home for the children is not fortuitous. We will accordingly analyze in the coming lines some key reasons which lead these children into these “devouring jaws of the streets” (F, XXI).

II- The causes of the Malaise

In matter of culture, it is often said that the further one goes from the centre, the less influential he/she becomes. This simply means that values change according to the setting, for, a particular place is linked to some values at physical or symbolic level. A specific language is developed in a specific area making it be attractive or repulsive. Here, the causes of the phenomenon of street children will be analyzed taking into account the above mentioned argumentation. We perceive, thus, two main causes leading to the birth and the expansion of the problem: some internal factors and, of course, some external ones.

II-1- External Factors

Under this vocable, we want to finger all the transformations brought within the African continent including Ghana as part of its development process. We will name modernity and all its connections.

Modernity as a period follows post-independence era in African states. It refers to self-awareness in a globalizing world. As such, it is characterized by the rise of capitalism, the birth of consumption economy, the idea of emancipation to name just a few. Of course, it entails some new practices, namely activities that lead to profit-making no matter the values attached to them, and also, new behaviours. In Darko’s *Faceless*, we are transported into an urban era; Accra, the capital city of Ghana, a modern state. Post-independence era rimes with the development of towns. It goes without saying that these towns and particularly capital cities have become melting pots which attract people from the rural centres in quest of better living conditions. Like many other countries in Africa, the people from the northern regions see the south (the forest and coastal zones) as the El

Dorado, the place where man can achieve. Rural exodus, another flail of modern times is telling on this aspect. In such a situation, men desert their wives to go to South while innocent and ignorant mothers entrust their offspring to ill-intentioned women who turn the petty jobs they promise to offer them into the practice of prostitution. The first case issued in the book concerns the Kayayoos, these northern Ghanaian girls who come down South to work as porters in the markets (F, 200). These girls are left to themselves most of the time and once night falls, are submitted to all sorts of vices namely alcohol consumption, rape, etc. We quite understand why Poison wanted to disguise Baby T's murder and turn her corpse to be a Kayayoo's (F, 63). Considering the case of the Kayayoo girls, we understand how far capitalism issued in modernity is a system of oppression and exploitation of the weak to the benefit of the bourgeoisie or middle class.

Post-colonial criticism sees marginality, plurality and "otherness" as sources of energy and potential change, but paradoxically enough, the change in *Faceless* is detrimental to the weak and more precisely to the weaker sex, the adolescent girls.

The situation doesn't only concern the Kayayoo girls. For material assumptions, some expert women in sex transactions, would convince mothers living in poor conditions, to hire their daughters, promising them to offer them some petty jobs. In reality, they would turn these innocent girls into prostitutes from whom they make money. From time to time, they will provide their mothers with envelopes which represent their part of the commercial activity. The case of Baby T, the senior girl of Maa Tsuru is worth being analyzed. The text reads: "Mama Abidjan used to work as a prostitute in the Ivory Coast ... she was now ... into recruiting young girls for work in chop bars ... and she would guarantee to find a good placement for her" (F, 140). As for the benefit provided by the placement, the text reads: "thus it began that for years, Maami Broni came to symbolize the arrival of an envelope containing money; whenever she showed up in the house, it always brought ... a wine to Maa Tsuru's who nevertheless never turn it down" (F, 143). Thus, modernity together with idleness resulting from the lack of appropriate employment programs have compelled to urge poor families to let their children join the streets to make money as it is a question of survival.

"Culture, not to say customs" according to Oladele Taiwo "cannot for long remain unchanged ... they are indeed in the process of change in the face of movement and progress in the world at large" (59). The African continent is part of this universal human culture in constant progress and change. Knowing this fact, we cannot only blame external factors in the study of the phenomenon of street children. Some more important factors at internal level are worth being scrutinized.

II-2- Internal Factors

We group under this vocable, all the reasons which for one way or another contribute to the birth of the phenomenon of street children and singularly the situations within the family unit which urge the children into the streets. These reasons range from tribal considerations to the shortcomings of a diseased state, passing by parental irresponsibility.

