

**A PSYCHOANALYTIC ANALYSIS OF AMMA DARKO'S *FACELESS* AND
BAYO ADEBOWALE'S *LONELY DAYS***

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERATURE
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BENIN CITY**

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BENIN CITY**

**NOVEMBER 2025
CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this project entitled: A Psychoanalytic Analysis of Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebawale's *lonely days* was undertaken by Kosisochukwu Peace KANU (Miss) of the Department of English and literature, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

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Date:

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Lord Most High for his love, grace, mercy and protection throughout my academic journey. I also dedicate this work to my loving family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with immense excitement and humility, that I will love to express my deepest gratitude to all those who stood by me through my academic journey and the completion of this project work. Their support, prayers, and words of encouragement have been invaluable throughout this journey.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how unconscious fears, trauma, and repression shape female identity in Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days*. Using the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, complemented by feminist perspectives, the research investigates how internal psychological conflicts mirror the external realities of patriarchal societies. The analysis demonstrates that both authors employ narrative realism, imagery, and interior monologue to reveal how women internalise fear, pain, and silence as mechanisms of survival. In *Faceless*, Fofo and Maa Tsuru represent the psychological consequences of abandonment, social neglect, and sexual exploitation, while in *Lonely Days*, Yaremi embodies the trauma and repression caused by widowhood and cultural marginalisation. The study finds that these psychological experiences, though destructive, ultimately inspire self-awareness and resistance. The research concludes that Darko and Adebowale portray African womanhood as both wounded and resilient. Through psychoanalytic interpretation, the study establishes that women's repressed emotions and fears become instruments of identity reconstruction and liberation within oppressive social structures.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Unconscious Fears, Trauma, Repression, Female Identity, Patriarchy, *Faceless*, *Lonely Days*.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose of Study.

This study examines Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale's *lonely days* as a psychoanalytical work through its thematic preoccupation to show how inner conflicts affects the psychological development of the protagonists in the novels.

1.2. Scope of Study.

The scope of this study is limited to Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale's *lonely days*. For the purpose of this essay, our focus will be on the deployment of psychoanalysis in the development of plot through the themes and character analysis in both novels.

1.3. Methodology

The methodology involved in this study is the qualitative method of research. This is a type of inquiry that focuses on understanding meaning, context and subjective experience. In this study, we will delve into a critical analysis of the primary texts; Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale's *lonely days*. We look into an in-depth inquiry into the narrative progression and character development in the novel, focusing on themes such as women marginalization, societal neglect and injustice, and the struggle for identity and dignity. Secondary materials will also be sourced from the library and internet to compliment the critical analysis.

1.4. Theoretical Background

This study is grounded in the psychoanalytic theory, influenced by the tradition of psychoanalysis, developed by Sigmund Freud. Freud was an Austrian neurologist and physician in the early 20th century and is regarded as the father of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic theory serves as a framework for comprehending the influence of the unconscious on cognition, emotions and behaviour. Freud asserted that a significant portion of individual motivation resides beyond conscious awareness. His concept of the theory emerged from his treatment of patients with neurological diseases and the clinical application of this concept is known as psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalytic theory depicts both normal and abnormal human experience while emphasizing the long term impact of early childhood events on adults personality and psychological development. On the other hand, psychoanalysis is a method that investigates the unconscious mind in order to alleviate painful emotional symptoms and develop self awareness.

The basis of Freud's ideas lies in his key work titled “The interpretation of dreams”(1900). He claimed that there are fundamental sexual and violent desires that the conscious mind rejects and suppresses which are metaphorically expressed in dreams. Freud asserts that every dream has a latent content which indicates its unconscious hidden meaning and can be uncovered through interpretation.

Several scholars such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, Jaques Lacan and Harry Sullivan have contributed greatly to the development of this theory. According to the Freudian framework, the human mind has a personality structure; the id, ego and

superego. The id is an unconscious reservoir of urges and impulses derived from one's genetic history that are concerned with the maintenance and spread of life. The ego has two levels of awareness; the conscious and the preconscious. It is the part of the personality that is involved with reality related tasks such as perception, cognition, and executive actions. The superego contains the individual's environmental beliefs and values as well as familial and societal norms. For Freud, tension between the three personality structures are suppressed and causes anxiety to arouse. The development of defense mechanisms, which are acquired through cultural and familial influences, prevents the person from directly experiencing anxiety. When these mechanisms impede the attainment of societal satisfactions, they become excessive. The presence of these defense mechanisms or patterns of adaptation differs quantitatively between neurotic and psychotic states. They include; repression, denial, projection, regression and sublimation and displacement, which all take place in the ego component of the mind. Freud believes that adult neurosis could arise as a result of the infant's repression of sentiments of rivalry against the same sex parent and longing for the opposite sex parent. This term is known as "the oedipal complex" or "the Electra complex in females". It has a literary connection to the Theban king who is fated to kill his father and marry his mother. Freud's concept of the theory was criticized by other psychologists due to its shortcomings, one of which is that it places far more emphasis on childhood.

Jacques Lacan reexamined Freud's theories through the perspective of linguistics and structuralism. While his view of the unconscious is based on Freud's foundation, it

introduces a new aspect to the concept. Lacan asserts that the “unconscious is structured like a language”, suggesting that the unconscious operates as a language composed of metaphor and metonymy, which generates meaning. He attributes the formation of the unconscious to a split that occurs within the individual during development. According to Lacan, “the unconscious is merely a persistent movement and activity of signifiers whose meanings are often out of reach because they are repressed” (Eagleton, 1963). He employs metaphor and metonymy, concepts taken from linguist Roman Jakobson, to illustrate the functioning of the unconscious. Metaphor involves replacing one idea with another while obscuring the original meaning, whereas metonymy connects ideas through combination and associations. Lacan explains that the metaphoric structure of the unconscious transitions from one signifier to another that is associated with it. Metonymically, it shifts between similar signifiers (Qaziz). Symbolism represents repressed thoughts in disguise. He expands upon Freud's ideas of condensation (which condenses multiple thoughts or individuals into a single image) and displacement (which shifts anxiety unto a different image through association) by relating them to metaphor and metonymy.

Lacan investigates how language and ideological systems impact human consciousness and the unconscious, as well as the construction of knowledge. He departs from Freud's emphasis on innate instincts and wants. He contends that individuals understand themselves and their relationships with others through existent systems such as language. In his key paper “The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis (1953)”, Lacan describes three stages of development; the imaginary,

symbolic and the real. These phases differ from Freud's stages of human development but they also fit with the processes of human growth with the first and third stages happening before and after language acquisition and the second bridges the two.

The mirror stage is characterized by what Lacan refers to as the “spectacular image” from which the ego-as-object arises. The child is captivated by this “other self” because he perceives his body as integrated and imagines a unified ego as something apart from himself. He sees in it the prospect of overcoming his fragmented condition and becoming a whole person.

Through identifying with an idealized picture, the infant embarks in a lifelong desire to achieve this ideal self, nevertheless, this goal will never be accomplished because we can never be ourselves. This separation is the underlying source of alienation, anxiety and neurosis.