II-2-1- Tribal or traditional ideology

Despite the advent of independences and modernity, child bearing remains a very important issue in the minds of African people. Be it at the level of the community or in creative literature, motherhood is discussed with passionate interest. A brief literature review on the case will show how concerned the female African writers, as regards the problem, are. In effect, a barren woman in black Africa is seen as a witch, as the most important thing in this community is to have a husband and give him children, if possible, male children who will perpetuate his family name. Thus, in Butchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* (1974) Francis and his parents were in good terms with Adah as long as she was able to bear them grandchildren (20). In *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979) by the same author, Amatokwu, Nnu Ego's husband is thinking of taking a second wife since his wife is unable to give him an offspring. Considering the prayer below, we understand that her marriage failure is the result of her infertility. Before the slave woman, she prays thus: "Please, pity me, I feel that my husband's people are already looking for a new wife for him. They cannot wait for me forever. He is the first son of the family and his people want an heir from him as soon as possible. Please, help me" (30). This plea from a woman shows the extent to which womanhood is revered. In Africa in general, children represent wealth. They both stand as an important manpower for their father in the traditional case, and the ones who will come in help to their parents in their old age. Consequently, failing to have some is synonym of a catastrophe. In Ama Ata Aidoo's *Certain Winds from the South*, Mma Asana, the old woman wishes she could get many more children on her husband's return (15). Examples abound in black African women's literature on the topic. This is the case of Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1997), Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and many others.

Coming back to *Faceless*, it is no wonder then that Maa Tsuru, despite the many desertions of her husband Kwei, went as far as to contract four pregnancies with him. This is the material expression of her womanhood before the community (126).

Bearing children in the African context is so important that one can argue that marriage itself is defined through childbearing. Mbiti, on the issue states that "marriage and procreation in African communities are unity: without procreation, marriage is incomplete" (7). Maa Tsuru's concern is to procreate. The question of these children's nurturing is not the main target. Left alone with four children without any job, she will nevertheless contract a new marriage with Kpakpo who also happens to be without any job. The reason we may guess is that a woman, in black African communities needs some tutelage to be called a woman. The point made here by Butchi Emecheta is clear enough: "In Nigeria, I am not sure, because a woman ... whether she is a PHD or not, they still talk about her. Unless she accepts the protection of any 'foolish' man, so she can be a 'Mrs' somebody, she has no significance" (quoted in Adeola James ... 44). As the case may be, this acceptance means and includes the consumption of marriage and the expectations of the "foolish" man's people to come true, that is to say, the bearing of children, mainly male children to perpetuate the family's name. Hadn't Baby T's murder happened, for sure Maa Tsuru would have born more other sons to Kpakpo instead of just two.

Paradoxically as it may appear, an abundant fertility is an aspect to be considered in the issue of street children. In effect, in the traditional ideology as expressed by Kwei's mother in

Faceless, having a fifth child is to bring calamity to their whole family (126). We understand then why Naa Yoomo's four children were successful at school and now hold good social positions in the administration after the death of the fifth. Kwei's escape from the matrimonial home can be explained by his and her mother's refusal to witness a fifth pregnancy that would ruin their own family. Here, superstition has impacted negatively Kwei and his mother. Kwei's escape creates the conditions that will lead the four abandoned children to the streets: poverty, on the one hand, and frustration on the other. In Maa Tsuru's Children's case, both conditions were met: poverty and their mother's remarriage and her love-making with her new husband before the children. The text reads: "she had noticed them toss and turn on their mats the whole night through. They saw it all" (F 131). Such a scene prompted them to leave the house forever (131).

"Literary work" according to Lucien Goldmann "is not the product of an author as an individual, but it reveals the collective consciousness, the interest and social values of a group or a class. Only great works express through their coherence, the World Vision, the consciousness of a collectivity" (quoted in Pierre Vincent Zima, 38). Through this assertion, it appears that the literary work is but a reflection of the society to which the writer belongs and wants to be the spokesman. If the object of psycho criticism is to try and understand the real motivations and the objectives of the writer, then Darko, through the actors she portrays, expresses unconsciously her feelings of both anger, despair and bitterness vis-à-vis a modern but patriarchal society where traditional beliefs still influence the conduct of the individuals. But beyond tradition, lies the most serious question of parental irresponsibility as regards the advent of street children.