The imaginary stage is central to Lacan's conception of ego formation. It is linked to the mirror stage, which is the self's initial interaction with the world. It is an intrinsic, unavoidable dimension of one's existence, and it is neither possible nor desirable to eliminate the illusions of the imaginary. In other words, it is a host of intra subject and intersubjective relationships which are imagined and internalized.

The symbolic is theorized using resources from Saussure's structuralism. It refers to the rules, practices, norms, institutions, rituals and traditions that govern one's social and cultural surroundings. Lacan refers to this as the “symbolic order”, with all of

these elements intertwined as networks of interconnected signifiers that represent the analytic unconscious.

He views the Real as interconnected with the other two registers, forming the foundation of his triad. The combined imaginary and symbolic create the realm of “reality”, which stands in contrast to the enduring nature of the Real, which cannot be adequately represented and transcends existence. The Real is inherently elusive, naturally resisting being captured in understandable and meaningful terms. As Lacan emphasizes, it represents an impossibility in relation to reality. Essentially, it represents an unknown factor that influences our actions, particularly our fears and neuroses.

In Lacan's theory of development, the individual is never completely developed but instead exists in a constant dynamic interaction among the three orders; the imaginary lays the groundwork for identity, the symbolic establishes the frameworks of language and social norms and the Real exposes the constraints of the systems.

Freud's concept of the unconscious mind, defense mechanisms and the id, ego and superego provide a framework for understanding repressed desires, childhood trauma and societal projection. Lacan's theories further illuminate how identity, desire and societal structures affect the character's experiences. Together these theories present a comprehensive foundation for analyzing the psychological factors that influence the plot and character development in both novels.

1.5. Review of related scholarship.

Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebawale's *lonely days* have attracted so much attention over the years and have been extensively researched on. Various perspectives and themes have been explored, resulting to abundance of research materials for this review.

Florence Orabueze in her book titled “Society,women and literature” comments that

“Alienation of children cannot be blamed solely on the environment and racist ideologies. The phenomenon will not be possible if there is no parental negligence of their duties to their children (13).”

The above excerpt exposes the role of parents in the psychological and emotional development of their children. Kwei abandons his responsibilities as a father, Maa Tsuru fails to take the right decisions on behalf of her family.

Felicia Annin in an essay titled “a critical overview of Amma Darko's *Faceless* explains that :

Maa Tsuru is feeble, suppressed and devoiced by men. Men take her for granted and consistently use her for their selfish gains. Fofo’s character contrasts that of Baby T. Unlike Fofo, Baby T is easily manipulated and influenced by the pressure from outsiders. This is evident in her involvement with Kpakpo, Onko and poison.

Furthermore,she says:

Marriage is an important institution in our society. Darko has portrayed the concept of marriage because of its role in society. Two types of marriages are revealed in the

novel; the marriage between Kabria and Adade,one portrayed as the ideal one as compared to Maa Tsuru 's relationships. Kabria and Adade's marriage is that of a typical Ghanaian marriage where the woman is solely responsible for taking care of the home and the man's responsibility is to contribute only in cash to the upkeep of the home.

From Felicia Annin's perspective,it is evident how Amma Darko utilizes characters in the novel to examine gender roles, marriage and the oppression of women in the society. However, traditional gender roles are later emphasized, with the woman burdened by household responsibilities and the man merely acting as a financial supporter. This disparity highlights the impacts of the patriarchal system and societal expectations imposed on women.

Kofi kra Jerome in his essay titled "The issue of street children in post colonial Africa" asserts that:

Bearing children in the African context is so important that one can argue that marriage itself is defined through childbearing. 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 a job, she will nevertheless contract a new marriage with Kpakpo who also happens to be without a job. The reason we may guess is that a woman in black African communities needs some tutelage to be called a woman.

Jerome suggests that in African context, marriage is strongly tied to childbearing and a woman's identity as a "true woman" in a society often depends on her marital status and her ability to bear children.

Speaking on *lonely days*, Togolese scholar, P. Dadja Tiou, in his essay titled “widow's hardships as a catharsis for their self assertion” quoted:

“ In most of African society, widowhood represents a “social death” for women. It is not just that they have lost their husbands, the breadwinner and supporter of their children, but widowhood robs them of their status and confines them to the fringes of society where they suffer discrimination and stigma”(T. Kuyela,p.140).

From the above excerpt, Tiou is of the view that widows are on the receiving end of societal neglect in a predominantly patriarchal society, thereby resulting in psychological trauma.

Aminu Bashir in his paper titled “culture as a tool of widow's plight in Africa” posits that:

In many cultures, prejudices against women are in fact deep rooted. Widowhood practices are among the prejudices that have consistently impinged on the dignity and rights of women in our different African cultures. However, widowhood rituals in the majority of African societies are now only reserved for widows with complex guiding rules,not for widowers for whom the culture or tradition has prescribed little to no mourning customs.

Bashir emphasizes that widowhood traditions in many African tribes reflect deeply ingrained bias against women, subjecting them to harsh rites and rituals, as with the case of Yaremi, Dedewe and Fayoyin, while widowers have no cultural obligations, harming women's dignity and rights.

Given the expanse of research materials on both novels, this paper differs in that it explores the psychological effects of trauma on the characters and how it contributes to the plot development of both novels, drawing conclusions from themes such as women marginalization, societal neglect and the struggle for identity.

1.6. Thesis Statement

This study explores how unconscious fears, trauma and repression shape the identities of women.

CHAPTER TWO

UNCONSCIOUS FEARS AND THE FORMATION OF FEMALE IDENTITY

This chapter discusses how unconscious fears shape the identities of women in Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebawale's *Lonely Days*. Unconscious fears are

anxieties or worries that people are often not aware of, yet they strongly influence behaviour, decisions, and interactions with others. For women in these novels, such fears arise from societal expectations, cultural norms, and personal experiences, and they often dictate how the characters see themselves and respond to challenges.

By examining the female characters in these two novels, this chapter seeks to show how hidden fears affect their self-confidence, relationships, and life choices. Darko's and Adebowale's works present women struggling to navigate a world that imposes limitations on them, and these struggles are intensified by the fears they carry unknowingly.

2.1 Introduction to Unconscious Fears

Unconscious fears are deep-seated anxieties that operate below conscious awareness, subtly influencing a person's decisions, perceptions, and identity. In psychoanalytic theory, Sigmund Freud posits that such fears arise from repressed experiences—events or emotions too painful for the conscious mind to confront (Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* 112). Carl Jung further develops this notion through his concept of the shadow self, describing unconscious fears as the unacknowledged aspects of the psyche that surface through dreams, habits, and emotional reflexes. In literature, these hidden fears become a mirror of both individual psychology and cultural conditioning, especially in societies where women's roles are narrowly defined by patriarchal norms.

In Amma Darko's *Faceless*, Fofu's unconscious fear of abandonment manifests through recurring imagery of invisibility and silence. Her childhood, marked by neglect and the absence of nurturing, breeds a persistent dread of being unseen or forgotten. The narrator observes:

"Fofu had learnt too early that grown-ups could not be trusted. They said one thing and did another." (*Faceless*, Ch. 5)

This passage, built through narrative irony and free indirect discourse, reveals how fear becomes ingrained through betrayal. The contrast between "learnt" and "too early" underscores premature exposure to trauma, aligning with Freud's idea of infantile anxiety a formative fear that structures later behaviour. Darko's minimalist diction and plain realism evoke a tone of psychological numbness, portraying fear not as an event but as a continuous emotional condition.

Fofu's learned habit of invisibility becomes her psychic defence. The narrator writes:

"She had learnt to disappear, to make herself small, to listen and not be seen." (*Faceless*, Ch. 5)

Through imagery of disappearance and rhythmic repetition, Darko externalises Fofu's repression—the unconscious attempt to protect herself from pain by effacing her own presence. This aligns with Freud's notion of the defence mechanism, where the mind converts unbearable emotion into behavioural patterns of avoidance. The language of smallness and silence symbolises how internal fear translates into physical posture—an embodied repression. Darko extends this psychological portrayal through symbolism and

focalisation. When Fofu encounters Kabria, a maternal figure, her unconscious yearning for affection surfaces beneath guarded mistrust:

“Fofu’s eyes searched the woman’s face, looking for something she could trust. She had forgotten what a mother’s eyes looked like.” (Faceless, Ch. 6)

Here, the gaze functions as a narrative metaphor for both longing and fear. Through focalised narration, the reader witnesses Fofu’s divided psyche—her desire for connection clashing with the instinct for withdrawal. Jung’s theory of the anima (the feminine aspect of the unconscious) becomes relevant here: Kabria represents the projected maternal archetype that Fofu’s psyche seeks for wholeness. Yet, the forgetting of “a mother’s eyes” signals psychic disconnection, a defence against reliving abandonment.

Similarly, Bayo Adebawale’s *Lonely Days* situates unconscious fear within a communal and cultural matrix. Yaremi’s widowhood subjects her to social exclusion and emotional repression, as the village of Kufi regards her as an anomaly for living without a man. Adebawale narrates:

“She was afraid of being left alone, of being forgotten, of becoming a ghost among the living.” (*Lonely Days*, 72)

This excerpt uses metaphoric language—“a ghost among the living”—to convey repression as social death. Through symbolism, Adebawale externalises an internal condition: Yaremi’s fear of isolation mirrors the Freudian “fear of loss of love,” a primary source of human anxiety. Her fear is not only psychological but socially

reinforced—the community’s surveillance transforms private grief into public performance. The narrative tone of melancholy and pathos reflects what Freud calls melancholia, where suppressed mourning becomes a prolonged psychic wound.

Both novelists employ setting as psychological landscape. Darko’s urban slum, Sodom and Gomorrah, operates as an externalisation of the unconscious—chaotic, repressed, yet alive beneath the surface. Similarly, Adebowale’s rural Kufi embodies collective repression, a world where custom silences individuality. The environment in both texts functions as a symbolic extension of psyche, aligning with Jung’s belief that “the outer world reflects the inner condition of the soul.”

Psychoanalytic theory thus illuminates the interplay between inner fear and external structure. In *Faceless*, Fofa’s unconscious fear manifests as avoidance; in *Lonely Days*, Yaremi’s fear manifests as conformity. Both patterns reflect what Freud terms reaction formation—the transformation of forbidden emotion into acceptable behaviour. Fear becomes an organising principle of female existence, dictating speech, movement, and identity.

2.2 Identification of Unconscious Fears in *Lonely Days*.

In Bayo Adebowale’s *Lonely Days*, the protagonist Yaremi’s unconscious fears significantly influence her identity and interactions. These fears, stemming from her experiences as a widow in a patriarchal society, manifest in various aspects of her life.

One notable instance is when Yaremi reflects on her husband's death:

“The night Ajumobi died, nine full moons ago, a shooting star zoomed down the empty sky in a long line of fire; the people of Kufi heard the go-away bird hooting a sad mournful tune on the bough of an iroko.”
(Adebowale, 1)

This description conveys Yaremi's deep sense of loss and the foreboding atmosphere surrounding her husband's death, indicating her unconscious fear of abandonment and the unknown. Additionally, Yaremi's interactions with potential suitors are marked by resistance and defiance. For example, when Lanwa, her late husband's half-brother, proposes to her:

“By the way, Lanwa, you must stop preaching the sermon of our people's old custom and tradition. This your long story of kinsman and cousin and half-brother connection with my late husband cannot catch me like a deer in a snare!” (Adebowale, 120)

This metaphorical reaction underscores Yaremi's fear of being controlled and her desire to assert her autonomy, challenging societal expectations imposed on widows.

Yaremi's internal monologues further illustrate her unconscious fears. In a moment of introspection, she admits:

“I reserve the right to choose the type of life I want to lead. It could be that of a woman deliberately aloof in self-contentment, untouched by the victimisation and oppression of the man.” (Adebowale, 120)

This self-perception reflects her fear of further victimisation and her determination to protect herself from societal and emotional harm. Her interactions with other villagers also reveal her fears. When faced with the pressure to remarry, she contemplates:

“I may choose to shield off man, permanently in my life, and transfer all affection and devotion to my children, spoiling them every minute with motherly love and care.” (Adebowale, 120)

This thought process indicates her fear of emotional vulnerability and her inclination to focus on her children to avoid potential pain.

Lastly, Yaremi’s actions often reflect her unconscious fears. When approached by a villager with an offer of assistance, she responds:

“Not your business Lanwa, how I want to live my life!”

(Adebowale, 120)

This statement highlights her fear of intrusion and her desire to maintain control over her personal choices.

These instances collectively demonstrate how Yaremi’s unconscious fears shape her identity and interactions, providing a deeper understanding of her character’s psychological complexities.

In both Amma Darko’s *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale’s *Lonely Days*, unconscious fears powerfully shape the identities and behaviours of female characters. Though set in different cultural and historical environments, both novels reveal women struggling against invisible anxieties formed by social expectation, trauma, and

vulnerability. Fofo in *Faceless* and Yaremi in *Lonely Days* embody how fear, when internalised, governs self-perception and conduct.

In *Faceless*, Fofo's fears emerge from the harsh experiences of abandonment, neglect, and life on the street. She carries within her the quiet dread of being unseen and unloved. The narrator observes her instinct to shrink away from notice:

“She moved quickly, keeping to the edges of the wall. It was safer there, away from the eyes that could harm.” (*Faceless*, Ch. 1)

This moment defines Fofo's emotional and psychological conditioning. Her fear of exposure reflects not cowardice but a learned survival instinct. The neglect she suffered from both parents, especially her mother Maa Tsuru, moulds a defensive identity where distrust and silence become shields against disappointment. Her interactions with Kabria later in the novel show her desire for connection, but also her hesitation to accept it — the unconscious fear that love and care will once again lead to pain.