II-2-2- Parental Irresponsibility

Reading through the lines of the "life story" that *Faceless* represents, we are stricken by the irresponsible attitude of the so-called "parents" toward their wives and children. It is certainly one thing to make children, but another to take care of them as it is taught by the natural law. Kwei's example is revelatory. Here is an irresponsible man who pregnant a woman four times, attempts to make her abort, and refuses in the end on behalf of superstition to take her as a wife. In fact, Kwei's unceremonious absence and final escape should be taken as ample evidence of acts of irresponsibility. His refusal together with his parents to honour his two female daughters, Baby T and Fofu and his abandonment of the matrimonial home led the children and their mother into a situation of precariousness. It is no wonder then, that under these conditions of extreme poverty, these children get prepared to join the streets. The text reads: "by the time Fofu's two older brothers each struck ten; they were running errands at the seaside and the fish market. Baby T and Fofu by then were performing petty chores for family members in exchange for food leftovers and old clothes" (F 127).

A life, however, cannot be made out of leftovers all the time. And when hunger and poverty mix, the expected choice for the child is to join the streets. Fofu explained to Kabria, a member of MUTE (N.G.O.) that she joined the streets with her sister because they dropped out of school after their father had deserted them a long time ago (F, 100). She goes further to explain that many children issuing from her family members are also on the streets simply because their fathers "didn't stay around to be with them and their mothers" (F, 101).

If so far, the reasons at stake fire irresponsible fathers who desert their families, but mothers are also to blame. In the case of Odarley, Fofu's friend, she joined the streets because her own mother had sacked her, pretending her to be troublesome after her father had left her for another woman and she too, found another man (103). The children thus, pay the price of their parents' misconducts.

Right at the beginning of the narrative, Darko acquaints us with similar cases through the interview of the two boys with the reporter of one of the private F.M. stations in Africa in Accra. If the boy joined the streets because he could not benefit by a maternal love as his mother got remarried, the girl on her part wished she could be cared for, providing her with warmth as a real mother would do just like the kind woman she met at the center (F, 2). It is such irresponsible acts and actions that Kpakpo, Fofu's mother's new husband and uncle Onko committed on the wink of an eye. In Africa, the communal and communalistic aspect of life made it a rule for every grown up to contribute to the forging of the child's character so that he/she can develop into a real man or woman. Here, however, it is Kpakpo, on the one hand, who tries to rape the twelve-year-old Baby T supposed to be his step daughter (F, 134). On the other hand, it is the so-called "generous" uncle Onko who raped the same Baby T on account of her innocence, leaving the bleeding girl on the bed and threatening her not to say a word to anyone (F, 139). This kind of practice cannot but urge a little girl to escape from the family home mainly when her mother is willing because of her new marital life. Poison, the street lord's story is almost the same. Abused and whipped regularly by his step-father, the boy he was, ran for the streets at the age of eight (F, 169).

All in all, we will partially conclude that one of the main causes for the children to join the streets resides in the disruption which occurred within the families, disruption caused by many factors namely desertion of fathers, mothers' re-marriages, hunger and poverty ... Kabria's family, despite problems inherent to each matrimonial home (children's care and behaviour, married life activities ...) has remained united and must serve as an example just like Naa Yomo who succeeded in educating properly her children who own important jobs in Accra city.

According to Terry Eagleton, "a literary text which undermines meanings is ipso facto revolutionary" (190). Darko's text is far more revolutionary. She means as a woman, through her narrative paradigms made up of cruel and realistic descriptions of children's lives to call upon parents and society to take their responsibilities. For, in any case all the components of the society are condemned to cohabit, including street children. It is rightly at this stage of our reflection that the state's own shortcomings are worth being analyzed.

II-2-3- The State's Share of the Blame

Amma Darko's *Faceless* shows the picture of a Ghanaian state which seems to have lost completely its landmarks. The description of the physical space as demonstrated further above leads the reader to understand the degree to which African post-independence leaders have failed in their political and social governances. The inadequacy formation-employment has created a class of unemployed, idle or jobless, still hoping for some job and whose present life is made up of prostitution, drug and alcohol consumption in the light of Kpakpo and others. In effect, the development policy in Ghana as it is the case in many other West African countries has been

centered around the main cities, here, Accra. This fact has engendered the phenomenon of rural exodus particularly among the people of the northern regions in quest of material welfare. We can therefore play with words and affirm that they hope to pass from the grassland (desertic) of the north to the graceland of the south (rich) that Accra represents. This lack of decentralization process can only but create shanty towns where disillusioned people, those “who cannot afford” that is to say the poor and the frustrated live. Sodom and Gomorrah’s inhabitants illustrate eloquently our assertion. Indeed, the lack of employment opportunities coupled with a bad urbanization policy and a failure in the decentralization policy have occasioned such phenomena like poverty, banditism and the advent of street children with all the vices linked to it. The many desertions operated by fathers in the book, are, aside tribal considerations, the consequences of unemployment and extreme poverty.

Institutions, they say, are sources of morality. This means, the state has the duty to guide and care for all the citizens. But, reading across the lines of *Faceless*, we cannot but be of Kofi Anyidoho’s view, when he asserts that *Faceless* is “the tale of a diseased society that seems to have lost its hold on the lives of its children” (F, X). To understand better this assertion, we will analyze the case of the police, the institution meant to protect and investigate criminal matters. The police are located in a very busy area and have a sorry sight. The text reads: “broken windows, leaking drains, cracked walls and peeling paint and a single seat” for visitors (F, 84). This description may be one of the reasons why the police officer on duty was rather interested in the lotto newspaper which at least could provide him with some money. Apparently, the police, for lack of resources were obliged to file cases. The words of the angry officer at seeing MUTE and harvest F.M. radio members are more than telling: “we do our best within the available resources here ... it is even less than criminal” (F, 81). He is right to some extent as the filing cabinet where the confidential reports are kept was itself damaged and outdated as well as the furniture. As for the telephone, “it was dead a long time ago” and there is not even a single car for the police (F 84-85). This is shortly presented, the police force which has to investigate criminal offences. This situation cannot but encourage violence and criminality in an area such as Sodom and Gomorrah, already affected and infested by street lords such as Poison, Matcho and many others.

The state has equally lost its memories. Information about Accra city is not available. The woman who was searching for information about the evolution of Accra area to its present state was bewildered simply to note that neither the Greater Accra Regional Office, nor the National Archives and Accra Metropolitan Assembly, not even the Department of Town and Country Planning were able to give her the right information (F 77-78).

It is said that the form in writing derives from the author’s mood or feeling. This remark proves true here, as Darko, through her narrative paradigms namely dialogues, satire (the officer’s belly, the **shit** parcel) and the use of representative writing (Poison’s phone call) and the narrating voices succeed in creating emotion, anger, frustration in the mind of the reader who feels betrayed by the ruling elite and their management of the state’s affairs.

II- What Perspectives?

Despite the anguish, anger and indignation that Darko's *Faceless* arouses in the reader's mind, it cannot and should not be seen as a pessimistic work. In fact, Darko's narrative is simply a reproduction of the living reality, the alienation of the children to the norms and ways of the streets. But beyond this, the reader must pay attention to the whole symbolism attached to the case.

III-1- Alienation

Poverty and hunger alienate the human being. This is the reason for which the children devote themselves to sordid activities in the streets: stealing, alcohol and drug consumption individually or in groups or gangs. They hope to make a living from these practices known as social vices. Unfortunately, they cannot always be lucky. Not even a disguise will help them achieve. Fofó, the street, girl was badly beaten and unless Kabria had begged the people to leave her, for sure, she would have died from her numerous injuries (*F*, 45).

Poverty, not only alienates the person, but it also produces an alienated consciousness. Maa Tsuru's choice of a second husband (Kpakpo) despite the desertion of the first can only be explained through tribal and ideological considerations. A woman must have a husband and bear him children to be considered as such in a post-independence Ghanaian society where traditional values are still operating. Mama Abidjan and Maami Broni's using street girls as pass girls for customers, Onko's longing for Baby T's public hair to make his commercial activity flourish are but the symbolism of poverty in a state where all the means contribute to a person's survival. In this domain, religion is not spared. Religion is turned into a business. So, the Jujuman whom Maami Broni and Onko went to for various reasons has built a special poultry run by his nephew and specialized in half-caste fowls (*F*, 185).

In *Faceless*, sacrifices, thefts, alcoholism, prostitution, delinquency, to name just a few, do not respond to the single factor of material acquisition. They appear as the crystallization of the hopeless' hope.

III-2- The Symbolism of Hope

The frustration and anger as felt by a writer influence forcefully his/her narrative style. Here, we will not talk of a negative aesthetic. We will rather use these shocking forms, as means to reach consciousness awareness. This anger is directed toward three bodies. Through each of them, we will suggest some solutions which to our sense can bring hope.