In contrast, Yaremi's fears in *Lonely Days* are shaped by societal control and the isolation of widowhood. Living within a patriarchal community that defines women by their marital status, she battles the fear of erasure — of losing identity in a society that denies autonomy to widows. Adebowale gives her a voice of defiance as she confronts oppressive custom:

“By the way, Lanwa, you must stop preaching the sermon of our people's old custom and tradition. This your long story of kinsman and cousin and

half-brother connection with my late husband cannot catch me like a deer
in a snare!” (Lonely Days, 120)

Her words blend courage and anxiety. Beneath her strong voice lies the unconscious fear of being subdued or rendered powerless. The rebellion is, at heart, a defence mechanism — resistance as self-preservation.

A clear similarity between Fofo and Yaremi lies in the way both women transform fear into strategy. Fofo’s avoidance and Yaremi’s confrontation are different responses to the same psychological wound — the fear of losing control over their lives. Fofo’s trauma drives her inward; Yaremi’s drives her outward. Freud’s idea of repression, the mind’s act of burying painful experiences, is visible in both. Fofo represses her longing for a mother’s affection, while Yaremi represses her loneliness through defiant independence. The differences, however, are as revealing as the similarities. Fofo’s fears are intimate and personal, born out of a fractured family and the violence of neglect. Her world is the urban chaos of Accra, where children learn mistrust to survive. Yaremi’s fears are communal and social, springing from the collective oppression of widows in a traditional Yoruba setting. While Fofo’s identity is haunted by abandonment, Yaremi’s is haunted by conformity. Fofo seeks invisibility; Yaremi insists on visibility. Both, however, operate within systems that deny women emotional safety.

Stylistically, the authors employ different methods to convey fear. Darko uses psychological narration and internal focalisation, allowing readers to inhabit Fofo’s anxious consciousness. Adebowale, on the other hand, employs dialogue and proverb-

rich discourse to externalise Yaremi's confrontation with her society. Despite these stylistic differences, both narratives insist that fear is not simply an emotion but a social condition. Each woman's inner world mirrors the structures that oppress her.

In conclusion, *Faceless* and *Lonely Days* reveal that unconscious fears are central to the making of female identity. For Fofo, fear manifests as mistrust and withdrawal; for Yaremi, as guarded defiance and resilience. Both characters demonstrate that fear, though born of pain, becomes a silent force of self-definition. Through the lens of psychoanalytic theory, the two texts illustrate how women internalise social oppression and transform it into a means of survival — showing that even in silence or defiance, the unconscious remains a powerful architect of the self.

CHAPTER THREE

HOW TRAUMA SHAPES THE IDENTITIES OF WOMEN AND MIRRORS SOCIETAL OPPRESSION IN AMMA DARKO'S *FACELESS* AND BAYO ADEBOWALE'S *LONELY DAYS*

This chapter examines the pervasive influence of trauma in shaping female identity and the extent to which such trauma reflects the broader systems of societal oppression in Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days*. Trauma, as

a psychological condition, often emerges from prolonged exposure to violence, neglect, loss, and social marginalisation. Within the African context, particularly in patriarchal societies, women's trauma is not merely personal but collective—a symptom of systemic injustice and the enduring power imbalance between genders.

Both Darko and Adebowale deploy trauma as a literary and psychological device to explore the fractures within women's identities. Their female protagonists do not exist in isolation; rather, they represent countless women silenced by social structures that normalise suffering, silence, and subjugation. In *Faceless*, trauma is embedded in Fofu's experiences and Maa Tsuru's life of neglect and shame. In *Lonely Days*, Yaremi's trauma emanates from widowhood and cultural marginalisation, which distort her sense of self and belonging.

By employing a psychoanalytic approach, this chapter demonstrates how trauma, though repressed, manifests through characters' speech patterns, emotional breakdowns, dreams, and social interactions. It further argues that trauma operates as a double-edged sword—destroying identity while simultaneously propelling self-awareness and resistance.

3.1 Representation of Trauma in Amma Darko's *Faceless*

Trauma, in psychoanalytic terms, refers to an emotional or psychological wound that leaves a deep imprint on the unconscious mind. It arises from distressing experiences that exceed an individual's ability to cope or integrate the emotions involved. Sigmund Freud first conceptualised trauma as “the wound inflicted upon the mind by an

experience too overwhelming to be fully known” (Beyond the Pleasure Principle 12). When trauma is repressed, it lingers in the unconscious, subtly shaping thought, behaviour, and identity.

In the context of women’s experiences, trauma is often a product of patriarchal domination, systemic inequality, and cultural subjugation. According to Judith Herman, “trauma shatters the sense of self in relation to the world, breaking the victim’s connection to others and to her own inner continuity” (Trauma and Recovery 56). For women in African societies, such fragmentation of identity often stems from the intersections of gender-based violence, poverty, widowhood, and marginalisation.

Female identity, therefore, becomes a fragile construct, constantly negotiated between the internal scars of trauma and the external demands of culture. In *Faceless and Lonely Days*, the female protagonists embody this psychological tension. Their identities evolve not merely as personal expressions but as psychological responses to trauma. The repressed pain of abuse, rejection, and alienation emerges in their dreams, fears, and relationships, signalling how deeply the unconscious holds the memory of suffering.

In *Faceless*, trauma dominates Fofo’s life as she navigates the streets searching for meaning after the loss of her sister. She recalls, “I thought of Baby T and felt something choke in my throat. I did not want to cry again, because no one listened when we cried” (Darko 71). Such a line combines elements of imagery and pathos to capture the helplessness that marks her identity—the constant struggle to survive in a society that

refuses to see her pain. Her trauma is compounded by abandonment and the violent loss of her sister, an experience that shapes her emotional detachment and guarded resilience.

Maa Tsuru's trauma, in turn, stems from spiritual stigmatisation and social rejection. The community brands her as cursed: "They said my mother was born with a curse. They said no man would stay with her, and none did" (Darko 38). The application of repetition and foreshadowing highlights Maa Tsuru's future misfortunes. This stigma becomes internalised guilt, a psychological burden that prevents her from nurturing her children. Her identity as a mother is fractured by shame and the repeated betrayal of men who exploit and abandon her.

Amma Darko's *Faceless* is a deeply unsettling yet powerful psychological and social exploration of how trauma shapes the lives of women and children in an unforgiving patriarchal society. The novel exposes the scars of abuse, neglect, and exploitation borne by women like Maa Tsuru, Baby T, and Fofo, whose pain reflects both personal wounds and collective societal failures. Through the lens of psychoanalysis, trauma in *Faceless* operates not merely as emotional suffering but as a symptom of structural injustice and moral decay.

Trauma in *Faceless* first manifests in the life of Maa Tsuru, a woman condemned by superstition and abandonment. Her trauma begins with the label of a "cursed" woman, one whom men use and discard. The narrator recounts the social stigma she endures:

“They said my mother was born with a curse. They said no man would stay with her. And none did. They said she was possessed and that the curse would follow her children.”
(Darko 38)

This statement encapsulates the trauma of social exclusion. Maa Tsuru’s pain is compounded by internal guilt; she comes to accept this stigma as truth, demonstrating what Freud describes as “the internalisation of external punishment.” Her life becomes a cycle of abandonment that leaves lasting effects on her daughters, especially Fofo and Baby T.

The next layer of trauma is embodied in Baby T’s story. Sold into prostitution under the illusion of employment, Baby T’s life becomes a testimony to the commodification of the female body. Her mother’s helplessness and society’s indifference converge to destroy her innocence. Her death is narrated with haunting simplicity:

“Her body lay there, naked, beaten, her eyes open and empty. The flies had gathered before the people came. No one knew her name.” (Darko 102)

Here, trauma is not just emotional—it is existential. Baby T’s namelessness signifies erasure. She becomes the “faceless” emblem of systemic violence, where poor, unprotected women are stripped of personhood and memory. This is a recurring psychoanalytic image of repression—the buried truth that demands remembrance.

The emotional toll of trauma continues in Fofo, Baby T’s younger sister, whose search for truth becomes an act of confrontation with inherited pain. Her nightmares and

flashbacks reflect the persistence of trauma across generations. When she encounters the image of her sister's death, Fofu's consciousness fractures under the weight of memory:

“Fofu's stomach turned. She saw again the small, broken body of Baby T, and she wanted to scream. But her voice would not come. It was as if the silence had been passed down to her.” (Darko 120)

This passage captures what Cathy Caruth calls “the haunting of history in the present.” Fofu's silence is not mere fear but the residue of trauma that travels through maternal and filial lines, binding women together through shared suffering.

Kabria, one of the central figures in the investigative group “MUTE,” offers the novel's most reflective commentary on trauma as a social condition. In observing the lives of the street children, she recognises how neglect functions as collective violence:

“They are children, but they live like ghosts. They laugh without joy and sleep without dreams. The city passes by them as if they do not exist.” (Darko 133)

This contrast between children and ghosts articulates invisibility which connects with the novel's title, *Faceless*. Trauma here becomes a national metaphor—the emotional cost of a society that refuses to see its own decay. Darko uses Kabria's voice to bridge the gap between empathy and social accountability. The relationship between trauma and motherhood is also central. Maa Tsuru's guilt is juxtaposed with the moral complicity of men like Kpakpo, whose abuse deepens her despair. When Kpakpo abandons her, the narrator observes:

“He left without a word, and Maa Tsuru sat for hours staring at the door. She did not cry. The tears had long since dried.” (Darko 87)

This quiet image portrays what Judith Herman calls “frozen grief”—a state where the capacity for emotional release is numbed by repeated trauma. Maa Tsuru’s stillness reflects resignation rather than recovery. At the end of the novel, trauma begins to transform into resistance through Fofu’s act of storytelling. Her decision to speak to Kabria and the MUTE team represents both psychological catharsis and symbolic restoration. In her own words:

“If I tell it, maybe people will know what they did to her. Maybe they will remember that Baby T lived.” (Darko 175)

This confession aligns with the psychoanalytic principle that healing begins through articulation—what Freud described as “working through” the repressed. For Fofu, to tell her story is to reclaim identity from trauma, and to make the faceless visible again. In *Faceless*, then, trauma is both destructive and redemptive. It erases identity but also awakens consciousness. Through Fofu, Maa Tsuru, Baby T, and Kabria, Amma Darko weaves a narrative where pain becomes testimony and silence turns to speech. The novel does not romanticise trauma but situates it within Ghana’s social reality—where patriarchy, poverty, and neglect form the unending chain of female suffering. Yet, in confronting that pain, the women of *Faceless* assert the first act of liberation: the courage to be seen and to speak.

In summary, trauma in these novels functions as a catalyst of transformation. It disrupts but also redefines. It silences but also provokes voice. Through psychoanalytic exploration, we see that trauma and female identity are not separate entities but intertwined processes—each shaping and reshaping the other in the struggle for meaning, dignity, and liberation.

3.2 Representation of Trauma in Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days*

Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days* captures trauma as both a psychological wound and a communal experience born of cultural injustice. The novel's protagonist, Yaremi, endures the emotional torment of widowhood in a society that defines a woman's worth by her relationship to men. Adebowale uses Yaremi's suffering to explore how patriarchal traditions perpetuate trauma through silence, exclusion, and ritual humiliation.

Trauma in *Lonely Days* is not a private affliction but a collective condition of female existence. The widow's pain is socially sanctioned, normalised, and perpetuated as culture. As the narrative opens, Yaremi's loneliness is described not as mere grief but as a continuing psychic imprisonment:

“Since Ajumobi's death, Yaremi's world had become a vast, empty forest of echoes. Every dawn came with the sound of women's laughter in distant compounds, but none reached her heart. The world moved on, but her heart stayed rooted in the past, where the voice of her husband still called her name in the wind.” (Adebowale 5)

This six-line passage conveys the lingering presence of trauma as a spectral voice that refuses to fade. Freud's notion of "traumatic repetition" (Beyond the Pleasure Principle 29) is evident — Yaremi relives her loss in cyclical memory, unable to detach emotionally from her deceased husband. Her identity, once anchored to Ajumobi, becomes fractured and uncertain.

Adebowale extends Yaremi's trauma through the social ostracism that follows her widowhood. The community's oppressive customs intensify her alienation. In a powerful scene where the elders insist she must remarry to "cleanse" herself of widowhood, Yaremi's defiance exposes the cruelty of a culture that pathologises grief:

"The elders gathered under the tree, their eyes heavy with tradition. They spoke of cleansing, of rituals, of the gods' anger. But Yaremi stood still, her heart pounding like a drum of revolt. 'You call this honour?' she said. 'You strip me of dignity and name it custom.' Their silence was the silence of guilt." (Adebowale 57)

Here, trauma becomes an act of resistance. Yaremi's defiance represents the psychological threshold where pain transforms into agency. Her voice disrupts patriarchal authority, showing that trauma, when confronted, can lead to empowerment. The widowhood rituals themselves function as psychological violence — a form of institutional trauma imposed under the guise of purification. Adebowale depicts this in a harrowing episode when Yaremi is coerced into mourning rites that humiliate her:

“They took her wrapper and left her bare before the gods. They said the spirits must see her grief. She sat on the cold floor, her body trembling, her heart numb. The drumbeats outside were not for dance but for judgment. The air smelled of ashes and shame.” (Adebowale 73)

This passage exemplifies what Judith Herman calls “the ritualisation of trauma” (Trauma and Recovery 78), where social systems reproduce violence through collective participation. Yaremi’s body becomes a stage for patriarchal control — her trauma both witnessed and legitimised by cultural spectatorship. Furthermore, trauma in *Lonely Days* manifests through isolation and silence. Yaremi’s inner world becomes a space of suppressed grief and longing. Adebowale uses introspective monologue to reveal her psychological fragmentation:

“Sometimes she talked to herself, sometimes to the wind. The children no longer visited, and the house spoke only in echoes. Nights were the hardest; the darkness whispered her fears back to her. She began to fear her own shadow, for it reminded her that she was still alive when she wished she were gone.” (Adebowale 98)

This extended quotation illustrates the depth of emotional collapse following social ostracism. Yaremi’s silence mirrors the Freudian concept of repression, where unbearable emotion is pushed inward, returning as anxiety and self-estrangement. Adebowale, however, does not leave Yaremi in despair. Her gradual assertion of

individuality symbolises psychological recovery. The novel closes with Yaremi's refusal to remarry, marking a decisive act of healing and identity reconstruction. She declares:

“I will not marry again. My heart belongs to the earth that holds Ajumobi. If the gods demand a sacrifice, they can take my loneliness, not my freedom. I have lived in silence long enough; now I will live as myself.”
(Adebowale 132)

This moment captures trauma's transformative power. Like Mara and Fofo in *Faceless*, Yaremi converts suffering into strength. Her refusal to conform reclaims agency from patriarchal oppression. Cathy Caruth's observation that “the act of narrating trauma restores the voice that trauma once silenced” (*Unclaimed Experience* 8) is clearly reflected in Yaremi's self-assertion.