III-2-1- The Family

Marriage is known to be the basis of all the social institutions. As such, it establishes the family unit, the objective of which is to create harmony in the couple. This includes mutual assistance in times of joy or distress. Children born from a married couple constitute the ingredients which give the marriage and the family a material and moral welfare as they symbolize, not only the perpetuation of the family name, but mainly the proof of a couple's manhood and womanhood and by extension, their fertility. Yet it is not the number of children which makes a family a responsible one. On the contrary as it is expressed in our corpus, overfertility creates trouble as regard the

rearing of children mainly when one of the spouses appear to be jobless and the other doing nothing. Faced with their fate, most of the time, fathers escape from the matrimonial home, leaving both children and spouse in desperation and extreme poverty. To avoid this, it is high time the families adopted the system of birth planning or else use contraceptive methods available everywhere in modern states. A child needs care, particular attention and love. Failing to give him these, assuredly leads him to the streets. Male parents have the moral duty to get the family united despite their social situation for a poor but united home is better than a disrupted family.

In Africa, it is said that marriage is not a private affair. This is when the relatives have their part to play. In case of an irresponsible absentee father or a careless mother, members of the extended family should come in help. Therefore, we strongly disagree with Maa Yomo who boasts herself for the success of her four children whereas sitting there and waiting for Maa Tsuru and her Children starve and risk their lives in the streets.

This over fertility or the contest of childbearing is a shared responsibility. Women should put aside forever ideological and traditional concerns about the woman and be able to control themselves. Both parents should know that beyond ecstasy and shared pleasure lays the thorny problem of raising, rearing, feeding and educating children.

The conversation below shows the reader the extent to which irresponsibility, carelessness and ignorance inhabit couples and lead them to uncontrolled births which result in children of the streets because means are lacking at home.

Kwei: "how ... why did you let it happen"?

Maa Tsuru's uncle: "nonsense ... why didn't you ensure it didn't happen by glueing an iron sheet around your loins"? (f,121)

Even if the woman (Maa Tsuru) does not speak here, we are aware that most of the time in Africa, a child comes unexpectedly to life due to both parents' ignorance. And it is here that we want to put the finger on the non-governmental organizations.

III-2-2- The N.G.Os (Non-Governmental Organizations)

Faceless is full of NGOs specialized in children's matters. Post-colonial criticism as stated aims to take side with the marginalized by showing no neutrality in relation to the exclusions, injustices and prejudices that constantly occur wherever we live. But here, we notice that many among the NGOs feel unconcerned about the children they are supposed to defend. "Children-in-need" and "Street-Girl-Aid" (F, 95) have not been able to investigate the causes of Baby T's murder.

The NGOs are helpful to the state if they are controlled by this latter to find out if they had not been simply set for material acquisition. Yet organizations like MUTE (F 38) are to be encouraged. Not only is it concerned with every social, gender and child issue, but it also collaborates with newspapers, radios, magazines, television ... (F, 38). Such an enterprise is promising. And it is no surprise that Fofu was rescued by Kabria, an agent of the organization, to be taken care of and finally be rehabilitated into normal life. If NGOs are important in a country, they

cannot replace the state's institutions, for it is the responsibility of the state to take care of its citizens in every aspect of their lives.

III-2-3- The State

Reading Darko's work, we cannot but blame the state and declare that the independences in black African countries have only been nightmares for their citizens. If we agree on the principle that a literary work is valued when we base ourselves on the author's unconscious, then we understand better Darko's bitterness and disillusionment faced with a Ghanaian system which is failing in every aspect. The state has failed in its development policy in general. It has created many idle men who indulge into alcohol (Akpeteshie), drug or else prostitution to dissipate their worries. That were the cases of Kwei and Kpakpo (*F* 123-130). In effect, Kwei's numerous attempts to find a suitable job to feed his family have failed as well as Kpakpo's.

Development of main cities goes along with the increase of the phenomenon of rural exodus as people expect to have better living conditions up there. But the city is both a place of opportunities as well as a den of sins. It then belongs to the government to create employment, to make a large offer to the youth in their development programs in order to reduce the rate of juvenile delinquency and the number of street children and absentee fathers in the homes.

The law stipulates that "any human deed which causes another person, a harm requires reparation from the harm's author" (François Terré et al, 6) (our translation). This means that the state, as the moral and social guarantor of the citizens has to react to any action which is detrimental to its code of conduct. But this can only be done through its judicial structures mainly when it concerns murder. In *Faceless*, the state is not able to investigate properly the case of Baby T's murder because the police force was almost inexistent. The police has no appropriate location, furniture, phone and cars, necessary tools to conduct a criminal investigation as it has been discussed further above in this work.