In essence, *Lonely Days* portrays trauma as both a personal wound and a collective indictment of cultural oppression. Through Yaremi's journey, Adebowale underscores that healing is not mere recovery from loss but resistance against structures that perpetuate that loss. The novel humanises the widow's plight, transforming her from a symbol of pity into one of resilience and renewal.

Trauma in Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days* transcends the individual and becomes a mirror of collective suffering rooted in patriarchal oppression and social neglect. Both writers employ their female protagonists as psychological mirrors through which the reader observes how pain constructs, distorts, and ultimately redefines female identity. While *Faceless* dramatizes trauma through

urban poverty, sexual exploitation, and parental failure, *Lonely Days* exposes it through widowhood rituals, gendered ostracism, and cultural bondage. Yet, the trauma in both novels stems from one shared root — a society that refuses to recognise women's suffering as human tragedy.

In *Faceless*, trauma is intimately tied to social invisibility and sexual violence. The most haunting image of this is Baby T's death, which symbolises the extinction of identity itself:

“Her body lay there, naked, beaten, her eyes open and empty. The flies had gathered before the people came. No one knew her name.” (Darko 102)

This image is not only an individual tragedy but a reflection of Ghana's moral collapse. Baby T's trauma becomes symbolic of collective failure — a society that consumes its own children and buries their memory. In psychoanalytic terms, this is a national “repression,” a collective denial of guilt that allows the trauma to continue unacknowledged. Kabria's reflection captures this horror of complicity:

“They are children, but they live like ghosts. They laugh without joy and sleep without dreams. The city passes by them as if they do not exist.” (Darko 133)

Through such voices, Darko turns trauma into a political mirror: a way of confronting the conscience of a society that has normalised exploitation and gendered suffering.

In contrast, Adebowale's *Lonely Days* situates trauma within cultural custom and the tyranny of tradition. The protagonist Yaremi's pain is sanctioned, performed, and

ritualised by her community. Her trauma lies not in physical violence but in the cruelty of communal silence. The narrative captures this poignantly:

“The women sang songs of mockery, their voices rising with the evening wind. Yaremi sat on the ground, her heart breaking with each note.” (Adebowale 59)

The community’s conformity to oppressive tradition transforms them into agents of trauma. Adebowale’s use of irony — women inflicting pain upon another woman — exposes the cyclical psychology of oppression. It echoes Frantz Fanon’s notion that colonised or subordinated minds replicate the violence they have internalised. Yaremi’s isolation thus becomes both cultural and psychological.

Despite their different settings, both novels show that trauma in women functions simultaneously as a wound and a weapon. In *Faceless*, Fofo’s trauma propels her toward speech and reclamation of identity; in *Lonely Days*, Yaremi’s pain drives her toward rebellion and self-determination. Freud describes such responses as “defensive formations” — psychic strategies by which the wounded mind transforms suffering into survival (*The Ego and the Id* 47). Fofo’s act of telling her sister’s story is an assertion of selfhood against silence:

“If I tell it, maybe people will know what they did to her. Maybe they will remember that Baby T lived.” (Darko 175)

Similarly, Yaremi’s defiance breaks the cultural code that demands her submission:

“I will not marry again. I have lived in silence long enough.” (Adebowale 132)

Both women, though separated by context, translate trauma into agency. Their speech acts become psychoanalytic catharsis — a purging of repressed pain through articulation.

Yet, the authors differ in how they frame trauma's origins. Amma Darko's *Faceless* situates trauma in a modern, urban landscape marked by poverty, violence, and institutional neglect. Adebowale, on the other hand, anchors his narrative in a rural world where trauma is transmitted through ritual and inherited belief. Darko's world is chaotic and fluid; Adebowale's is structured and ceremonial. Both, however, converge on the same truth: trauma is a symptom of social blindness and moral decay.

Thematically, both authors suggest that trauma is cyclical. In *Faceless*, daughters inherit the pain of their mothers — Fofu's suffering is an echo of Maa Tsuru's. In *Lonely Days*, Yaremi's plight represents generations of widows silenced by custom. This repetition of pain reflects what Cathy Caruth calls "the unassimilated past that insists on return" (*Unclaimed Experience* 7). Through speech and self-assertion, both novels transform trauma into remembrance, and remembrance into renewal.

Ultimately, Amma Darko and Bayo Adebowale converge on the notion that trauma, though destructive, also generates awareness and resistance. Their protagonists — Fofu, Maa Tsuru, and Yaremi — endure suffering not as passive victims but as survivors who reclaim narrative power. Both *Faceless* and *Lonely Days* reveal that in patriarchal Africa, trauma is never just psychological; it is social, historical, and political. Yet, through storytelling, these women break the silence imposed upon them, proving that out of suffering, identity and liberation can be reborn.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW REPRESSION SHAPES THE IDENTITIES OF WOMEN IN AMMA

DARKO'S *FACELESS* AND BAYO ADEBOWALE'S *LONELY DAYS*

This chapter investigates the dynamics of repression and how it influences the formation of female identity in Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days*. Repression, a key psychoanalytic concept in Freudian theory, refers to the unconscious exclusion of painful or threatening experiences, thoughts, and desires from

conscious awareness. It operates as both a psychological defence mechanism and a social instrument of control. For women in patriarchal societies, repression is often culturally enforced—manifesting through silence, obedience, and endurance.

In *Faceless*, repression functions as a survival strategy. Women like Maa Tsuru internalise shame, guilt, and pain, enduring abuse and societal ostracism in silence. Similarly, Fofo learns to repress her fears and vulnerabilities as a means of coping with a violent and exploitative world. In *Lonely Days*, repression is institutionalised through widowhood rituals, forcing Yaremi and other women to suppress their emotions and individuality under the pretext of cultural honour.

This chapter explores the psychoanalytic dimensions of repression as both a personal and collective condition. It demonstrates that repression, while destructive, can paradoxically foster resilience and identity transformation. The discussion is organised into four parts:

4.1 Manifestations of Repression in Amma Darko's *Faceless*

Repression, as conceptualised by Sigmund Freud, is the psychological act of pushing distressing memories, desires, or experiences into the unconscious mind to protect the individual from emotional pain or internal conflict. In psychoanalytic thought, repression is not simply forgetting; it is an active and ongoing process that shapes behaviour, emotions, and identity. For women in patriarchal societies, repression assumes a social dimension—where cultural expectations dictate what may or may not be

expressed. It becomes a systemic silencing of the female voice, often disguised as virtue, obedience, or modesty.

According to Freud, “the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious” (*The Unconscious* 148). This implies that repression does not erase experience but buries it deep within the psyche, where it continues to exert influence. For the African woman, as depicted in Amma Darko’s *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale’s *Lonely Days*, repression is both a personal mechanism and a collective inheritance—passed down through generations of women conditioned to endure rather than confront pain.

In the African cultural context, repression is normalised through proverbs, customs, and religious doctrines that valorise silence and submission. As Simone de Beauvoir observes in *The Second Sex*, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (267). This becoming involves the internalisation of restrictions and expectations that shape women’s consciousness from childhood. The result is a psyche split between personal desire and social obligation, creating a continuous tension within the self.

In both novels, the authors explore how repression manifests as a psychological scar and a social performance. Women are taught to repress their anger, grief, and sexuality to maintain social harmony. Yet, the repressed emotions often find expression in dreams, silence, or acts of defiance. Carl Jung’s view on the unconscious becomes relevant here; he posits that “what is not brought to consciousness comes to us as fate”

(The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious 32). The women in *Faceless and Lonely Days* embody this fate—their repressed emotions return as trauma, rebellion, or spiritual awakening.

Repression thus functions as a double-edged force in female identity formation. On one hand, it deforms the psyche, suppressing individuality and freedom; on the other, it compels the emergence of self-awareness and eventual resistance. The silenced voices of women become the unseen engines of transformation, as repression paradoxically leads to self-realisation through suffering.

In *Faceless*, Amma Darko portrays repression as one of the most pervasive psychological conditions endured by women living under patriarchal and impoverished structures. The novel reveals that women are not merely victims of visible oppression but of an inner silence born of shame, guilt, and social conditioning. They repress their anger, desires, and ambitions to survive in a world that demands submission and endurance.

Maa Tsuru embodies this repression most powerfully. Labeled “a cursed woman” because of her mother’s past, she internalises the stigma and accepts her misfortunes as fate. Her life becomes an endless cycle of endurance and silence. When the narrator observes that she “believed that her mother’s curse had followed her” and that “no man stayed with her long enough to father all her children,” Darko underscores how cultural superstition transforms into self-repression (*Faceless*, p. 38). Maa Tsuru’s acceptance of

her suffering without protest symbolises how women internalise the myths that confine them. Her silence becomes both her protection and her prison.

Fofu, the young protagonist, also manifests repression as a psychological defence. Her trauma following Baby T's death is buried beneath layers of suppressed emotion. When Kabria tries to draw her out, she finds Fofu unable to speak, immobilised by fear and grief. As the narrator states,

“Fofu opened her mouth to speak but no words came. The memories of the street and of Baby T's death were too heavy for her tongue.” (Faceless, p. 93)

Here, speech itself becomes the site of repression. Fofu's silence is not mere muteness; it is a psychic wall shielding her from reliving her trauma. This aligns with Freud's argument that repressed material returns in disguised forms—through dreams, silence, or avoidance.

Kabria and the women of MUTE represent another dimension of repression: social restraint masked as civility. Although educated and middle-class, they too inhabit a world that curtails women's expression. Kabria balances her domestic duties with her work at MUTE, repressing irritation toward her husband, Adade, and the constant demands of family life. Her humorous attachment to her old car, “Creamy,” becomes a metaphor for her contained frustration—an external sign of inner exhaustion. Through

such details, Darko captures the quiet, everyday repression experienced by women who appear “free” yet remain emotionally burdened. The environment of Sodom and Gomorrah—the slum that forms the novel’s backdrop—further mirrors this state of repression. Beneath its physical decay lies moral and emotional suffocation. The residents endure deprivation without protest; they have learned to suppress both pain and anger as strategies for survival. As the narrator remarks,

“The people of Sodom and Gomorrah lived as if tomorrow did not exist. They had learned not to hope, for hope was a luxury they could not afford.” (Faceless, p. 65)

This observation captures collective repression at a societal level: an entire community numbed into passivity by poverty and neglect.

Through the psychoanalytic lens, Darko demonstrates that repression, though invisible, is a powerful agent of control. Freud contends that the repressed always seeks return, often through displaced or symbolic action. In *Faceless*, such return occurs through Fofu’s eventual decision to tell her story. When she finds her voice and begins to narrate her sister’s life, the silence that once imprisoned her begins to dissolve. Her speech signifies the breaking of repression and the re-emergence of agency.

“Fofu spoke at last. Her voice was soft but steady, and with every word, the pain loosened its hold on her.” (Faceless, p. 184)

From a feminist-psychoanalytic perspective, this act of speech is liberation. It affirms Florence Stratton's observation that "African women are conditioned to suffer silently, their tongues tied by tradition and their spirits bowed by inherited myths of inferiority" (Contemporary African Women Writers, p. 58). Darko's women bear this burden, yet she allows them to transform repression into resistance.

Ultimately, *Faceless* presents repression not merely as a symptom of oppression but as its psychological mechanism. It is the silence that sustains subjugation, the internalisation of guilt that prevents rebellion. However, through Fofo's awakening, Darko shows that confronting repression is the first step towards healing. The journey from silence to speech becomes the novel's central metaphor for self-discovery and freedom.

4.2 Comparative Study of Repression and Identity Formation in Both Novels

Repression in Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days* functions as both a psychological weapon and a social condition that shapes, distorts, and ultimately redefines female identity. Although the two writers work from different cultural and geographical settings—urban Ghana and rural Nigeria—they share a concern with how women internalise silence, fear, and endurance within patriarchal systems that equate submission with virtue. Yet, within this enforced silence lies the possibility of transformation; the very act of enduring becomes the beginning of self-awareness and resistance.

In *Faceless*, Amma Darko situates repression amid the physical and moral decay of Accra's Sodom and Gomorrah. Here, silence is not only personal but societal. Maa Tsuru, burdened by the belief that she is cursed, accepts abuse and neglect without protest. Her acceptance—"They said my mother was cursed, and I believed them. What else could I have done?" (*Faceless*, p. 42)—reveals how superstition enforces psychological imprisonment. Fofo, her daughter, inherits this repression, suppressing her grief over her sister's death and her anger at a world that refuses to see her. Kabria and the women of MUTE, although more educated and secure, also embody quiet repression. Their politeness, humour, and duty-driven lives are coping strategies for surviving in a world that undervalues their voices. Through these women, Darko presents repression as both a shield and a chain: it protects the self from immediate harm but also prevents emotional release.

In contrast, *Lonely Days* places repression within the framework of Yoruba custom and widowhood. Yaremi's silence is imposed through ritual and social expectation. The pressure to remarry after her husband's death, and the constant surveillance of the village community, become mechanisms of psychological control. Her words—"They have no idea how lonely the days are, how heavy silence can be" (*Lonely Days*, p. 76)—reflect her internal conflict between fear of rejection and the desire for self-determination. Adebowale uses this silence to critique the collective complicity of culture in repressing women. Yet, Yaremi's endurance becomes a kind of defiance; by choosing not to remarry, she transforms repression into an act of will.