A responsible state has three priorities: education, defense and health. Unfortunately, the black African states have almost all failed in these domains because of their lack of initiative or their refusal to adapt their management of the political affairs to their social realities. Having inherited a capitalist system, they prefer oppressing and exploiting the masses to their benefit. Material-minded, the ruling elite feels a certain elevation vis-à-vis the masses, forgetting that "both man and society are involved in each other and that the conduct of the individual member of the society" be he an adult or a street child "affects the entire society either for good or for evil ..." (J. Omosade ,207).

Art, to name it, "as a social and aesthetic activity is part of the religious, political, cultural ... even institutions or ideologies" (Kotchi, 66). As such it contributes to society building. Through *Faceless*, it is an implicit invitation that is made to the African states to reconsider their economic and social policies. They should have a creative mind, adapt (not adopt) their politics to the social realities lived by their citizens. To speak like Supriya Nair, a nation cannot develop "unless the masses are involved in the building of a political and social consciousness necessary for the development of that nation" (quoted in Lindfors, *South Asian ...* 116).

Conclusion

Faceless is a novel dedicated to the victims of African independences and more specifically, the victims of growing urbanization namely the street children. Through the depiction of the disintegration of the Ghanaian society and culture, Amma Darko, to speak like Emmanuel Ngara “does not give us a partial or biased view of the historical epoch she is dealing with ... Thus, we are able to see how political, religious, tribal and personal factors all contributed to the crumbling of the traditional social structure (quoted in Lindfors “Approaches ...” 115). This is all the more true as beyond the phenomenon of street children, it is the whole post-colonial epoch which is evoked through its specificities including the moral decay resulting from Marxist ideologies set up by the market economy.

This work aimed at depicting the living conditions of the street children in Darko’s fiction and the causes linked to the birth of the phenomenon to propose some perspectives under the form of solutions. A survey of the book has allowed us to discover that due to poverty, people from Sodom and Gomorrah and precisely street children live in unbearable conditions doubled with the threat of being raped, stolen or killed. More, the study has reached the point that the case of street children is linked to three main factors the resolution of which could help to reduce not to say eradicate the flail. They are named parental irresponsibility, tribal patterns or considerations and the state’s shortcomings. As such, political and social reforms are offered as alternatives together with a social program including employment creation and job opportunities for parents and mainly for the youth. The late Achebe declared that “an African writer cannot afford the luxury of ignoring social issues when so much remains to be done after independences” (quoted in Lindfors “South Asian ...” 105). This is exactly Darko’s concern. As a woman, she cannot remain speechless and see the decline of traditional African values in modern Ghana and mainly, the spreading of moral decay and vices among youth in general and female youth in particular. Darko is a committed writer who hopes to contribute to consciousness awareness among the masses and equally the ruling elite as regard their responsibilities. Children represent the future of the nations but they need protection, attention, love and food. To borrow Anyidoho’s words “no seed grows into harvest joys without the planter’s diligent labour of love” (*F*, XXI). Darko’s is a strong signal given to all the social classes to reconsider the case. There is certainly a hope if we join hands to fight. For, unless something is done, just to paraphrase Bereng Setuke, “there will, no doubt, forever be at the heart of our lives, the recurrent cycle” of the phenomenon called street children (quoted in Mthombi Mutloatse, 68).

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LES PAGES A BIEN LIRE POUR CORRECTION, SI NECESSAIRE:

1- Page 1, Introduction, 1er paragraphe

“The phenomenon of street children has become one of the most widely discussed social tragedies of our time” (**Kofi Anyidoho** in *Faceless*, XIX). **La documentation intégrée telle que présentée ne semble pas correcte.**

On pourrait dire:

According to Kofi Anyidoho ou in the words of Kofi Anyidoho, “The phenomenon of street children has become one of the most widely discussed social tragedies of our time” (**pour présenter la source ainsi: *Faceless* XIX**).

2- Page 6, début de page, 3è ligne

In short, we can partially conclude that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah among whom the street children are frustrated and this fact makes them be watchful. (**La phrase semble inachevée**)

3- Page 7, 12è ligne

Entreest

4- Page 18

Kwei: “how ... why did you let it happen”?

Maa Tsuru’s uncle: “nonsense ... why didn’t you ensure it didn’t happen by glueing an iron sheet around your loins”? (**Page of the dialogue?**)