While both texts explore repression as a tool of female subjugation, they diverge in their depiction of transformation. In *Faceless*, liberation is communal. Women like Fofo, Kabria, and Vickie awaken through solidarity and dialogue, particularly through MUTE, which symbolises collective consciousness and female agency. It is within this circle that Fofo finds her voice and begins to speak her truth. In *Lonely Days*, however, liberation is solitary and introspective. Yaremi's strength emerges not from collective action but from inner conviction. Her defiance, though quiet, dismantles the idea that a woman's worth is defined by marital status.

Both authors also reveal that repression operates across generations. In *Faceless*, Maa Tsuru's silence echoes through Fofo's pain, showing how internalised suffering can be inherited. Similarly, in *Lonely Days*, Yaremi's submission reflects the historical conditioning of countless women before her. Yet both novels show this cycle being broken. Fofo's decision to narrate her story and Yaremi's refusal to conform mark turning points where the repressed returns as awareness. Freud's idea of "the return of the repressed" finds powerful resonance here: what has long been buried—anger, grief, and longing—resurfaces as courage and clarity.

Florence Stratton's observation that "African women's silence is not the absence of voice but the prelude to speech" (*Contemporary African Women Writers*, p. 102) captures the central movement of both novels. Darko and Adebowale show that silence, though born of repression, contains the potential for speech. When Fofo begins to tell her

sister's story and when Yaremi declares her right to live without another man, repression gives way to expression, and silence becomes the seed of identity.

Both writers also use setting as an extension of their characters' psychological states. The decaying cityscape of Accra mirrors Fofo's suffocated voice, while the closed, traditional village of Kufi mirrors Yaremi's social confinement. Yet, both spaces become sites of awakening: Sodom and Gomorrah gives birth to MUTE's activism, and Kufi becomes the ground of Yaremi's defiance. The same places that suppress also nurture transformation.

In conclusion, Amma Darko and Bayo Adebowale use repression to expose the silent machinery of patriarchy and its power to shape female consciousness. However, they also reveal repression's paradoxical power to awaken selfhood. Through Fofo, Maa Tsuru, and Yaremi, both writers show that identity is not destroyed by silence but redefined through the struggle to break it. The journey from repression to expression—from silence to speech—becomes the ultimate act of resistance and renewal.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of the Study

This research examined how unconscious fears, trauma, and repression shape the identities of women in Amma Darko's *Faceless* and Bayo Adebowale's *Lonely Days* through a psychoanalytic perspective. The study applied Freudian and Jungian concepts

of the unconscious, repression, and trauma, alongside feminist interpretations of psychoanalysis, to explain how patriarchal societies create and maintain psychological subjugation in women. Both novels were read as psychological case studies that mirror the social, emotional, and cultural conditions of African womanhood.

Chapter One introduced the research problem, aims, methodology, and theoretical framework, and reviewed relevant scholarship on the two novels. It established that both Darko and Adebowale explore the emotional consequences of patriarchy, presenting their female characters as symbols of collective suffering and as figures of personal transformation.

Chapter Two examined how unconscious fears influence the construction of female identity in the novels. It showed that characters such as Maa Tsuru and Fofo in *Faceless* and Yaremi in *Lonely Days* internalise fear as part of their social and psychological inheritance. Fear of rejection, loneliness, and social condemnation dictates their choices, limiting their freedom while also shaping their awareness of self.

Chapter Three explored trauma as both personal and communal experience. In *Faceless*, trauma emerges through neglect, sexual abuse, and the breakdown of family and community. In *Lonely Days*, trauma arises from widowhood, exclusion, and the burden of cultural customs. Both authors reveal that trauma destroys identity yet also stimulates self-discovery, showing that pain can become a path to psychological growth.

Chapter Four analysed repression as a psychological and cultural mechanism that silences women and distorts selfhood. In both novels, women suppress pain, anger, and desire under social pressure. However, repression also becomes a means of endurance and eventual awakening. Through the lives of Maa Tsuru, Fofo, and Yaremi, the study demonstrated that repression limits agency but also breeds resilience. The comparative discussion established that although the women's environments differ—urban Accra and rural Kufi—the psychological patterns of silence and endurance are universal.

In sum, the study concluded that Darko and Adebawale depict women as victims of patriarchal structures and yet as survivors who transform suffering into strength. Through the psychoanalytic exploration of fear, trauma, and repression, both writers reveal that African womanhood is not defined by defeat but by the quiet and enduring search for voice and identity.

5.2 Major Findings

The study yielded several key findings:

Female Identity is Psychologically Conditioned:

The identities of women in both novels are products of social repression and unconscious fears. Patriarchal expectations shape how women perceive themselves,

leading to a fragmented sense of self that must negotiate between submission and survival.

Repression and Trauma Intersect as Tools of Control:

Both Darko and Adebowale depict societies where silence, ritual, and gender norms function as instruments of repression. These social mechanisms translate into psychological trauma that hinders emotional expression and autonomy.

The Unconscious as a Site of Resistance:

Despite repression, the unconscious mind remains a source of power. Dreams, memories, and acts of rebellion reveal that the repressed self persistently seeks liberation. The “return of the repressed” is evident in Fofu’s eventual speech and Yaremi’s refusal to remarry.

Suffering as a Catalyst for Self-Awareness:

The novels suggest that suffering—though painful—serves as a crucible for transformation. Women’s endurance of trauma and repression becomes the pathway through which they discover voice, purpose, and identity.

Repression Reinforces but Also Dismantles Patriarchy:

While repression sustains patriarchal structures by enforcing silence, it also breeds resistance. The more women internalise pain, the more they awaken to the need for change. Thus, repression paradoxically engenders both subjugation and liberation.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Amma Darko and Bayo Adebawale employ psychoanalytic dimensions not merely to portray suffering but to reveal the intricate processes through which women construct meaning and identity under oppressive systems. The novels affirm that the female psyche, though fractured by trauma and repression, possesses an indomitable will to survive and redefine itself.

In *Faceless*, the movement from silence to speech symbolises the reclamation of selfhood from the ruins of urban neglect. In *Lonely Days*, Yaremi's decision to live independently, despite communal condemnation, signifies the assertion of individual will over collective repression. Both narratives testify to the resilience of African women who navigate the terrain between subjugation and self-discovery.

Ultimately, this psychoanalytic analysis underscores that the struggle for identity is inseparable from the struggle for consciousness. The unconscious fears, repressed emotions, and traumatic memories that haunt these women are not merely personal burdens—they are reflections of societal wounds. Yet, through resilience, reflection, and quiet defiance, they transform pain into purpose.

Darko and Adebawale, through their profound psychological realism, invite readers to recognise that freedom begins within the mind. The path to liberation is not simply external emancipation from patriarchy but an inner awakening—a reclamation of the silenced self.

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